

**CrCrTh 645/Bio 545, Fall 2012**

**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.**

How would you like to take a course that will interest your scientific interests and allow you to equate it with society today? Well, this is the one but be prepared for creating your own opinions on a wide variety of issues and reading numerous articles/essays that are somewhat outdated because research on critical thinking and the world of science is sorely lacking. This course would give someone the method to expand their personal and academic horizons. One cannot help but notice: even this evaluation is seeking the answers to somewhat "loaded" questions. This course does not need an upgrading but a six hour debate amongst those designing the course to work out any issues and extrapolate a succinct goal.

"Using Biology in Society as our framework"... maybe using this approach might help compose a synthetic statement. But I've run out of time to contribute here today.

This course utilizes a project-based learning model that includes numerous themes. The strength of this course is the ability to build collaboration within class, research skills and motivates students to learn through topics of their interest. Since it is project based, students can learn at their own pace. The weaknesses of this course could possibly be the minor technological malfunction(s) that could build confusion among learners. Overall, this is a course that also presented different perspectives in biology and society. The powerful learning model in project based model is also being contrasted with one week's theme of case based learning model. Both models can be used to differentiate learning styles. This course empowers students' learning and allows students to take their thinking skills to a higher level. This is a great class!

The course was difficult to comprehend at first. I wasn't sure where we were headed as a class and where I was headed as an individual. I struggle with the vagueness of the directions, but in the end I appreciated the challenge. I believe this course will make me a better educator and coach. Be prepared for a ride.

Overall, I think this course accomplished what it set out to do- engage graduate level students from a variety of backgrounds in thoughtful discussion about science and society. As a teacher, this course really satisfied my desire for a content based course that was directly and immediately applicable to my job as an educator. Even though I took this course as a biology content course to satisfy requirements for my master's degree, it also enriched my thinking about teaching and learning. I enjoyed the structure of the course and felt a true shift in my attitude and abilities from the first few weeks to now. This growth and development of my own thinking is what I value most about my experience in this course. Thanks Peter!

This course is helpful for any students who wish to learn how to think differently. You will work hard and initially face dead-ends and some frustrations, but by overcoming those initial hiccups, you will leave this class with a portfolio of work of which you can be very proud. The

applications this course has for the real-world are limitless. As a teacher, researcher, business-person etc., the ability to critically and creatively think is invaluable. Personally, I am very glad I took this course at the beginning of my graduate career, but it would be applicable at any time. I am just happy that I was exposed to a variety of methods of learning and thinking about (not to mention approaching) problems that I will now be able to utilize throughout my graduate studies and further on.

I signed up for the course thinking I was going to sit in a comfy chair, reading comfy materials and writing comfy papers on them. I thought I knew what was expected of me and it would make my reacquaintance with school easy. I was half right, in that it was a subject I would feel more comfortable with, but wrong in thinking the course would be "comfortable." Engagement doesn't let you hide behind the passive student mask and say nothing. And writing isn't just a practice of spitting back the content of assigned readings-- you had to apply them to something would make them meaningful in your area(s) of interest. The expected result was that the course took me places I didn't expect and it made me both excited to do more and helped me to realize and focus on particular topics that I can connect with.

The course is a challenging and interesting investigation into Biology and Society. The class covered a wide range of topics in Biology and how they connect to society. I appreciate the meandering style of some of the learning but also sometimes longed for a focus or a narrowing on one topic. As the course proceeded I felt more comfortable with the style of instruction and the places that my thinking went to because of the approach of the course. This environment could be challenging for some who want more structure. But could also be a great experience to change ones schema on education.

Overall I really enjoyed taking the course, especially looking back on it at the last session. I don't know if I would have had the same reaction if you asked me during week 2 or 3. I struggled in the beginning with the class structure (or lack of structure) and didn't understand why I continually was asked for revisions. However it was in this struggle that I learned. This struggle although frustrating at the time was the best part of this class. Without having this tension, I might not have pushed myself as hard so I appreciate that now! It was a great way to get back in the classroom because although it challenged me, it made me realize how much I genuinely enjoy the learning process. It was a class that I enjoyed coming to every week because of its active participation and would recommend it to anyone. Thank you for opening my eyes (and the class') to critical thinking!

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**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?

My personal goal is always to expand my knowledge base and to understand how others think. I certainly did but the full set of goals was somewhat blocked by guidance and instructions that were not of the norm.

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**1. Self-evaluation (continued)**

What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?

Online courses cannot be stimulating or effective since the personal aspect of being able to even see someone facial expressions is present. No feeling of "partnership" is present.

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**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?

