

TA Evaluations – Introduction to Political Philosophy (PHIL 0080) – Fall 2010

This document collates and transcribes student comments from the above class. They are grouped according to the questions on the student response form and minimally edited for clarity. Scans of the original forms can be found elsewhere in my teaching portfolio.

- 1. Section Meetings:** Please comment on your section. How much class participation did your section leader encourage? What was the quality of the discussion? How well did your section leader command the subject matter? How valuable did you find section? How often did you attend?

‘He did a good job of leading conversation in fruitful directions while encouraging students to demonstrate their knowledge of the material and voicing their objections. The discussion was great for better understanding material and Tim knew the subject matter very well. I attended section each week.’

‘I attended every week. Tim was on point every week with the material. He allowed students some flexibility in what topics to address and then led a comprehensive and interactive discussion. Section was very helpful.

‘The section leader encouraged participation, however it sometimes felt like the majority of the class wasn’t totally engaged, and conversation was relatively dull. The section leader knew the material well, but the flow of the class seemed very stop and start (attended 90% of sections).’

‘He was good at encouraging participation, the class didn’t always get that into discussions though. He obviously had a good grasp of the material, but sometimes I couldn’t tell what point he was getting at when he was playing devil’s advocate.’

‘Tim was great w/examples and talking through abstract concepts...definitely helped, esp. in thinking about how to develop ideas in our papers. Attended all but 1 section. He encouraged participation and he handled it well when people hesitant to get involve in conversation either by randomly calling on people or rephrasing a Q.

‘Encouraged but did not force participation. Quality of discussion was good. Very good command of subject matter. Attended section 90% of time – was very helpful.’

‘Tim managed to keep topics running throughout the sections, but there was not quite enough class participation. Section was very helpful in reinforcing ideas.’

‘a) Lots. b) good – answered questions and gave clarity to confusing topics. c) well – had very few instances where he genuinely did not know how to answer. d) valuable. e) 100% of the time.’

‘Encouraged sufficient class participation, chance to ask questions etc. Quality of discussion was good overall, some explanations were a little vague. Sections were helpful in a way. I tried to attend every section.’

‘Section was probably my favorite part of the course. Discussion was fun and informative and participation was encouraged. I attended ~90% of the time. I would say that section was extremely valuable.’

‘Our section was very small, so each person was given the chance to speak and encouraged to participate (but not forced to). The discussion often successfully dealt with the complexities of the topics but sometimes went for too long and became almost pedantic. The TA knew the subject matter well and helped to review/clarify ideas, but I wish there had been more opportunity for criticism/creative thinking rather just review. I went to all but two sections.’

‘Encouraged participation well, asked questions. Good discussion, helpful. Asked what we wanted to discuss before launching into overviews. Attended always – knowledgeable teacher.’

‘Tim encouraged lots of participation, but not many people spoke up, possibly because section always felt like review.’

‘Encouraged discussion but limited to answering clear-cut questions found in notes. Useful for clarifying arguments of lectures but not for creative or critical thinking.’

‘I attended every section but I did not find them particularly useful, because I don’t think any of us actually ever went to class.’

‘Section was interesting and a loose discussion. The TA encouraged participation and led quality discussions. He has a strong sense of the subject and conducted the conversations well. I attended almost every section.’

‘There was a decent amount of class participation, not much discussion because other students didn’t really make substantive points. Section leader knew the material pretty well, I didn’t find section very valuable ever though I went every week.’

2. Grading: How helpful did you find the comments on your papers? Any other comments on grading

‘The comments were pretty helpful.’

‘Comments on the first paper were helpful. We’ll see about the second one.’

‘Pretty helpful, but took too long to get the second paper back.’

‘Helpful! Wish I had sent him my first draft instead of the writing fellow.’

Tim Syme – Teaching Portfolio

‘Comments were very helpful.’

‘We have only gotten 1 paper back so far. Based on that one paper, comments/suggestions could have been slightly more rigorous/critical.’

‘Comments on the paper were somewhat helpful. TA was also approachable outside of section to go over the paper – very helpful.’

‘They were relatively helpful.’

‘The comments on the papers were helpful and extensive and the grading was good.’

‘Very helpful, concise and clear about what worked/didn’t work.’

‘Very helpful – lots of comments = lots of areas to change.’

‘Useful. Solid.’

‘It took a long time to for graded papers to be returned, but other than that, I have no complaints or comments about the quality of the written comments.’

‘Paper grading was fair with good comments.’

‘Comments were not that helpful, only received one paper back so far. Not really sure how papers are graded. Would have appreciated them returned in a more timely fashion.’

3. Office Hours: How accessible was your TA? Did you utilize office hours, or make other arrangements to speak individually with your TA?

‘I did not utilize office hours but he did seem fairly accessible and willing to meet w/us if we had questions.’

‘I did not attend office hours but Tim was always available via email.’

‘Only every tried to email and he responded promptly’

‘He was easily accessible, and though I didn’t utilize office hours frequently, I did speak with him extensively after class.’

‘Only every tried to email and he responded promptly.’

‘TA was very accessible.’

‘Tried to. Too much work on my part, but the TA was available.’

‘Accessible by email. I never went to office hours.’

Tim Syme – Teaching Portfolio

Not always very accessible, but he tried – were always able to find a time.’

‘He was accessible but I did not often choose to meet with him.’

‘He was fairly accessible even though I never actually made us of his office hours.’

‘He was accessible for meetings outside of class via email.’

‘Somewhat accessible. Didn’t see him outside section.’

4. Other Comments:

‘Tim did not seem particularly invested in this section, even though he is clearly a very intelligent and friendly guy.’

‘Great TA.’