



HUMA 17100 6 - Language and the Human II - Instructor(s): Nisha Kommattam

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

Number Enrolled: **19**

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: **Thursday, March 28, 2024**

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

Comments
Connections between language and identity
how language is linked to identity, language policies/multilingual policies around the world
I learned how to improve my argumentative writing and some interesting ideas about identity and language. I also learned a decent amount about the Sri Lankan Civil War.
how language shapes identity
I developed essay writing skills as well as an understanding of how to parse academic writing.
The most important things that I learned in this class is how intertwined different identities are. I feel like people talk all the time about "intersectionality" and buzzwords like that in theory, but this class gives us a really interesting look at real world examples of different languages, ethnicities, religions, countries, etc colliding. I thought the readings were really fascinating. I also improved a lot as a writer thanks to Scott's excellent writing seminars and feedback on my drafts, and I got a lot better at reading and comprehending academic writing because the readings were pretty difficult and advanced. Taking this class was definitely well worth the time.
I learned the connections between language and identity!

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

Comments
Discussions added aspects to my understanding that I didn't think about before
Professor Kommattam is great at asking questions that drive great class discussions which made it easier to be able to apply knowledge.
readings covered many languages across the world and different social groups
Readings and discussions both contributed to my learning well.
Prof Kommattam's comments throughout discussions were always thought-provoking and I thought she led the discussion well.
The discussions were very helpful in elucidating certain aspects of each reading; the presentations especially helped enhance my understanding of the readings.
The readings, even though they were dense and exhausting at times, were probably my favorite part. It was really cool to learn about other countries and cultures as well as learn about theories of language and identity, both in theory and in practice. My only complaint is that I wish we did more novels, as I really liked discussing and writing about Pygmalion, Handmaid's Tale, etc. Hunger of Memory seemed really interesting but we only had time to rush through it during one class, I wish we could have dived deeper into that book. However, the quarter is very short; I feel like we could have gotten two quarters worth of discussions out of all the readings we did!
However, I didn't feel like I got very much out of the class discussions. Often the discussions felt repetitive and surface level. Maybe I just came into the discussions with a bad attitude, but I felt like many classmates (including me on quite a few days I have to admit) just skimmed over the reading and wanted to do the bare minimum to get participation credit. I also think the class is a bit big to have really good high quality discussions – even though having a class of 20 ish students is amazing, it is still hard for everyone to participate. I preferred when we would spend the first half of class discussing in small groups of 4–5 students because then everyone gets to talk more and more interesting perspectives come up.
Having everyone take turns starting the class with a presentation on the reading was an interesting idea. Every presentation was very well done and it was helpful to get a review or summary of the readings, especially if I had to rush my preparation for class or if the reading was very dense or technical. However, sometimes the presentations were kind of boring, not because they weren't well done, but because it was a summary of the reading which I had already studied and taken notes on myself. Maybe if the presentations were either shorter or more focused on the presenter's perspective/opinions, it would have been more engaging to me. I did get a lot more out of the reading I had to present on than any other reading because presenting forced me to really know the article inside and out, so that was valuable.
I'm really grateful for Scott's writing seminar because it really helped me understand how to write academically. I didn't know how to structure a paper and what conventions to use in academic writing, and I had no idea how to revise well or craft a good thesis. His instruction really crystalized some intuitions I had and also gave me a totally new perspective on some aspects of writing and revising. He did an amazing job as writing tutor. Thanks to my experience getting feedback from him and from writing the essays, I feel prepared to do well in CIV and SOSC (which I probably would have really struggled with if I did it before the writing seminar!) All of the writing prompts were interesting and thought provoking, so I enjoyed writing the papers which is pretty rare for me.
Overall it was a great class! I learned a lot.

Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.13	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	62.50%	25.00%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%	62.50%	25.00%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	3.38	3.50	0.00%	25.00%	25.00%	37.50%	12.50%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	3.88	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	62.50%	12.50%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.25	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	50.00%	37.50%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.13	4.50	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%	25.00%	50.00%
I felt respected in this class.	4.38	4.50	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	37.50%	50.00%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.13	4.50	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%	25.00%	50.00%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
Professor Kommattam has great intentions, but it's very important that you communicate with her from the start because her expectations for an entry level course are comparatively different than most other sections. Specifically with writing, I have some reservations about her methods. Just the idea that most students are going to start off writing not so good papers is a bit concerning from the student perspective... why is the bar on the floor? I think also her expectations aren't very clear so for someone that isn't very familiar with dealing with instructors like this, it totally helps and is of your best interest to communicate with her early and track your progress throughout the course.
There is a presentation everyone has to do on one of the readings, one midterm essay, and one final essay.