The course ultimately met my expectations and even went further and an initial negative turned in to a strong positive.

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**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?

My attitude went from exasperation to a feeling of success. It was probably the first time I felt that the course was the enemy and I had to beat it.

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**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.

*-Critical thinking about the diverse influences shaping the life sciences. Topics include evolution and natural selection; heredity, development and genetic determinism; biotechnology and reproductive interventions. We interpret episodes in science, past and present, in light of scientists' historical location, economic and political interests, use of language, and ideas about causality and responsibility.*

*-You address the course material on a number of levels: as an opportunity to learn the science and approaches to interpreting science; as models for working as an educator--construed broadly as stimulating greater citizen involvement in scientific debates; and as a basis for discussions about practices and philosophies of education and lifelong, collaborative learning.*

*-A semester-long "learning/engaging" project in an area of the life sciences in their social context about which you are interested in engaging others in learning and critical thinking. Each week you adopt or adapt the themes and activities from the previous session to apply to this area.*

Course description-excellent Syllabus--A bit convoluted and complex--could have simply stated assignments with a small blurb of explanation.

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**4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs)**

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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.**

How would you like to take a course that will interest your scientific interests and allow you to equate it with society today? Well, this is the one but be prepared for creating your own opinions on a wide variety of issues and reading numerous articles/essays that are somewhat outdated because research on critical thinking and the world of science is sorely lacking. This course would give someone the method to expand their personal and academic horizons. One cannot help but notice: even this evaluation is seeking the answers to somewhat "loaded" questions. This course does not need an upgrading but a six hour debate amongst those designing the course to work out any issues and extrapolate a succinct goal.

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**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?

Personal goals included becoming more confident in my research abilities and finding ways to support translation and the process of critical & creative thinking in my workplace. If I were doing this class again, I might seek some sort of dialogue outside of class hours to talk with classmates... something I miss from being at a distance. Personal obstacles included new responsibilities and place of employment while taking class this semester... balancing them and being in the here and now.

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**1. Self-evaluation (continued)**

What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?

I need to develop a support network outside of the online environment that relates to the concepts of critical and creative thinking... something local where I can interact with people face to face. I also need to make time to "let go" of producing... to focus more on the here and now of letting thoughts surface when they need to and recognizing them.

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**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?

As with all the cct courses... there is genuine interest and support from students and faculty in your personal development. I thought I would develop more tools for my "toolbox" when in reality we need to make tools presented our own before we can apply them.

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**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?

I was frustrated by the more focused path than PBL experiences as I learn more about the underlying thoughts with exploration of the tributaries of the river. But I also appreciate that this focus probably introduced me to more content than a true PBL course. For future students, I can only say, stay with it, allow it to be a journey and allow it to be personal.

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The semester-long project focus need not be a final determination of your thinking on learning/engaging people... The idea of installments could be flushed out with a better explanation of how they might fit into a project; not that this needs to be a prescription of how to do this, but a vision of what it is you hope for.

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#### **4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs)**

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"Using Biology in Society as our framework" ... maybe using this approach might help compose a synthetic statement. But I've run out of time to contribute here today.

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**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?**

I will need to take this class for my M.Ed. In science education. Yes, I achieve the goal. I will relax more at the beginning of the course. Time is an obstacle because I feel learning needs time.

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**1. Self-evaluation (continued)**

**What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?**

I feel that one needs to be technological savvy at a certain extent to not struggle with an online course.

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**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?**

This course opened my eyes to see myself and my learning differently. The project based learning has helped me build on knowledge that is related to both my work and my personal interest. I suggest a brief introduction about where to find all the online components will be helpful. There is a list on the wiki homepage but just a brief overview during first class will help learners know the set-up of the wiki quicker.

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**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?**

I feel confused at the beginning of this course and in the end I felt that I learned so much. This is by far one of the best classes that I took for my M.Ed. Program. My recommendation to prospective students is take some time to navigate the wiki during the first week of this class.

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**3. Evaluation in relation to the course description**

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**Comment on how well the goals expressed in the syllabus were met.**

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*-A semester-long "learning/engaging" project in an area of the life sciences in their social context about which you are interested in engaging others in learning and critical thinking. Each week you adopt or adapt the themes and activities from the previous session to apply to this area.*

In fact, the course description matches all the activities and assignments that I completed in this course. This course is truly a journey of learning at a more complex level!

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**4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs)**

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**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.**

This course utilizes a project-based learning model that includes numerous themes. The strength of this course is the ability to build collaboration within class, research skills and motivates students to learn through topics of their interest. Since it is project based, students can learn at their own pace. The weaknesses of this course could possibly be the minor technological malfunction(s) that could build confusion among learners. Overall, this is a course that also presented different perspectives in biology and society. The powerful learning model in project based model is also being contrasted with one week's theme of case based learning model. Both models can be used to differentiate learning styles. This course empowers students' learning and allows students to take their thinking skills to a higher level. This is a great class!



