

Note: lettered responses represent the same individual across the questions, so that all “a)” responses come from the same person, and so on.

1. Start with an evaluation of yourself. What were your personal goals in taking this course? Did you achieve them? How would you have proceeded differently if you were doing this course again? What have been your major personal obstacles to learning more from this course?

- a) My personal goals were to increase my sufficiency in critical thinking skills. I did achieve my goal of improving my critical thinking skills but my goals broaden as well to include ongoing learning and developing as a critical thinker. I don't think I would you have proceeded much differently if I was doing the course again. My own personal obstacle was likely balancing different life pressures (time), had I even more time to focus on the course I would have learned more. That said, I don't feel like it was a great impediment.
- b) This being my first course in the program, I wasn't sure what to expect. I was drawn to it for it's uniqueness, but wasn't sure if I would struggle relating to other students in various professionals/skills. My main goal was to learn something and I gained so much knowledge from the unique learning methods and tools. A lot was learned through experience and just dialogue with peers. My biggest obstacle was the time of the course. It was very difficult to arrange my work schedule to be online each week. At first I tried to take the course completely asynchronously, but really felt like I was missing something by not engaging in the discussions and group work. Once I was able to make the needed adjustments, I felt like I had a much better learning experience.
- c) I wanted to enhance my abilities in education leadership. I feel like I have grown a lot especially in the area of understanding and applying critical thinking. I probably would take the course at a different time-I started a new job at the same time and found it hard to adjust to both at the same time. My obstacles have been not enough time to dedicate to the course, juggling more than one responsibility, fitting into a new job and all the dynamics there and I think all of these prevented me from showing my true potential-at times my mind and voice were clouded.
- d) To improve in my critical thinking. I did improve. To do it again I would be better at working the technology and knowing what needed to be done. I did have trouble knowing what needed to be done.
- e) This course is literally required, so that goal has been accomplished. That is not to say that is was not useful and beneficial. Absolutely so! What I resisted and appreciated at the same time was the independence of collaborative exploration. It gave me the opportunity to explore an area of personal interest with the support of colleagues and the professor.
- f) My personal goals were to learn more about critical thinking, to be able to evaluate my own skill as a critical thinker, identify ways to improve my thinking, and find ways to help others become better critical thinkers. I do feel I have achieved these goals though I've also come to see how broad a subject it is. This semester has provided me with a starting point with a great deal of continued work ahead of me. If I were taking the course again I would spend some time considering the three CE exercises together to try and determine how I might proceed from one to the next to make it a more cohesive project. I don't suggest combining into one large effort, I liked having it split into components but I think having a broader picture in the beginning might have helped. My personal obstacles to learning more were 1. staying organized between all of the different activities and assignments, 2. learning to see how the activities aimed towards teachers/teaching could be relevant to someone outside of academia, and 3. becoming comfortable with the uncertainty and ambiguity necessary to the process.

1. Self-evaluation (continued). What have you learned about what you have to do to make a course stimulating and productive (with respect to the format of this course: face-to-face, online, hybrid)?

- a) With respect to indirect learning, I am finding I have to 'engage' with the material in a way that is personally/professional meaningful. I find the hybrid (online but face to face) medium great for learning and specifically for learning from others.
- b) Need to be present. And not just PHYSICALLY there, but ready to engage, think, reflect, and active.
- c) You have to show up and participate.
- d) I learned to focus on the process and not get distracted by my project topic.
- e) I'm old fashioned and like the face to face, but I have to say this format was a good substitute (and a very convenient alternative!) The small class size afforded many opportunities to interact with my classmates and the instructor. The initial reluctance soon disappeared when I discovered that the format was quite personal and interactive.
- f) Because this was an online course, I found using the wiki to share information to be really helpful and having the weekly online interaction really helped to form a more cohesive class and make the dialogue more interesting. The form of dialogue we used in the class also helped to make it a comfortable place to explore topics and talk about challenges helping me to feel more connected to the class.

2. General Evaluation of course. What was special about this course (+positive and/or -negative)? How did the course meet or not meet your expectations? In what ways do you think this course could be improved?

