

CrCrTh 603, Fall 2016, Foundations of Philosophical Thought 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 7 respondents who gave permission for these comments to be shared on the web (out of 9 total received).

- If you are interested in exploring philosophy within your own life and current affairs, I would take this class. You will also have the opportunity to explore philosophy in some other formats, such as in books or movies.
- This course is very challenging as we explore many difficult topics of philosophical thinking such as terrorism, abortion, liberty, and more. However, the instructor is very supportive and the course is designed to encourage an atmosphere of open discussion, questions and exploration. There is less focus on learning specific facts or achieving certain grades and more on engaging in comprehensive dialogue about philosophy and philosophical thinking. The course introduces a wide variety of topics and philosophers and so it is impossible to come away with mastery of the subject but you will instead have a good foundation to continue your exploration of philosophy.
- I was advised to take this course by Professor Taylor. Thankfully I heeded his direction. The goals I created for myself were basically to do my best by deep-diving into the material and improve my writing skills. This course was VERY challenging (given extensive weekly reading material and reflective essay assignments) but in the end my expectations were far exceeded. Professor Millman is a treasure. His facilitation is expert and my fellow course mates really made for a meaningful and excellent educational experience. Conferencing in from Europe each week for a Master's Degree program is a dream come-true. so from my position, the hybrid class format is absolutely wonderful. The way the table with the instructor and students are arranged allows for online students to feel they are actually a part of the room. Whether intentional or accident the logistical setup works really works well. Looking back there isn't anything I would change as I dove into each semester week with keen interest and vigour. I did not experience any major personal obstacles beyond family obligations. In my opinion the cited course goals were met with fervour and very satisfactorily. The fact that we had so much material to cover at first felt daunting but as the course progressed - I got into the groove and was able to expound through writing my infused and connection-making reflections. We forayed into all the course descriptions with great fortitude. I feel I have evolved a lot - as a person - from taking this class.

- My personal goal was to acquire insight in regard to the nature of Philosophical Thought, or Philosophical Inquiry. Post-course, I am left with the impression of being handed an extremely valuable thinking tool, along with a well-rounded manual concerning how this tool might be put to use. I believe that engaged personal participation is of the utmost importance for a successful course experience. Arthur Millman is brilliant. I think he managed to bring out the best in all of us, and as a result, the entire class presented gems of original philosophical thought throughout. The class itself is a rewarding forum in which to practice the development of thought. The course complements the other CCT courses I've taken thus far: Creative Thinking, Dialogue Processes, Seminar in Creativity, and Critical Thinking. I'd say the goals expressed in the syllabus were met and surpassed. My overall recommendation to prospective students: take the course. I wish it lasted for another semester.
- When we were planning our class projects, I began with the idea of reflecting and synthesizing on the arc of all of our readings. They really seemed to flow from week to week in an interesting progression. Our topics started with some fundamental definitions of liberty and individual right to happiness and free will to what being an individual is, what is life, death, terrorism, altruism....and there were many fascinating interconnections to weave mag all the topics. The content of the class is weaker when students work through opinions, reactions and personal experience. The opportunity to come to a topic as fresh and objective as possible is something I appreciated very much. It felt like working on puzzles. But I would've preferred if the teacher had halted us from presenting opinions. "I think" is similar to "I gather, I conclude, I interpret....." but the first is only a broadcast, not a door opener.
- In this course, students take part in readings and discussions on multiple philosophical topics. Through this process, students learn about different ways to think about a subject as well as how to practice self-inquiry. Students will connect what they are learning about to their lives through weekly reflection papers as well as through individual projects.
- This is a course designed for personal reflection on some of the most complicated philosophical decisions, including abortion, death, and individual rights. The purpose of the course is to not find answers but to find the confidence to have an opinion. The course will include group discussions from people of very different backgrounds. Though this will not hinder your thinking, but rather improve how you think. Arthur will be there every step of the way to help you reach the confidence needed to develop great insights that will lead to a better understanding of the world moving forward.