I would recommend this course to:

	No	Yes
Highly-motivated and well-prepared students	37.50%	62.50%
Anyone interested in the topic	12.50%	87.50%

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

Comments
Instructor said interesting things during class and put together the comments from different people in interesting ways
Discussion questions always challenged us to think critically
The instructor created a pretty comfortable environment for students to share their ideas.
Assigned readings were chosen well
I think my professor's ability to relate each student's point back to a broader topic, while furthering the discussion kept the conversation moving while allowing me to understand each individual point better. Her detailed comments on my first essay also helped me understand what she was looking for in future writing.
I like how Professor Kommattam facilitated the discussions. She let us students do most of the talking, but she often brought up really good points that I had missed and help us direct the discussion to especially interesting topics. I also really liked the readings she chose, in particular I loved the focus on South Asia. In 12th grade my world history class spent a quarter on the Indian independence movement and ever since I've been really curious about those regions and cultures, so I loved reading about Hindi and Urdu, Sri Lanka, etc. Overall she really brought a welcoming attitude of openness and curiosity to the class, and I appreciated how kind and friendly she was to every student.

What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
Make more clear what exactly is expected in the class, more office hours that aren't just 15 min long
the instructor wasn't clear enough the type of style she wanted for the first paper also sometimes wanted us to power through long readings where people had to give presentations on
Additional clarity when it comes to expectations of specific parts of the course. For some students, simply learning the expectations for class presentations came primarily from watching those before them and not so much the assignment itself which is frustrating for students like myself who presented earlier in the quarter.
Let students facilitate the discussion on their own more. In the fall our professor was clearly listening to what we were saying but rarely provided comments, letting us call on each other. I think this let us better build off of each others' ideas, which is really the point of discussion. I do think the professor had interesting points but the real point of the course is for us to generate ideas on our own and discuss them with each other.
I think that sometimes the instructor's comments ran a little long and lost themselves in the details; this left little space for thinking about how to respond to them.
Nothing really comes to mind... my complaint last quarter was somewhat not knowing what the professor was looking for in grading our essays, but I feel like by now I understand what professors expect from HUM essays. A rubric of some sort could be helpful, but overall Professor Kommattam and Scott did a good job making the expectations clear.
Nisha was a great professor but could be a bit intimidating at times, making it difficult for more introverted students to speak up during discussions.

The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.29	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	42.86%	42.86%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.00	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	42.86%	0.00%	57.14%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.57	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	42.86%	57.14%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.29	5.00	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	28.57%	57.14%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.43	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	28.57%	57.14%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.14	5.00	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%	14.29%	57.14%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.00	4.50	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%	14.29%	42.86%	14.29%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.29	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	42.86%	42.86%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.71	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	71.43%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.29	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	14.29%	57.14%	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
Scott Jung was great
Scott Jung. Scott is the most genuine and amazing person I ever met, whether thats discussing just college life or your writing, Scott is a great resource and I plan to use him for the rest of my academic career because he's that amazing.
Scott Jung was an incredible writing seminar instructor! I have the highest praise and respect for him. I already talked about him a lot in the writing department evaluation so I'll call that good for now :) but overall he is amazing! He is a very competent teacher and a very empathetic person. He went above and beyond

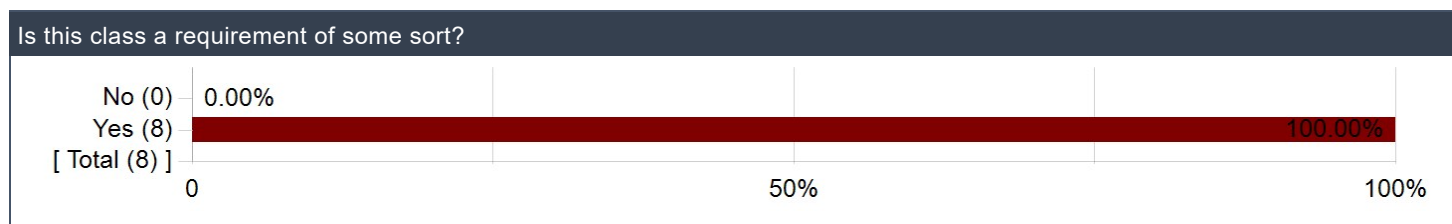
The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Helped you succeed in the class.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	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.	5.00	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%

