SOSC 18400 3 - Democracy: Equality, Liberty, and the Dilemmas of Self-Government I - Instructor(s): Andrew Brandel

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Autumn 2023**

Number Enrolled: **16**
Number of Responses: **9**

Report Comments

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

Creation Date: **Friday, February 2, 2024**

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

Comments
That democracy is everchanging and exactly when/where it emerged is a topic up for debate when analyzing ancient civilizations.
I've learned about the formation of democracies, the different forms of government, and the many aspects that impact a government and how it functions. I've learned to better analyze difficult–to–read texts, and how to fully expand on my arguments.
I learned how to deconstruct primary source material to break down the author's argument, as well as gaining knowledge of how to pull main ideas out of sources and discuss them with peers.
During this course, the texts and instruction from the professor busted myths and misunderstandings that I had previously held about the origins of democracy. I learned about Ancient Greek, Roman, and Florentine democracies and their many flaws and imperfections. I was able to make interesting connections to modern democracy and to highlight blaring differences. I feel better equipped to question and defend/critique our current democracy because of this course. Additionally, my writing skills and skim reading skills developed due to the assignments from this course.
I learned a lot about democracy, its different forms and manifestations over time and how different modern and ancient democracy are.
I learned how to absorb a lot of information from very long readings
I learned about the foundations of democracy and how to write a persuasive and detailed sosc essay.
Historical recounts from various authors covering ancient Greece, Rome, and Florence.
The most important thing I've learned is how to ask questions and how Athenian, Roman, and Florentine governments were structured and how many scholars impacted modern–day democracy.

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

Comments
The professor does a good job of breaking down the texts and providing the necessary context to help his students. For me, the discussions outside the class with the professor 1–1 helped the most with understanding the overall objective of the class and the essay assignments.
The discussions helped me understand the material better, and allowed for healthy debate. Different opinions and interpretations were valued.
I think the reading assignments contributed to my learning by allowing me to get familiar with primary sources and how modern historians explained their arguments, so when I had to write about primary sources I had some experience with writers that did the same.
The lectures significantly helped to fully understand the texts that had been assigned. We spent class breaking down and depicting the ideas and arguments that were present in the texts.
The class was mostly discussion of the previous reading in a whole class setting. There were two papers over the course of the quarter.
seminars were somewhat significant to my learning, but I found that if I didn't understand the reading, it didn't help much to go to the discussions and participate
The in–class discussions contributed the most to my learning by opening my horizons to other perspectives of the assigned readings.
Readings were necessary to participate in the in–class discussion which was the only aspect of class besides the papers. Sometimes they could be very boring though, however, Professor Brandel still does a great job with lectures and sifting through the plain historical facts and seeing the importance and the events' contributions to the development of democracy.
The discussion contributed to my understanding of the assigned readings.

Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.44	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	33.33%	55.56%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%	55.56%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.11	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	22.22%	44.44%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%	55.56%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.29	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	42.86%	42.86%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.38	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	37.50%	50.00%
I felt respected in this class.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%	55.56%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
N/A
You are not given busy work, and you are only assigned two essays throughout the quarter. However, your essays are expected to be at least seven pages long.
10/10 would recommend!!

I would recommend this course to:

	No	Yes
Highly-motivated and well-prepared students	0.00%	100.00%
Anyone interested in the topic	11.11%	88.89%

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

Comments
Again, his ability to break down difficult parts of the text and provide the necessary background info with the text helped the most.
The organization of our discussions
The instructor’s discussions and explanations of primary sources were helpful so I could understand them.
The instructor walked us through the readings each day, which enhanced my understanding of the text and helped demonstrate how one can think logically about such dense texts. The instructor infused humor and a semi–casual tone into the course, which made it a more enjoyable experience and encouraged a space that felt more comfortable for sharing thoughts and ideas.
He did a great job explaining some of the harder passages and concepts of the more complicated reading which helped me make sense of the ideas of the readings better.
I think the understanding of the complexity of the readings helped the instructor teach it in a digestible way
My instructor's conversational approach to teaching made the content easier to digest and made discussions in class more interesting.
His walk through of the readings to highlight what was actually important.
His feedback on my essays and his insights on the readings helped facilitate my understanding of the course.

What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
Maybe the overarching goal or theme over the quarter.
N/A
I would maybe appreciate if we did more activities in class that broke apart arguments and concluded what authors were saying, or if we were given sample writings which we could use to guide our own writing.
I think that the instructor should spend a bit more lecture time explaining concepts and terms that are necessary to the readings.
Not sure, he was a great professor.
more detailed outside resources about the historical context of the readings
My instructor could allocate an equal amount of time to each scheduled talking point rather than dwell on less significant details in the text.
Providing more engaging readings that aren't just history and actually challenge one's ideas of how democracy developed in ancient societies.
There is no need for improvement. I truly liked Professor Brandel's class structure. Would take out some of the readings specifically texts from secondhand sources and replace them with different texts.

