

Instructor Evaluations – Democracy: Philosophy, Politics and Power (Summer 2011-2013) - Student Comments.

This document collates student comments from all three years that I have taught at Summer@Brown – Brown's summer school for high school students. Quantitative response data for these classes is included elsewhere in my teaching portfolio.

2011

What aspects of the course did you like best? What did you like least?

'I enjoyed debating different aspects of the material. The class was much more theoretical than I thought it would be, there was A LOT of homework as compared to other classes, and a great deal of lecture. It would have been better if there was more variety.'

'The class was extremely interesting and engaging. it was also quite relaxed yet had alot of energy. i enjoyed it completely and feel it was also very challenging and advanced. one thing i did not enjoy was the amount of work received, although it seemed to be too much, it was bearable and gave me a taste of what college would be like.'

'I like the class set-up, although the class ended up being something I wasn't expecting, thus leading to my disappointment.'

'Loved exploring the practical application of political philosophy through writing and class discussions. Think that this aspect could have been emphasized more, even if we had to do less readings.'

'I found the in class discussion was interesting. However, i found the workload unreasonable and found the lectures to be very boring.'

'I liked the class discussions and debates the best. I felt that this was how I got the most out of this course. I did not like the amount of homework though, it felt like we were cramming a 1 year course into 2 weeks. I felt it didn't really give us a chance to learn, instead making us worry about 50 pages of reading that were quite difficult to understand. '

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What about the instructor(s) did you like best? What did you like least?

'I mostly enjoyed debating with him, and having discussions that sometimes extended for a few minutes even outside class. As stated before, I was less fond of the sheer amount of lecture and homework.'

'Well i actually like our instructor completely. he was young, down to earth and open to all different opinions. he was also careful to explain things carefully in class. I liked that he was student as well, but disliked the fact that he hadn't ever taught a class before this.'

'Great that instructor was able to provide prompt feedback and was very approachable.'

'The instructor was likeable and very knowledgeable. However, he spent too much time talking and assigned too much homework. I would have preferred a more interactive class environment.'

'I liked that he went through things properly and made sure that everybody understood, even if that meant explaining extensively. I don't really have any complaints except for the amount of homework assigned since it was quite difficult and dense.'

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2012

What aspects of the course did you like best? What did you like least?

'Some of the readings were interesting, though some weren't. What bothered me about this course was that I didn't feel like the teachers were actually teaching me anything- like we discussed readings a bit and they led us to think about stuff that way, but there wasn't any real teaching other than what came from the readings. I wish we had been taught more of the history rather than just going over readings.'

'I liked the work outside of class, but the class discussions themselves were very long, and not always stimulating. It's biased of me to say that though, since philosophy and politics aren't the areas that I am interested in studying.'

'I liked how we analyzed abstract ideas in class (Cosmopolitanism, Critique, Utopia) and then applied these concepts to our personal ideas and current relevant issues.'

'I loved the structure of the course. It was extremely organized and clear what exactly the teacher demanded of me. The material itself is very fascinating. I find that politics is a very important topic

that teenagers should become informed about. You should definitely keep this class for the summers to come.’

‘The best parts of the class were the heated discussions and debates. The worst parts were some of the reading.’

‘What I liked best was when we were discussing the ideas of a utopia. What I liked least was the topic assignments.’

‘I liked discussions and debating about current events
-I disliked talking about critique and utopias.’

‘I loved the fact that we did not have any tests or quizzes, but rather had a very long discussion throughout the class. The discussions were fascinating, but sometimes they often led to nowhere and it grew to be frustrating. I did enjoy what we were talking about, but for a class that is supposed to be about democracy, we did not talk much about democracy. Still, I enjoyed discussing utopian visions and applying them to political situations, and I thoroughly loved the final project. But to be honest, we should have had a stronger definition of what politics are, because I think there were almost too many interpretations of it.’

‘I liked the debates on the issues
I wasn't a fan of the theoretical reading (yet I understood they were necessary)’

‘I enjoyed the discussions I had with my classmates and appreciated the variety of perspectives and backgrounds displayed. My main criticism is that our final project assignment was very unclear until the middle of our last week, and I would've wanted to understand what it would be earlier on.’

What about the instructor did you like best? What did you like least?

‘He didn't teach much, just went over the readings (see previous note).’

‘My instructor was very respectful and friendly, asked us to analyze our points of view very carefully as well. However, I don't think he'd had much experience teaching, since it should be obvious that sitting around and talking for 3 hours bores most students.’

‘Tim and Coleman were exceptional. It was truly an honor to be instructed by them. Although the work was conceptual and demanding, they kept us engaged and interested with discussions and readings.’

'I really enjoyed how easy it was to connect with Tim. I also thought he was very willing to answer any and all of our questions. I think he may have thought we knew more about political philosophy than we actually did initially.'

'My professor was extremely well informed. Not only was he clearly a very smart man but he taught the material in a clear, concise manner. I only wished he didn't assume the amount of information we knew outside of the course. It would have helped if he went down a level and truly taught us the material rather than lecture us. Other than that, he was very interesting and I truly enjoyed the structure and organization of this class.'

'The instructor was very clear, knowledgeable, and able to bring the best out of the students. That said the instructor lacked time management.'

'What I liked best about the instructor was our discussions. What I liked least was his disorganization of the final project.'

'-Very well spoken and appeared to be very educated about the topic. -Least- The course was not what I expected it to be'

'I think the instructor just has to be a bit more eloquent in his speech and know what he is trying to get across. I thought he had a wonderful sense of humour and he was obviously very bright, I just think if he were a bit more precise and had set goals the class would have been better.'

'I liked his engagement with the class I disliked how he was a bit unclear with the homework assignment at times'

'I liked how approachable Tim was and how he brought to light perspectives that were new to me. I think he could have been better at cutting off our discussions (which became rather long and protracted, as everyone wanted to say just one last thing ad infinitum).'

2013

What aspects of the course did you like best? What did you like least?

'I really enjoyed the discussions, the arguments we had, specifically when they were grounded in the real world. What I liked least were the more metaphysical discussions that seemed too abstract to completely grasp.'

'I really liked that we were able to do everything online (no bought textbook) and that the class was so small, which encouraged group discussion. I didn't like that it was all reading based and that sometimes we would see in class what we read two nights before. I felt that there wasn't enough time.'

'I liked debating political issues, I did not like the readings we did because I did not find them very intellectually stimulating, but very repetitive.'

'I liked the current events discussions that were framed by philosophical ideas, and the classes where we only discussed the readings were my least favorite.'

'The open discussions were significant and they cover both descriptions because they were distracting(which was bad) but widened my view nonetheless.'

'i loved the class discussions and debates
i didnt like the lectures as much'

What about the instructor did you like best? What did you like least?

'I liked how independent he sounded - especially considering the controversial nature of the course. Never took sides or imposed his views, but encouraged us to develop our own. There was nothing I didn't really like except the occasional feeling of being picked on.'

'What I liked the most was that he was very relaxed in his way of teaching. He took it seriously without being overly strict, we were expected to act like adults. He is a bit distracted, so maybe it would be better if he were more organized.'

'I liked how we was not afraid to share his opinions, and he gave the class new perspectives on things. However, he could have included more discussion and debate into the class.'

'His easy going attitude in class and the way he facilitated conversation on interesting topics. My least favorite part about the professor was how he would never stop discussing the readings even though none of us understood so a few classes, in my opinion, were lost due to that.'

'Love the fact that he was laid back. Least? Sometimes lost in his questions.'

'i liked that he talked about subjects openly and knew a lot of interesting facts
i didnt really like all the lecturing he gave'