1.

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**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?**

Personal goals - to improve myself as an educator as well as learn more about myself. I did achieve them. I would dedicate a daily specific time to work on assignments My personal hectic schedule made it hard some weeks to complete requirements in a timely manner

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**1. Self-evaluation (continued)**

**What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?**

I appreciated the ability to see classmates. As challenging as the technology was at times - I buy in more when I feel as though I am talking to real people and not voices and text messages

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**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?**

The most meaningful part of this course was the ability to follow my own interests and the support I received from classmates. I try not to go into a course with high or low expectations, but I appreciated the challenge the course provided. It stretched me at times when I'm not sure I wanted to be stretched, but like most journeys I was pleased with where I ended up. sitting in front of a computer for 3 hours at a time is pretty long

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**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?**

At first my reaction to revisions was like they were personal attacks. When I began to view them as ways to help me they came much easier. The most challenging graduate course I have taken. I would highly recommend this course to students as long as they understand what they are getting themselves into.

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**3. Evaluation in relation to the course description**

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*-A semester-long "learning/engaging" project in an area of the life sciences in their social context about which you are interested in engaging others in learning and critical thinking. Each week you adopt or adapt the themes and activities from the previous session to apply to this area.*

Each of the goals were met. There was weekly content that needed to be covered then the installments required us to relate them to our semester long project. It was a powerful methodology because we had to stretch some weeks to make relationships. At times I wondered if there was one theme we developed throughout the semester. I don't think there was beyond biology in society.

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#### **4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs)**

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**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.**

The course was difficult to comprehend at first. I wasn't sure where we were headed as a class and where I was headed as an individual. I struggle with the vagueness of the directions, but in the end I appreciated the challenge. I believe this course will make me a better educator and coach. Be prepared for a ride.

1.

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**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?**

My personal goals in this course were to get a fresh outlook on topics in biology and a new perspective in the way I teach these topics. I definitely achieved these goals over the course of the semester. If I was taking this course again, I would not have that initial anxiety of not know the mechanics of the coursework, assignments and grading system. I don't think I would do anything differently, though. My personal obstades were getting pet the initial frustration of having to revise some of my weekly installments. As the course progressed I realized the value of this and began to feel more comfortable with the process.

**1. Self-evaluation (continued)**

**What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?**

I've learned that it is important to contribute to class in a variety of ways: posting on the discussion boards on the wiki, participating in class, and engaging in on going conversations with the professor regarding my assignments.

**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?**

What was special about this course was that it was one of the most relatable and meaningful courses I have taken to far (while working towards my masters in education). Being able to choose my own area of interest in a semester long project, and really have the opportunity to delve deeply into it was very meaningful. What was also unique about this course was that the professor became an online entity mid way through the semester. For the most part this wasn't a problem, but the time difference and being unable to talk to him in person was sometimes challenging. The course did meet my expectations by providing a great environment for learning and discovery.

**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?**

My attitude initially was that I wasn't sure if I was going to like the course. As the semester progressed, I began to feel more comfortable about the learning process and that. Hangs my opinion. In the end, I got a lot out of the course- as both a grad student and a high school teacher. I would definitely recommend this course to another science educator. It had a perfect mixture of science content/discussion and opportunities to "talk shop" with other teachers.

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Overall, I think these goals were met over the semester. I believe there was enough opportunity to look at the topics we discussed each week through the many lenses described above (#2). I don't really have any suggestions for improvement at this time.

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**4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs)**

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**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.**

Overall, I think this course accomplished what it set out to do- engage graduate level students from a variety of backgrounds in thoughtful discussion about science and society. As a teacher, this course really satisfied my desire for a content based course that was directly and immediately applicable to my job as an educator. Even though I took this course as a biology content course to satisfy requirements for my master's degree, it also enriched my thinking about teaching and learning. I enjoyed the structure of the course and felt a true shift in my attitude and abilities from the first few weeks to now. This growth and development of my own thinking is what I value most about my experience in this course. Thanks Peter!

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**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?**

My goals were to become better at thinking critically and asking more questions of what I read/learn. I was hoping to also strengthen my reading and analysis tools and to learn new methods to implement in a classroom. I have made significant steps toward achieving my goals but there is always room for improvement and I have adapted many methods/themes from this class for use in my own classroom. My personal obstacles in learning more from this course were: time management and procrastinating. I was enrolled in several other classes at the same time so I have to divide the time I could give to each class and respective assignments which meant I could not fully devote myself to any one class.