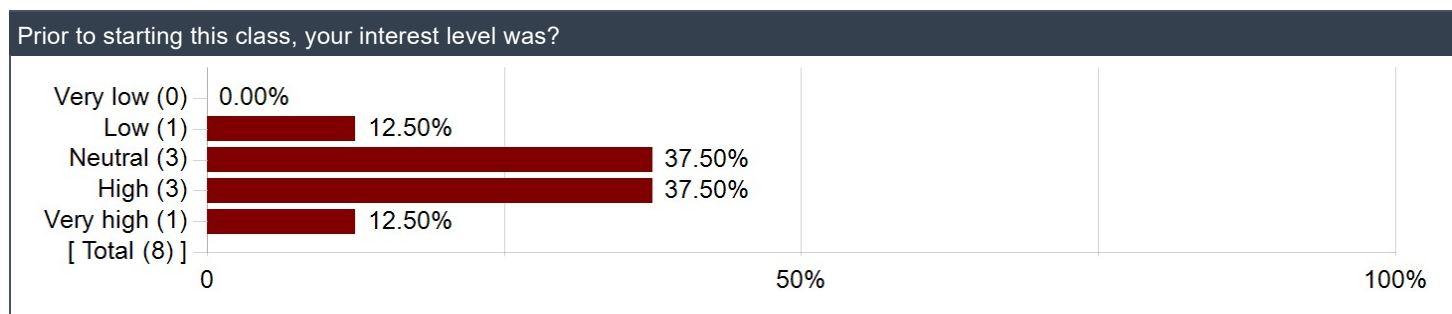
How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	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	4.00	5.00	0.00%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%	57.14%	0.00%

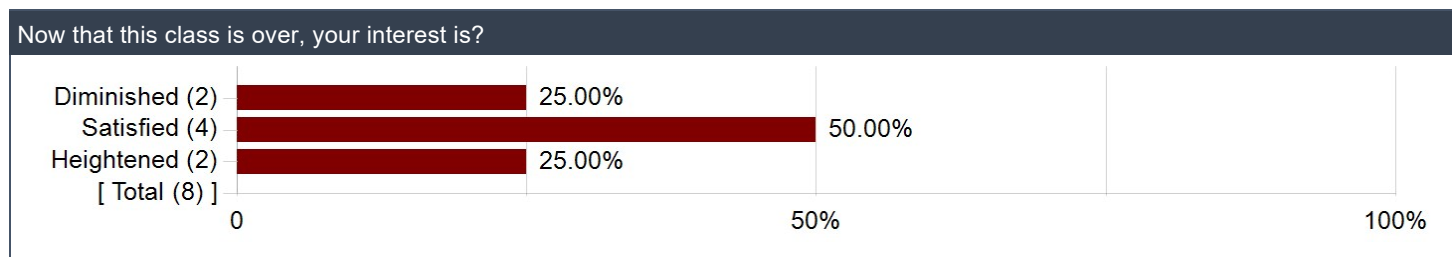
Is this class a requirement of some sort?



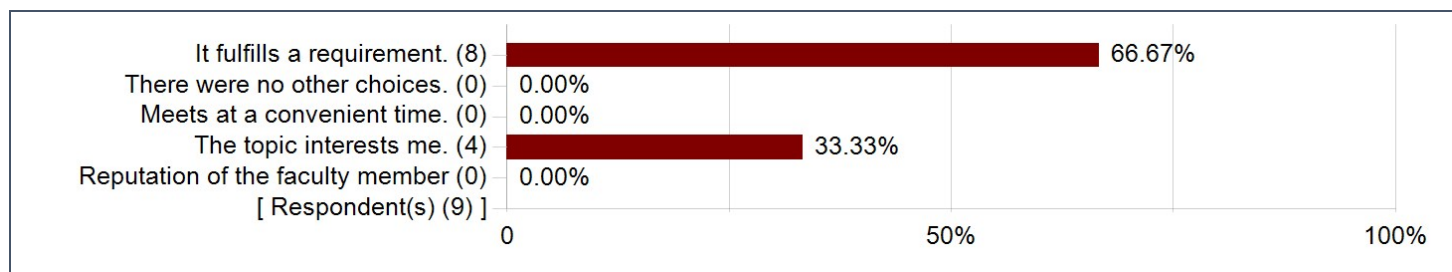
Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