The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	22.22%	66.67%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.71	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	22.22%	55.56%	22.22%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%	55.56%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%	55.56%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.44	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%	33.33%	55.56%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%	55.56%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.63	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	55.56%	11.11%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.78	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	22.22%	77.78%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.56	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	44.44%	55.56%	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
My writing advisor was Emma Adler. Her hand–on approach to teaching how to structure a compelling argument contributed the most to my learning. While I appreciate her entrusting us with the entire responsibility of coming up with possible claims, I found that we were given too much liberty with little actual insight or useful information. I also didn't necessarily enjoy the collaborative aspect of the practice, and I found it difficult to write with so many ideas being tossed around at once.

The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	3.00	3.00	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	2.00	2.00	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	2.00	2.00	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	3.00	3.00	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Helped you succeed in the class.	2.00	2.00	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	3.00	3.00	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	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	1.00	1.00	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	80.00%
Field Trips	1.00	1.00	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	80.00%
Library Sessions	1.00	1.00	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	80.00%
Review Sessions	1.00	1.00	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	80.00%
Writing Seminars	2.00	2.00	40.00%	40.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Other course elements not mentioned above:

Comments
N/A

Is this class a requirement of some sort?

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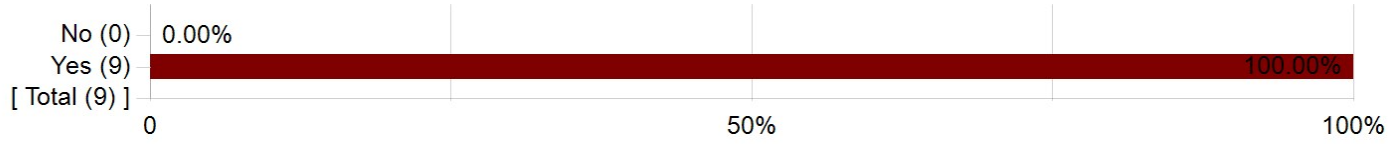

Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?

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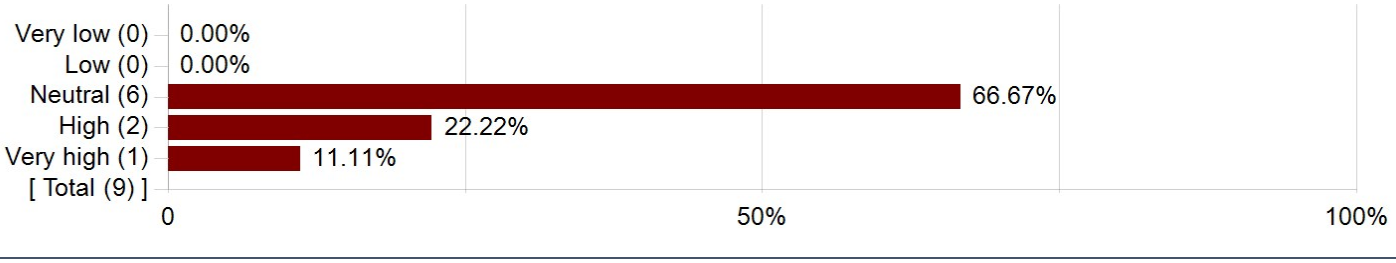
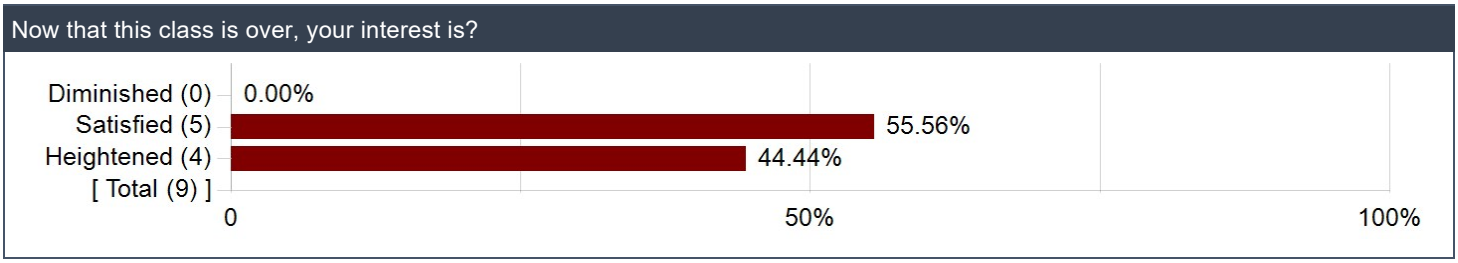
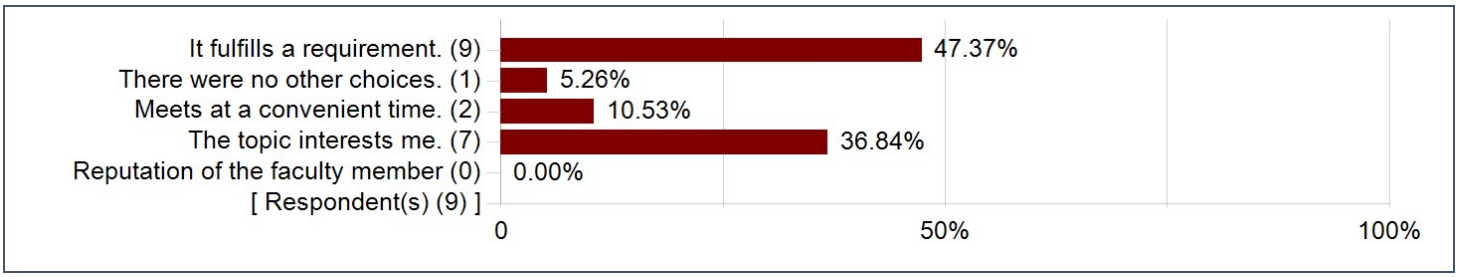