**1. Self-evaluation (continued)**

**What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?**

I have learned that I need to speak more to the other online people in the class and address them more than, or as equally as I address the people in the physical classroom. It was difficult to get to know the online students until later in the year because I did not talk to them as much initially.

**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?**

This course introduced me to an entire new way of thinking about thinking and helped me to come to terms with the idea that there isn't always an answer (something we are conditioned to search for unfortunately). I initially was not sure if I needed to revise assignments that were marked OK, so at the end of the semester I began to do revisions based on information I gained while completing the final projects. This course exceeded my expectations-I thought I would learn how to more critically "judge" work and analyze the "merits" of different texts. Instead, I gained an entirely new way to even approach texts, something that is invaluable. Possibly this course could be improved by granting greater freedom with the installments-I understand we needed to tie them in, but at certain points it was restrictive to do so. Perhaps in future students could write an installment keeping to the theme but also add "alternative pathways" to the installments where students can further develop thoughts that take them away from the main theme but relate to the overall topic.

**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?**

I went from being frustrated and a little confused as to what was required from the course to accepting that uncertainty and beginning to embrace it as a necessary part of the learning and thinking process. Now I am used to feeling a little uncertain with a topic and, if I do not, I wonder if I am too biased. This course was more challenging than my other graduate courses because it was not structured as the teacher being the sole owner of an immense amount of knowledge from which we could humbly draw out the answers to our questions. To prospective students I would say: This course is a lot of work, but it is worth it to learn a new way of thinking about the world. You shouldn't leave this class without having gained a variety of ways to think about and approach problems.

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We touched on all of the goals expressed above. We fulfilled our semester-long project, but I am happy to say this project is something I will continue to think about in the coming months and (hopefully) years. The information I gained will hopefully continue to impact my lesson-planning-particularly in thinking of how each approach forced me to think differently and how I could adapt/apply that thinking to my individual students. A bit more intertwining of topics would be useful too-for instance, maybe every 3 weeks or so we could write an installment that intertwined the themes learned thus far. That might be too much work or too confusing though.

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#### **4. Synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs)**

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This course is helpful for any students who wish to learn how to think differently. You will work hard and initially face dead-ends and some frustrations, but by overcoming those initial hiccups, you will leave this class with a portfolio of work of which you can be very proud. The applications this course has for the real-world are limitless. As a teacher, researcher, business-person etc., the ability to critically and creatively think is invaluable. Personally, I am very glad I took this course at the beginning of my graduate career, but it would be applicable at any time. I am just happy that I was exposed to a variety of methods of learning and thinking about (not to mention approaching) problems that I will now be able to utilize throughout my graduate studies and further on.

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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?

Firstly, one of my goals was to reacquaint myself with school. I have a background in anthro and it made this a course seem friendlier in the sense that it's a topic I'm comfortable with. It worked that way for me and then brought me down a path in ways I didn't expect. But that's a good thing. I wouldn't do things differently, but if there were obstacles, it would be my health, and that's something that can happen to anyone at anytime.

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**1. Self-evaluation (continued)**

What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?

I think how it's done now, with both video and audio, is good. All classes should be this way (except online only courses).

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**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?

The course requires you to change the way you view how classes should be conducted. It's an adjustment but also a good thing most appropriate for graduate level work. The negative, if there was any, is that I don't teach or work anymore. Defining a target audience for my work can be tricky, especially if you are more interested in a general audience.

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**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?

I'd recommend this course to anyone wanting to truly expand their horizons. It's not a course for the weary. Learning and personal growth requires a tolerance for ambiguity, at least for a while. In the end, however, things do come together and you will find you have no regrets taking this course.

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**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.

*-Critical thinking about the diverse influences shaping the life sciences. Topics include evolution and natural selection; heredity, development and genetic determinism; biotechnology and reproductive interventions. We interpret episodes in science, past and present, in light of scientists' historical location, economic and political interests, use of language, and ideas about causality and responsibility.*

*-You address the course material on a number of levels: as an opportunity to learn the science and approaches to interpreting science; as models for working as an educator--construed broadly as stimulating greater citizen involvement in scientific debates; and as a basis for discussions about practices and philosophies of education and lifelong, collaborative learning.*

*-A semester-long "learning/engaging" project in an area of the life sciences in their social context about which you are interested in engaging others in learning and critical thinking. Each week you adopt or adapt the themes and activities from the previous session to apply to this area.*

The description and the execution of the course was well done. I'm not sure at this point if doing anything differently would be necessary.

