SOSC 17300 3 - Religion: Cosmos, Conscience, and Community III - Instructor(s) - Derek Buyan

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Spring 2024**

Number Enrolled: **19**
Number of Responses: **13**

Report Comments

Opinions expressed in these evaluations are those of students enrolled in the specific course and do not represent the University.

Creation Date: **Thursday, July 11, 2024**

What are the most important things that you learned in this course? Please reflect on the knowledge and skills you gained.

Comments
Religion in the secular age / religion and social change
Making and defending nuanced, multi–textual claims was the main writing technique explored, and the texts themselves explored the relationships between religion and society: How religion relates to political or social ideologies, how religion interacts with politics and society, and how religion is used for social change.
Religion and society, economy, government
The main thing that I took away was how religion functions in a modern age. We started with thinkers such as Marx, Locke, and Weber and eventually applied their theories on religious to contemporary writers such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X.
Religion as a source of both positive and negative social change, Marx's historical materialism, a good recap on the Protestant Revolution, more about the Iranian Revolution. We generally just got a really well–rounded overview of how several societies and major thinkers have viewed the interplay between religion, economics, and social standing throughout history.
religion and society
Putting ideas down with clarity in paper. Professor Buyan really helped with that.

Describe how aspects of this course (lectures, discussions, labs, assignments, etc.) contributed to your learning.

Comments
Discussions were somewhat helpful
Discussions were the main use of class time, and were very helpful for thinking about texts in new and interesting ways alongside making connections to other texts. Our weekly reading analyses allowed for a deeper dive into one text for that week, trying to dissect it's main claims and most interesting points into a few bullet points was a challenging but useful task
Discussions were always great. Professor Buyan would open with a brief lecture on the material with really helpful context, then would give us discussion prompts in smaller groups and then we would come together to all discuss the texts and the prompts. It was really good format and definitely useful for understanding the key ideas of the texts.
Lectures the main thing. It was sort of a mix between lecture and group work and discussion. I honestly feel like the classroom we were in really put a damper on the vibe of the class because we were seated in rows which is pretty absurd for a discussion based class. There was a lot of group discussion which felt useful but also the constant moving around was sort of exhausting. I like the idea of working with different people but in reality, at 9:30am, I just want to sit in my seat and discuss with those already around me. Readings were really interesting and tied together well. They seemed really long sometimes though is the truth. Like 40+ pages.
Lectures were great. Made the course themes very accessible because Professor Buyan would contextualize all that we were learning and helped us create a thread to connect each class together.
The “reading analyses” were very good. This was an assignment that was due on every Tuesday or Thursday depending on which day you were assigned. I thought these were a great way to help us engage with the texts. The assignment was to respond to four very simple prompts (the same prompts every week) in around 2–3 sentences. The discussions themselves were pretty helpful as well. I also enjoyed how Professor Buyan started and ended every class with some context for each of the readings.
Lectures were really informative and engaging. Discussions were less discussion–y than past quarters, as we mostly just answered the professor's questions and occasionally bounced ideas off each other, but I didn't mind. As for readings, they were (as always) too much, but I liked the ones this quarter way more than last quarter; each text felt like they added well on top of what came before. Very rarely did I feel like any of them were superfluous.
in–class discussions were extremely helpful

Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.31	4.00	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%	46.15%	46.15%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.46	5.00	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%	30.77%	61.54%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.31	5.00	0.00%	7.69%	7.69%	30.77%	53.85%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.31	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.69%	53.85%	38.46%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.77	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	23.08%	76.92%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.54	5.00	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%	23.08%	69.23%
I felt respected in this class.	4.77	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	23.08%	76.92%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.54	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.69%	30.77%	61.54%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
N/A
This was a pretty enjoyable course. The workload was fair and the material was pretty engaging!
deals the least with religious texts but this also means that discussions are not bogged down by theorizing fiction

I would recommend this course to:

	No	Yes
Highly-motivated and well-prepared students	0.00%	100.00%
Anyone interested in the topic	0.00%	100.00%

Thinking about your time in the class, what aspect of the instructor's teaching contributed most to your learning?