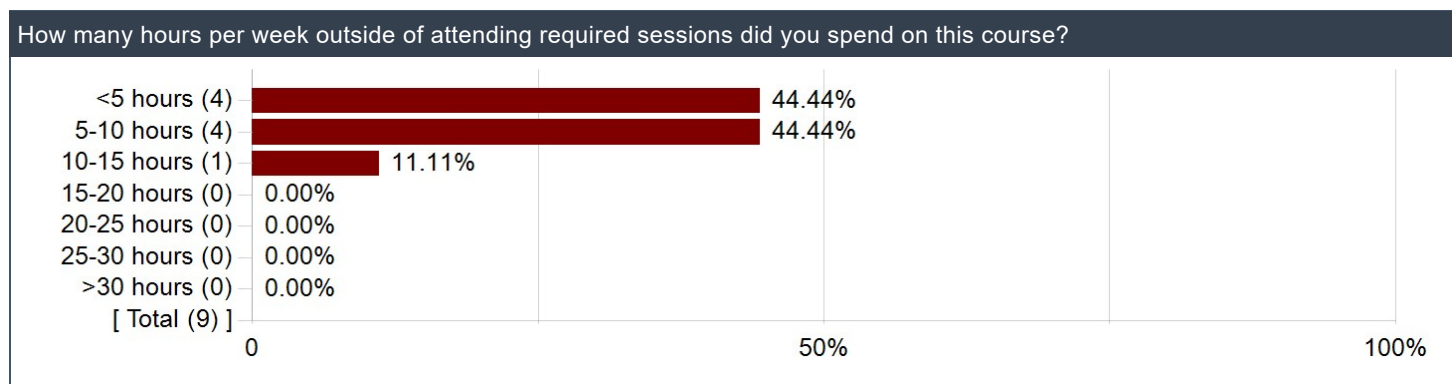
Now that this class is over, your interest is?



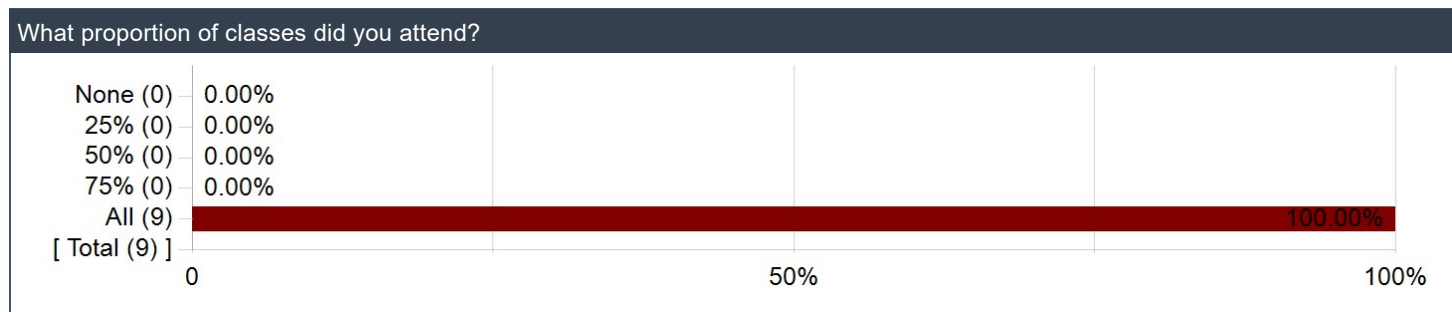
Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



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
It wasn't very difficult.
Moderate; some of the readings are fairly tough but it's definitely doable. You only have to write two papers which are pretty brief, and you get lots of help revising your draft before submitting it for a grade. The grading is pretty generous too so I think any student at UChicago can succeed in this course (although maybe if they are not a native English speaker, it would be very difficult)