

CrCrTh 693, Spring 2016, Action Research for Educational, Professional, and Personal Change 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 15 respondents who gave permission for these comments to be shared on the web (out of 16 total received).

- This is a great course. Especially if you are a teacher, I recommend you to take this course. Give this course time to study and work on the project and you will not have a problem. Instructor is excellent and she knows what she do. She take time to give her students comments. I can achieve my goals because of my instructor helped me.
- This course is so many of the things that I love about the CCT program, even though there are times that I am not so sure I love them. It's a class where so much of the learning is happening while you are wrangling with your project, and at the end, while it might be difficult to convey to someone else what exactly you have learned, you will be amazed at how much further along the path you've come, and how much bigger, broader, and deeper that path goes than you first expected. This course deepened my appreciation for process over production.
- This course ahs helped develop my knowledge and skills in taking action and being intimately involved with my research. It has turned around my thinking to allow support and see the need and usefulness of constituency building. Evaluation has also become a key factor. It is important to make reflections and evaluate the effect of changes made. This process is cyclical in nature and is a life long process.
- In my opinion, this course needs to be further developed quickly before it is offered the next time. The concepts are too subjective for students to get a sense that they are progressing from step to step in their projects. It is like climbing a ladder with rungs that are made of duct tape...sometimes the tape holds, but often it breaks. I think that the rungs need to be made out of stronger wood that allows us to know that once I get to that step it is secure and that I can move on to the next step. I can't get to the top fearful that all the work I did before is useless because I have just fallen again down to rung #1. The feedback needs to be more directive and not just lots of questions, suggestions, and ideas. And I think some sort of rubric system will help evaluate me better...so maybe a rubric(s) will be the "rungs" of the ladder. And while I know Peter's intention of not having evaluation (rubric?) be a part of this class, I think that since the material is so frustrating, one way to make it less frustrating is to have these rubrics so that we don't fall into a place where we become so discouraged that we stop learning. Additionally, some of the time spent in live meetings could have been MUCH MUCH better used in explaining more of the ways to successfully write my plan. For example, showing how

some successful plans were worded and what made them successful. Some of the exercises and weeks were wastes of time and we did exercises that had little to no bearing on the goals of this course. Finally, I think the buddy system was OK...but not great. Some of the feedback received by my buddy had no clear connection to anything I was doing. That is, I got a sense that he/she did not feel comfortable enough to make meaningful statements partly because he/she was just as confused about the parts of the action plan as I was! Finally, while I think Rhoda is a fine and caring and fun person, I don't think she was as effective as she could of been in providing more concrete direction on what I was doing wrong and right.

- Overall this course was both challenging and rewarding. Throughout the course, I learned to really assess and evaluate my own thinking and assumptions and to consider alternative ways of thinking. The tools and techniques learned throughout the course will help tremendously as we each go about trying to effect change in our personal and professional lives. Because this is a process to implement change, it provides steps to follow helping you to work your way through a complex problem and inquire into it in more depth. Working your way through that kind of in-depth assessment can be fascinating and frustrating. The course is very busy with a heavy workload and requires vigilance in completing assignments in order to keep up the pace. The Action Research process depends upon iteration and revision; while this can be frustrating and tedious at times, it is also an invaluable part of the process and is likely where you will see drastic changes in your thinking. Rely upon your buddy, peers and professor as sounding boards when you feel stuck or need another perspective. They ultimately will be some of the greatest assets you'll have in this course and really highlight how important it is to have the support of a constituency when trying to implement change either professionally or personally.