Comments
Discussions
Discussions and office hours were helpful
I thought the way class discussions were organized worked quite well, where we discuss in groups about a particular question for a few minutes, then groups shared big ideas or answers that went up on the board, and then as more questions were asked the board began to collect together common ideas or patterns we could recognize more easily than when it was just the large block of text we were reading.
Professor Buyan was really good at nudging us toward the key concepts and main ideas of the texts during discussion and really helped our overall understanding of the texts.
I think he asked good questions and probed our thinking
Professor Buyan is extremely organized. He wrote the agenda on the board at the start of every class and managed our time very well. The Canvas and assignments were structured very well and he provides a rubric for his papers. I am not used to teachers grading classes so systematically, but I can’t say that I didn’t like it.
Professor Buyan's lectures were awesome. I feel like previous quarters didn't do a great job of giving us historical context or directly outlining the main ideas of some of the texts we read (because a lot of times, even if you did the reading, it wouldn't be super clear), but Buyan made sure everyone understood the basics, which made it so much easier to connect with the text on a more complex level.
his energy! by far the best religion prof i have had

What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
N/A
This is small but class often ended a minute or two late and it always felt like a time crunch on the end which was slightly stressful. Also, I think there was a tiny bit too much group discussion and sometimes it sort of made time drag on when we were done discussing before the time.
I wish that the discussions were a little less guided. The “discussion questions” Professor Buyan used with us were fairly basic. They covered the basic points we should have gotten out of each text. While I see the value in this, I wish that the conversations could follow where the students wanted to go a little bit more. We could have spent more time on the details that the students were interested in, and the professor could have then related those to wider points. Furthermore, Professor Buyan basically gives a speech when he lectures. I am pretty sure he prepares them for class because when he lectures it seems like he is basically reading off a script. I completely understand if that is his style and something he is comfortable with. I also appreciate the time he took to prepare the lectures he gave. It just felt a little unnatural and I would’ve appreciated to see him lead classes more off the dome.
I feel like some of his feedback seemed pretty backhanded; he'd often leave comments like "thanks for this mostly good analysis" or "thanks for this mostly clear thesis," often without saying what specifically stopped a piece of writing from being "fully" good or "fully" clear. Other times he would provide feedback on our reading analyses that DID make sense, but it would be difficult to integrate it into the next assignment because we'd be working with an entirely new text and, once again, we'd risk not understanding something. With that being said, even if I didn't grasp the main idea of a text perfectly, he would (at least for me) still give me full points, so it's not like we were penalized for it, it more so was just kind of annoying to never feel like your work was good enough.
honestly nothing

The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.77	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	23.08%	76.92%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.46	5.00	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%	30.77%	61.54%	0.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.54	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.69%	30.77%	61.54%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.46	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.69%	38.46%	53.85%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.54	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	46.15%	53.85%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.54	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	46.15%	53.85%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.54	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	46.15%	53.85%	0.00%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.54	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	46.15%	53.85%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.69	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	30.77%	69.23%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.54	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	7.69%	30.77%	61.54%	0.00%

Please include the name of the TA/CA/Intern you are evaluating. What aspects of the TA's teaching contributed most to your learning? What could the TA modify to help you learn more? Please include any additional feedback for the TA/CA/Intern.

Comments
Hawkins Lewis
Hawkins was pretty good. He gave very straightforward advice. I have no complaints.
Hawkins

The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	3.75	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	3.50	3.50	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	3.75	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Helped you succeed in the class.	3.75	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.50	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	3.25	3.50	0.00%	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%

How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	Mean	Median	No Gain	A Little Gain	Moderate Gain	Good Gain	Great Gain	N/A
Laboratory Experience	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Field Trips	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Library Sessions	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Review Sessions	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Writing Seminars	2.78	3.00	22.22%	22.22%	22.22%	22.22%	11.11%	0.00%

Other course elements not mentioned above:

Comments
N/A

Is this class a requirement of some sort?

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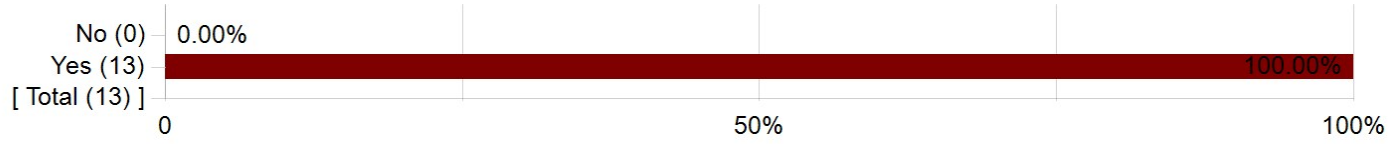

Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?