- a) What was special was the fact the material could be applied to so many domains of life. That integration seemed to be stressed in the course. It makes for the wanting and willingness to change. The course exceeded my expectations. I'm not sure at this time how it should be improved but learned through the course that everything can improve.
- b) Being one that always take online courses that do not meet weekly, I was hesitant when I found out the way this course would be done. After the fear of the webcam and getting used to the interactive classroom again, I feel like this could not be a course taught in the standard online format as we learned so much from each other.
- c) The course has shown me the importance of critical thinking and revealed how one sided my thinking has been. I was very unsure about the course going in so I have enjoyed learning about the development of critical thinking and recognizing how to apply it to every day life. I did however at times feel disconnected during some of the assignments that I don't believe were as clear as they could be. I also felt that we should be allowed to have more dialogue about what we were experiencing during the course.
- d) I liked that there were no grades to think about. The course was about what I expected but I think there could be more clarity in the instructions.
- e) The participants were special - each with a unique perspective and VERY focused and earnest.
- f) I thought that the environment cultivated in this class was well done as it was a very comfortable space to have dialogue without pressure or fear of making mistakes. Having the focus taken away from grades and focusing more on the learning also helped to create that space to explore and experiment without fear of failure. I thought the free-writing was a great tool to help get settled into the week's discussion while also acknowledging that people may have competing priorities that they need to balance. Initially I found it challenging to move from the first half of the class directed towards working on the CE to the activity portion but after a few classes it became more routine and not quite so distracting to switch gears. At times it felt that the activities were rushed and so we might not have gotten all we could have from those exercises. Lastly, the structure of the syllabus is REALLY confusing at first. There is a ton of great information within it but it is really challenging initially to keep track of what is due when, etc. It just seems harder than it needs to be. But after a couple of weeks it became much easier to manage.

2. General evaluation (continued). In what ways did your attitude to doing the course change through the semester? How does it compare with other graduate courses? What would be your overall recommendation to prospective students?

- a) There was so ebb and flow in the energy I had to put towards the course but that was mainly based on what was and wasn't going in my life. I have only done a few other graduate courses so the only contrast I would make is in the medium. I think I have a harder time learning in compressed courses and courses that are fully online, with no face to face hangout. My recommendation to prospective students would be to take the course and let yourself "sink into it".
- b) This is great course to start the program with! Great foundation and introduction to the program. I came into the course not knowing what to expect and thinking I was already a critical thinker. I leave understanding that this will always be a work in progress.
- c) I was a bit lost at first but then I found I started to connect after the weekly classes. I did not enjoy the CEs-I felt the first one and the overall process of a CE could have been better explained. I was not happy with my writing throughout this course and that is partly because I was severely distracted but also didn't feel I had the support of classroom discussion about readings and assignments. I think the course would benefit from incorporating more dialogue and feedback into the weekly sessions. I had a very different experience from my previous courses-both style of class and approach. I like the weekly meetings but I didn't feel that we had enough time to discuss the work. I would tell prospective students that the course will bring them to realize that we need to change how we think and act in order to improve this world and it is a very enlightening process.
- d) As I became more comfortable with the format I feel I did better. Other classes are more structured. The format can be confusing but it is worth it.
- e) The independence of the course can be intimidating at first - you do most of the work on your own (with support from the instructor and colleagues). There isn't the traditional feedback like grades and progress reports. Self-evaluation is emphasized. Most people are uncomfortable with that, at least at first, but it is essential to being a critical thinker yourself. So you have to get comfortable with it. See the positive side of it - the efficacy of it.
- f) Initially I felt a lot of stress due to the experimental format and having so many activities with such a confusing syllabus. But as the course progressed, I found myself growing a lot more comfortable with the process and realizing that it's ok to not have all the answers right away. Other graduate courses I've had were a lot more structured and direct. While there is some benefit to that as less time was spent shuffling things around and trying to figure out what to do when, in the end I found this indirect method of learning to be very enjoyable and I learned a lot. I found that the dialogue we had in class helped to create a very close knit group and I learned a lot from both the professor and my other classmates. I would definitely recommend the course to prospective students and just offer them the advice to spend some time early on to create a system to track the work and then just try to enjoy the process.

3. Evaluation in relation to the course description. Read the course description/goals below. Comment on how well the goals expressed in the syllabus were met. Make general and specific suggestions about how these could be better met.

By the end of the semester, you will have:

a set of tools, experiences, activities, knowledge of publications, and an enhanced disposition to self-directed lifelong inquiry around:

** your own critical thinking, i.e., scrutinizing the assumptions, reasoning, and evidence brought to bear on an issue--by others and by yourself, where such scrutiny is enhanced by placing ideas and practices in tension with alternatives; and*

** what is needed to teach or guide others re: the above in ways that might depart markedly from your previous schooling and experience.*

a critical understanding of collaborative explorations and allied approaches to project--based learning in relation to participants re--engaging with themselves as avid learners and inquirers.

