

CrCrTh 692, Processes of Research and Engagement, Fall 2017 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 pushed me to think about the process of research. It also allowed me the space to engage with and learning from my peers that I haven't yet had in graduate study. This was not easy and, at times, it seemed as though there was much work due, and not sure how it connects to my final product or the process I am used to. Although as the course ends, I look back and wish I was able to more thoroughly enjoy the process, but I do feel like I came out with a really great paper and I learned a lot about my topic and those of my peers.
- This course helped me to grow both professionally and personally and this is why I would recommend this to other students, even if they are not in the program. As I am nearing the end of my coursework in this program, I felt like everything built up to this work and allowed me to truly be reflective throughout the semester. Conferences with Peter, the large group, small group, and peer commentary were all learning experiences that have taught me the value is the revise/editing process that I once took personally and offensively. I am now comfortable with receiving and giving feedback and can see how beneficial it is to the process. It has been a pleasure to work with SUCH an inspiring group of people from so many different backgrounds. No matter who I was paired with in this course, I always felt a strong sense of support and encouragement.
- CCT692 is a platform for students to develop their research and engagement skills in topics that have meaning to them as individuals. The course is loosely structured allowing for an indirect path to a goal that is discovered only through following the process. Time management will be key to completing the course.
- Initially the program may feel overwhelming, but if you approach it by leaning into your interests, passions or a piece of your personal or professional life, it will feel both necessary and exciting. Find readings and content that engage you. There is no reason for dread in this course. You will have guidance and freedom if you trust the framework. You will be able to play and engage with a lot of materials, classmates and a lot of processes. Know that you will feel certain sometimes and totally uncertain at other points. It's all ok. Naturally, through the steps a portion of the research will reveal itself as a place to explore further. Go towards that sliver of the macro view and connect with it. Do not strangle the work, flow with it and know there will be time for continued development beyond the semester. This is not a semester of perfection and blind expertise, but a time for growing, learning and building towards the future.

- As I have said before, in these courses, you get what you put in. It is certainly possible to get through without significant personal and/or professional transformation, but with some commitment of effort, it is unlikely. This course enabled me to re-think the value of my work and position myself to create and produce thinking and research of significance. It has been, for me, a personal journey of situating myself in my work and bringing understanding and in turn value to its development. A truly significant course.
- The course provides a clear introduction to the steps of writing and doing research. Learners are provided with clear examples and instructions that encourage self-directed learning and initiative, which is essential. Upon completion of this course, the learner would have completed thorough readings and reviews of publications and understand the basics of academic writing.
- I like the many unique research 'tools' and approaches I've garnered in this class. I very much like the quality of attention given by the course instructor and I also find the peer commentary component as being great in keeping us cohesive as a class. I think the calibre and diversity of students in this course has been exceptional and I am truly impressed by my colleagues. A recommendation to prospective students: Don't feel you have to pick as your final project something that is grandiose or revelatory. Choose a subject and be honest about what you are certain you will be able to accomplish. Be clear to yourself and in the writing of your final project so that you can better focus on the skills being learned rather than on over-producing something.
- There is a phrase that applies to this course...."Trust the process." This class starts off with a feeling of intimidation. There is an abundance of assignments. The assignments lead to a comprehensive, ambitious work. Fear sets in. This course is not one that resides within itself but a course that builds off of previous CCT courses (and life for that matter) and prepares you for the future and conclusion of this program (and life...for that matter). This course is broad but direct. Clear but ambiguous. But all is not lost. From clearly stated goals, well-prepared syllabus, assignments, and checklist, and with professor, class, and personal feedback, it is not possible to fall behind. In the end, you will be left with a voice and the ability to appreciate the process rather than needing to find the solution as quickly as possible.
- For future CCT students who want to engage with their synthesis topic should take this course to explore strategies that would improve the research skills and research project, thereby allowing their synthesis project research would flow smoother and more natural.
- There is no real way to evaluate thinking and progress when your mindset is constantly expanding. It helps that there is group of people in the same boat and that you can talk to Peter, Jeremy, or create a Google Hangout session with some classmates. When it comes to 692 and CCT I've learned that It is important to trust the process.
- The phases made me a better writer, much of that being via the amount of attention paid to narrowing down and zeroing in on what I was trying to write about. The topic and points which emerged through careful inquiry of an initial seedling of an idea which I normally would have pressured into being, were not what I expected, they were better, so much richer. Ideas emerged which I'd never thought of before. The instructor feedback to course work was invaluable. My recommendation to prospective students would be they should expect to immerse themselves fully in order to gain the greatest benefit from the course.
- Because research isn't done in a vacuum, we reach out to sources such as literature and people, it's also valuable to consider one's self a source. The process, as I'm seeing it, gives multiple interesting angles on one's stages of research methods. The methods are designed to be sustainable, in that they are colored by and responsive to the student researcher's assessment of their needs and tendencies. The outline of each stage is thoughtfully linked to the next so that one can see themselves developing along with their material, and take the steps with them in

future practice. The reflective aspect also allows room for significant revisions of the concept when initial ideas become out of touch with what's really being said because the array of tools (phases) bring to the fore feeling tones, wonderment, desire to understand, need for confirmation, and intrinsic motivators that academia doesn't always value. This could be the defining attributes of "Engagement" but could also be the value that we source from our communities to learn, and what we propose to give back. In this case, "communities" certainly includes the classmates in the progress, growing inter own directions, but together.

- The final synthesis session of this class opened my eyes to how transformative this class can be. Not just me, but many of my classmates mentioned how their views of research have been expanded. It is a course that takes a fair bit of courage and openness, but it really is a class that brings into focus the importance of process. The word "research" carries with it a ton of expectations and baggage, but it's the word "engagement" that I want to highlight. Every time I went through the steps as laid out, I came away with a sense of insight that I would have otherwise likely missed