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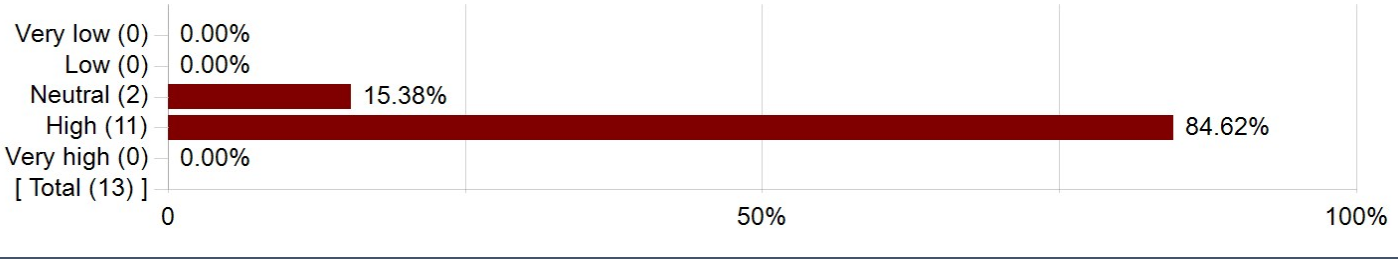
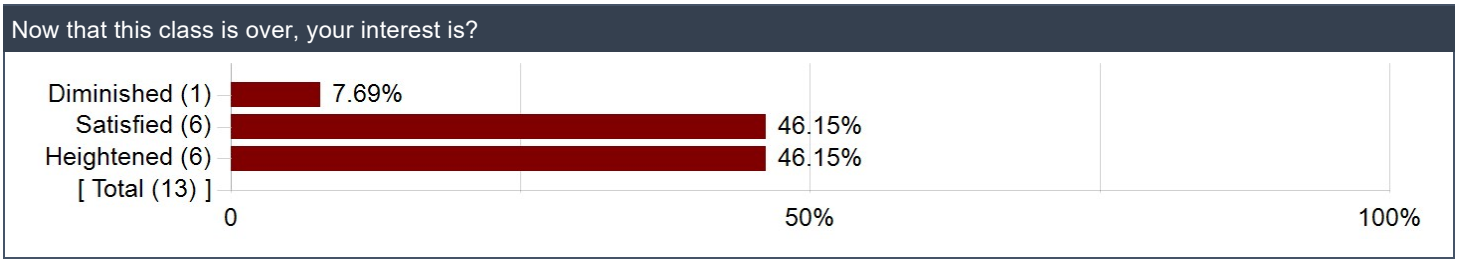
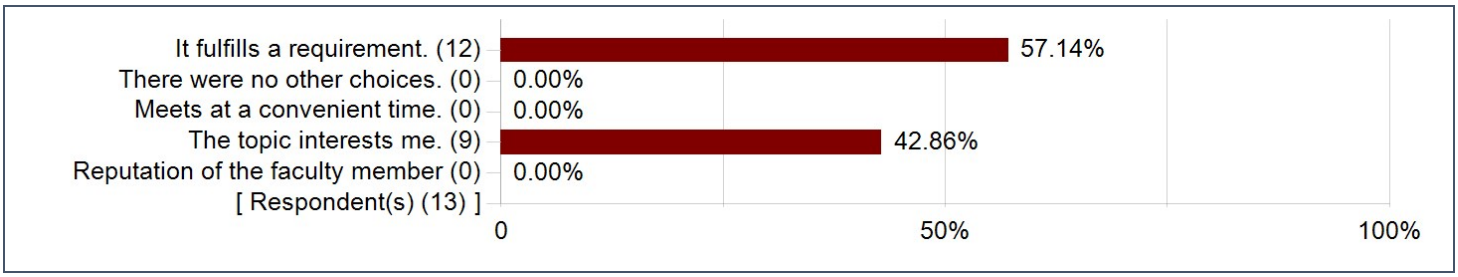


