

CrCrTh 649, Scientific and Political Change, Spring 2018 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 questions 1-3 listed on <http://bit.ly/CCTEval>

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.

- This course has expanded my learning journey in a way that other courses have not even come close to. The format of the course fosters organic learning, supported by a wonderfully curious and down to earth instructor who encourages collaboration and research based on interests rather than a curriculum. I came into this course expecting a sort of normal course experience, but can leave knowing that some of the things i have been presented and have discovered myself will stay with me for a while to come, despite my focus being far removed from science in my professional ambitions. This course is for everyone, not just those interested in science, and if you truly put in the effort to be curious, you will be greatly rewarded and surprised by how you can impress yourself.
- Peter was always available for questions or concerns, which I value highly. I did come to understand the challenges of affecting policy surrounding issues in science to a deeper level than when I began the course. Many of the sessions included listening to a plethora of issues via presentation form. Feedback received from these presentations was helpful.
- If you want to learn how to investigate problems having to do with science, technology, and policy, look no further. This course will bring you through several problem based learning units that will expand and extend the way you think about these topics. You will be able to focus on areas that are if specific interest to you and you will be able to dig as deep into the rabbit hole as you like, finding out all the information you need to present your information to the class. This fast paced course will offer you the skills you need to analyze political influence on scientific and technological advances that you never realized were there. You will discover inside you the learner whose appetite has been forgotten, and you will feed that learner all the knowledge they can handle. You will also be able to organize and process the information you find into a neat pile that you can later comb through to find what you're looking for.
- The Scientific & Political Change course is a strong offering that calls on the learner to be self-motivated as well as curious. Because of the open-ended nature of the projects, there is a lot of flexibility in terms of how you approach the assignments, and one of the strengths of the course is that it broadens your perspective of what science-policy connections are as well as the disciplines in which these connections exist. The variety of case studies one sees in this course, because of the peer work presented, is excellent and there is relatively quick turnaround with the four PBL structure. There are recommended weekly readings that provide supporting

theory, but are not discussed and it is required of the learner to make use of them. It would probably be helpful for people in the course to complete the readings as well as seek out (or be provided with) additional resources or tools that would support the underlying theory/foundations for undertaking these inquiries. The progression is quick, so getting peer support as well as leveraging the support of the instructor (who was excellent) is important - as is staying on top of assignments - the provided assignment checklist is the best way to ensure that everything is submitted and to deadline. I really enjoyed this course and would recommend it to others.

- This class invigorated my sense of curiosity and interest in researching for the sake of study and investigating ideas about making (how to) change in areas of personal interest. Being able to experience the way other classmates did things was a great benefit to my learning process. The freedom of the looser structure was liberating and overwhelming at times but where that perhaps allowed me to fall short of producing something I could have done better with strict structuring, the navigation process of trying to find my way was BEYOND beneficial in a way that could not be replicated in a more heavily structured curriculum if it tried.
- When I started the course, I didn't know what to expect. It was my first experience with online learning and first experience with project-based learning. The way that the course is structured is very innovative because although you never have met these classmates or instructors in person, there is a genuine sense of collaboration and openness with the assignments and discussions. Peter did a great job of facilitating the class discussions and getting the students to think more critically and deeply about each of the 4 cases. To be honest, I think it would be a wonderful experience to be able to take this course a SECOND time; this time applying the knowledge and inquiry strategies that I developed this semester.
- Any student who is interested in science and technology and learning how new ideas or developments are brought to reality should take this course. Many people focus on what comprises the new technology or medicine, but forget how it came to be. Being able to research how politics and policies influences these will provide a student with the entire picture. This course is also special because you are able to focus on topics that interest you. If you want to focus on artificial intelligence or HIV/Aids research, you can. It may seem intimidating at first, but the structure of the course allows you to not feel like you are in this alone. You work with your peers and the professor to hone in your ideas. This is done through the completion of 4 Project Based Learning cases. Through these cases you will explore the topics you find interest in and connect them back to the course objectives. Note that these cases take time and dedication. If your work or life is chaotic, I might save this course for a time where you can attend every class. You will be disappointed if you do not put your full effort into this course because there is the potential to learn so much and really grow from what you research in this course.
- The course encourages the learner to take a personal journey of inquiry into the world of science and the politics that influenced its directions. The journey will be fast and intense but a learner that is keen on exploring and reading would do well. For those without scientific backgrounds, there would be difficulties initially in grasping the case studies and concepts that are presented but it is important to stay engaged with the coursework and to seek for help from peers and the instructor whenever needed. Extra effort goes a long way. A lot of the material in the course would be centered around the development of science and technology in the US, which might resonate or disassociate the learner depending on their political inclinations. To fully appreciate what the course has to offer, I recommend that the learner suspends their judgement to be open to new perspectives.

- "This was a wonderful introduction to graduate school. I was encouraged to think, draw conclusions, dig into issues about which I was curious, and reflect on the products I created. I was most happy with that fact that it was not a course you can really ""mail-in."" When this is an option, I tend to lean towards good-enough instead of great (top on the list of things to work on). Not the case for this course. The projects require you to recognize relationships, birth original thoughts, and express yourself in an accesible way. You're given more than enough time to complete the projects, and since you can do them on essentially anything that interests you (so long as it is related to scientific and political change) the motivation level is high. Great course. Great teacher/thinker in Peter Taylor.
- It feels like a really safe space to take risks and have opinions."