

CrCrTh 602, Spring 2017, Creative Thinking Students' Synthetic Statements, from the Final Course Evaluation

The synthetic statement is the fourth question on formal course evaluations for the Critical and Creative Thinking Graduate Program. See the text of questions 1-3 by choosing any evaluation from this page: <http://cct.wikispaces.umb.edu/CourseEvaluations>.

Question 4: "Building on your comments from Questions 1-3 in the formal evaluation, compose a synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) evaluating this course. (Imagine readers who might not be willing to wade through all the answers to Qs 1-3, but are willing to read more than simply the numerical averages of standard course evaluations.) Please make comments that help the instructor develop the course in the future and that enable some third party appreciate the course's strengths and weaknesses. Among other things you might comment on the overall content and progression of classes, the session activities, and the use of mentors to support the learning in the course."

Below are the Synthetic Statements from the respondents who gave permission for these comments to be shared on the web.

- The overall content and progression of the course included a variety of assignments which fit a variety of learning styles. Weekly tasks were due every week, including during spring break (& Easter, Passover, etc). The instructor could set up these tasks in a better and more consistent balance. Delores' commentary kept the developer of the course in the public eye, but otherwise had no discernible value. The live classes were fun, once the technical difficulties were managed. We needed Blackboard support on a more consistent basis, however.
- Students participating in the Creative Thinking course will be given opportunities to expand their world views, explore new approaches to old problems, and exercise both their imaginative and analytical minds. The course offers moments to learn and moments to grow, moments to reevaluate and moments to reflect. What it does not offer is a moment to rest! There is much to gain and much to get through, so the Creative Thinking course asks that students really bring their best to the table. This is not to say that it is an intensely difficult course, just highly rigorous and deeply enjoyable.
- We need to change this course, immediately. 1) We need less assignments. There were close to 60 graded assignments, including weekly diaries and journals. We need more breathing room. Less small assignments. We don't need 12 weekly diary entries. There isn't enough material or time in the week to find a reflection every week. We don't need so many "metaphorical" assignments that were created to get us thinking about a concept or technique. We're graduate students and are capable of understanding a concept without having to waste time with a useless assignment. 2) There needs to be more emphasis on creating something. In future classes, let's have the major assignment dominate the course, rather than the small assignments. Let's make sure each student isn't drained by the time the important work begins. I also think there should be more emphasis on trying to get our work published. It seemed that the goal of our main project was to get a grade rather than create something that could actually become something. There needs to be a way to connect us to resources outside the course to try and actually allow us to actually create something, rather than just get a grade.
- There are high expectations for anyone who is interested in participating in this course. The predictable notion that the more work you put in, the more you will get out, applies in rare form to this course. The readings are difficult and very time consuming, so 7 hours of work a week

is a fair expectation for the conscientious student. If you need additional help, the professor is very willing, although his explanations may not always ring clear. Participate in class, whether online or in person, in order to gain the most understanding of the texts and concepts through conversation. Try not to feel discouraged by the frequent revise and resubmit emails, they are only there to push your understanding further. It is a course that is well worth the effort if you are truly invested in learning about epidemiology, but it is not worth while for the faint of heart or mildly interested.

- This is a course that relies almost entirely on Blackboard, with very little face to face (whether via online or in person) engagement. It is assignment heavy and focused on creative exercises that get you to produce novel/random responses. If you work full time, I do not recommend taking this course at the same time you are taking any others.