- a) I would say more than most courses, this course succeeded in the above goals.
- b) Goals were expressed clearly and met.

- c) I definitely think the goals outlined in the course description except for a critical understanding of collaborative explorations were met. I think more discussion about collaborative explorations would have been helpful.
- d) I feel that this adequately describes the class.
- e) I feel confident that I can be a midwife in bringing critical thinkers into the world.
- f) I think the goals were well met though I was skeptical they would be at the beginning. Because the course does not feel as structured as others I've taken, I did find a bit of learning curve before I felt comfortable with what we were doing and what I was learning from it. But that's to be expected (I've now learned) from this method of indirect teaching. Now that it's over, and having finished the final CE which pulls the information together, I do feel that I have a good foundation of critical thinking and I've found the experience to be very valuable.

4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs). Building on your comments from Qs 1-3, 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.

- a) The course was a surprise. I went into it expecting to 'get' critical thinking skills. What I realized was that critical thinking is much broader and more complex than just 'getting' skills. It opened my eyes to this broader context and also taught me the importance of being able to think critically in a variety of the different domains of life and daily living.
- b) This course is truly what you make of it. If taken seriously, it can be a truly rewarding learning experience. The content can be applied to all professions and areas of life and that course did not 'sway' towards a specific field. The small group size allows for deeper discussion and real learning. The 'openness' of the Creative Explorations allows you to explore on topics that YOU are interested in knowing more about and things that you have questions on, versus being told exactly what to write about. Having a variety of CE's to read on the community page is such an amazing resource.
- c) This is a thought provoking and eye-opening course where you learn how to stretch your mind to think and appreciate beyond what you think is justified. You will learn how important a skill this is for the well being of not only yourself but of others and in general, the survival of the world. This comes from the readings and class sessions. The assignments are a bit scientific and not easy to relate to or follow. It would be great if more real life examples and experiences were incorporated and there was more dialogue and group feedback about the readings and assignments. The course will change you.
- d) This is a course on critical thinking that focuses on the practice of the process. There is some time needed to get comfortable with the format but that is not too bad. There are no grades in this class which allows you to think only about what you are doing. One learns to improve through insightful comments from the instructor and other students.
- e) I appreciated the collaborative approach. I appreciated the independence. But I was a little put off by the public nature of the course: most of the classes are recorded, the papers are posted publicly, and the individual comments on papers are shared. In a supportive environment, that is fine; everyone supports each others' efforts. However, I'm not sure about the value of such a public sharing of student work. I know there was an option offered to limit accessibility on the Google space, but there seemed to be an expectation that all students would share their work publicly. I disagree with that premise. I agree that it is a good idea to share the work of other students especially when the effort is so great and the benefit is enormous. So much can be learned from other colleagues. However, I bristle when this is done in a public forum especially when this is the learning process. Not professionals. Not experts.
- f) My personal goals in taking this course were to learn more about critical thinking and how I might further develop it for myself and in others. At the start of the course, I was a bit skeptical as the format was experimental and not as structured as I initially expected. It was a bit difficult to get my bearings

and keep track of what was due when, why we were doing each assignment or activity and what was expected from me. It was initially quite stressful but after realizing that the uncertainty is to be expected and part of the process, it all started to come together throughout the semester. The course is designed to support this process with a very supportive professor and classroom experience (despite being online) and with a focus on learning as opposed to a strict focus on grades. The CE exercises provide a great way to learn about and develop your own critical thinking skills while researching topics that are relevant to your own situation. The activities were helpful and even the ones that initially seemed more relevant to teachers (i.e. lesson/activity planning) were easily adaptable to non-academic situations. Meeting online each week and the format of dialogue used in the class helped to create a very cohesive and comfortable environment to explore and learn. I found that I learned a lot from both the professor and my classmates and found the class to be a very rewarding experience. Overall, I enjoyed the course very much and would highly recommend it.

I give permission for my response to Question 4 to be included anonymously in the compilation posted to the CCT wiki (and thus viewable to the public).

- a) Yes
- b) Yes
- c) Yes
- d) Yes
- e) No
- f) Yes

Using the scale below, overall, how would you evaluate this course?

1. Very Poor 2. Poor 3. Average 4. Good 5. Excellent

- a) 5
- b) 5
- c) 5
- d) 4
- e) 4
- f) 5

Using the scale below, overall, how would you evaluate this instructor?

1. Very Poor 2. Poor 3. Average 4. Good 5. Excellent

- a) 5
- b) 5
- c) 3
- d) 5
- e) 4
- f) 5