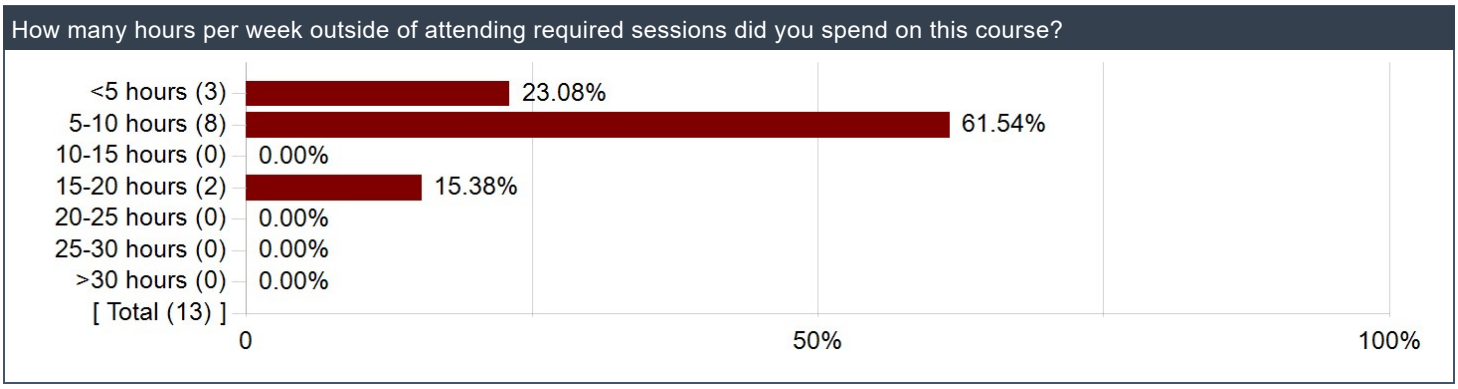
Now that this class is over, your interest is?



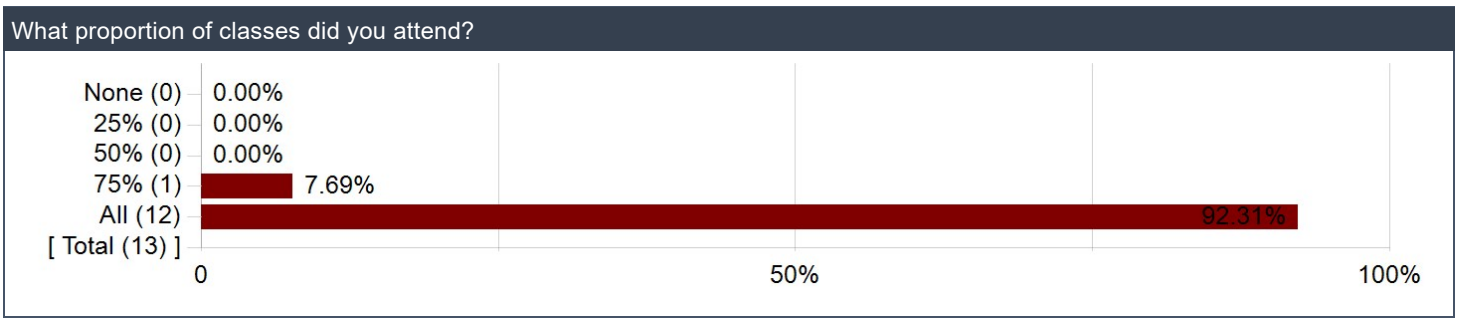
Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



How many hours per week outside of attending required sessions did you spend on this course?



What proportion of classes did you attend?



Please comment on the level of difficulty of the course relative to your background and experience.

Comments
Not too difficult, but I found it pretty interesting
N/A
I don't have much experience with humanities outside of HUM, the readings were manageable length and the essay assignments were reasonable
Not difficult but a lot of reading
This is a good SOSC to take. I had taken a couple of classes at the Divinity School before, but I think the Religion Core would be accessible to all. I do not know about the difficulty of the other SOSC sequences, but I felt like Religion was not hard at all.
This was the hardest quarter of the sosc sequence for me, although this was mostly just due to our professor being (rightfully) a little harder on us than our autumn or winter professors were. With that said, it was certainly doable, and I think the improved quality of lectures made reading and interacting with the texts often something I WANTED to do rather than something I felt I needed to.
easyish