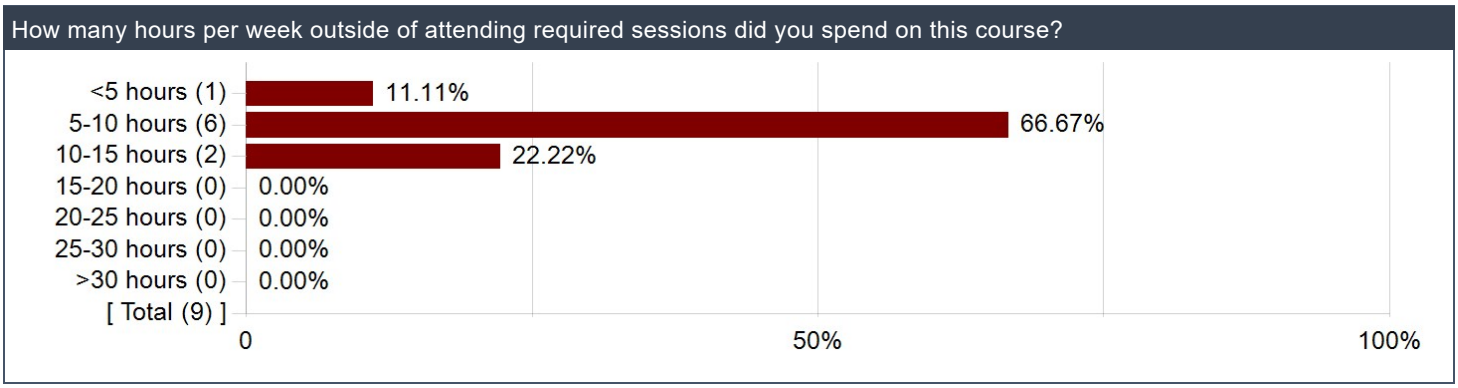
Now that this class is over, your interest is?



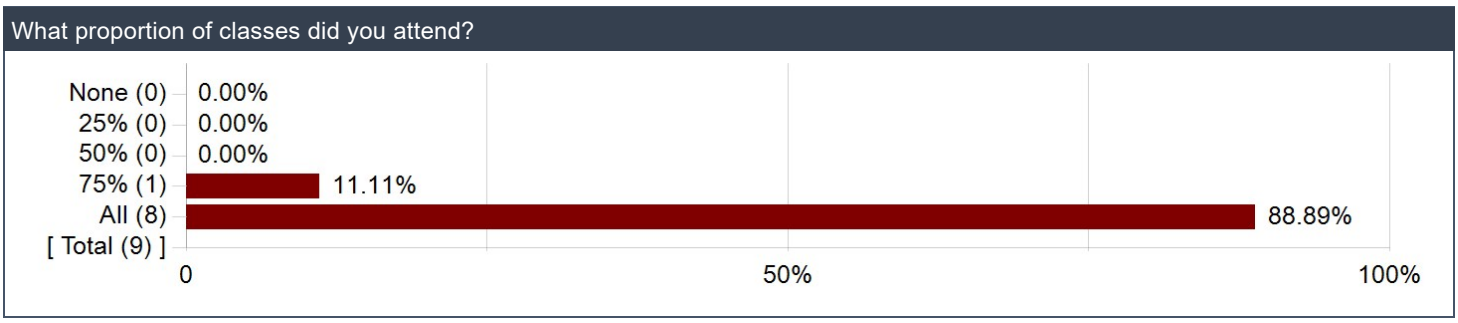
Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



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
The most difficult part of the class are the readings because at times they were not very engaging and dragged on for ever.
I have no experience with this topic, but it was not too difficult. It is very heavily reading based though.
I thought the course grading was relatively difficult and not as clear as it could have been in relation to my previous experience.
Overall, the workload isn't too intense but the assignments are pretty long. The readings are often rather complex, dense, and sometimes antiquated. Not having taking many political–related classes, the subject matter wasn't too advanced to stay on path with.
The readings can be a lot and the papers can be a little long coming right out of high school, but it is not that hard to adapt.
This course wasn't difficult but be prepared to write essay in a short amount of time.
Minimal prior knowledge of the topic but Professor Brandel made the content very digestible through lectures even if the reading didn't seem to have much depth at first.
Somewhat difficult; some readings are difficult to understand and the essays force you to constantly improve.