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**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.**

I signed up for the course thinking I was going to sit in a comfy chair, reading comfy materials and writing comfy papers on them. I thought I knew what was expected of me and it would make my reacquaintance with school easy. I was half right, in that it was a subject I would feel more comfortable with, but wrong in thinking the course would be "comfortable." Engagement doesn't let you hide behind the passive student mask and say nothing. And writing isn't just a practice of spitting back the content of assigned readings-- you had to apply them to something would make them meaningful in your area(s) of interest. The expected result was that the course took me places I didn't expect and it made me both excited to do more and helped me to realize and focus on particular topics that I can connect with.



1.

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**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?**

I took this course hoping to enrich my high school teaching and to be intellectually stimulated. I often tell my students that I like teaching Biology because of its intersections with society. I do not always walk the walk on this idea. Throughout the class I was certainly given many ideas and materials that will change my teaching. I do not think I would proceed differently. I had some growing pains since this was my first true college class in 10 years but overall I think I adjusted. The major personal obstacles related to the work/life balance. In particular this semester was very personally busy in ways that were unavoidable.

**1. Self-evaluation (continued)**

**What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?**

It requires some patience at times.

**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?**

The course lived up to the 'critical and creative thinking' title of the program. I struggled through this but also realized over time that in that struggle I was learning a lot or my thinking was challenged in a different direction. The course met expectations in that we delved into Biology in Society and I found context for me as a professional in the methods of the course. The only major improvement I think could be the technical skype/google+.

**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?**

I developed over the course on the class as I adjusted to the revise and review process. I see them as essential to producing the best work in that moment but also see that almost everything can be viewed as a work in process. I would tell other students to take the class and to embrace the methods.

**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.**

*-Critical thinking about the diverse influences shaping the life sciences. Topics include evolution and natural selection; heredity, development and genetic determinism; biotechnology and reproductive interventions. We interpret episodes in science, past and present, in light of scientists' historical location, economic and political interests, use of language, and ideas about causality and responsibility.*

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*-A semester-long "learning/engaging" project in an area of the life sciences in their social context about which you are interested in engaging others in learning and critical thinking. Each week you adopt or adapt the themes and activities from the previous session to apply to this area.*

I think my experiences in the course closely match the course description. The middle point of the description what achieved but often it seemed it was the less overt component to the work we were doing.

**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.**

The course is a challenging and interesting investigation into Biology and Society. The class covered a wide range of topics in Biology and how they connect to society. I appreciate the meandering style of some of the learning but also sometimes longed for a focus or a narrowing on one topic. As the course proceeded I felt more comfortable with the style of instruction and the places that my thinking went to because of the approach of the course. This environment could be challenging for some who want more structure. But could also be a great experience to change ones schema on education.

1.

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**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?**

My initial intention for taking this class was merely to get back into school, as it had been some time since I was in the classroom. I also wanted to try a different style class, as I am used to the lecture/notes and final tests method of teaching. I hoped to improve upon my thinking skills and not see everything in "black and white." Additionally, I am required to lead meetings and presentations often in my workplace so I wanted to get better at public speaking. Since we essentially "present" in some way during each class, I definitely improved through practice which increased my confidence in it. Without a doubt I improved my thinking, it was a great exercise in pushing myself further especially with the revision comments. A personal obstacle I faced was merely a time management problem. I work full time as many of the other students to and often have to take work home, so it was hard to find the time to get everything done.

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**1. Self-evaluation (continued)**

**What have you learned about what you have to do to make an online course stimulating and productive?**

I think you have to engage the online students more, since it is harder to establish a relationship with them, than people you see face to face. I got to know the people in the class more and sometimes it was hard for the online people to get involved in the conversation since they often used the chat box to say when they wanted to speak which led to a delay. It wasn't as organic. Additionally with the instructor being online it was difficult to always understand the assignment and technology often failed with added to the difficulties.

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**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?**

The course was special in that we got to choose our own project which suited our interests/passions and adapt the themes of each class to OUR project. It was nice because you got to hear about a spectrum of topics and understand more about your fellow classmate. In some classes, I felt the assigned reading wasn't adequately discussed or mentioned. We spent a decent amount of time reading and understanding the text but in class we discussed something completely different. It took me awhile to get used to that. I remember in the beginning with the IVF articles, I spent a long time researching IVF and it was never brought up during the class. It might be nice considering the time students take to read the homework, to spend more time in class discussing it.

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**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?**

During the semester, my approach to learning definitely changed. At the beginning, I spent considerable time on my installments, trying to write the "right" answer in my report. I soon realized with the revision comments I got, that it wasn't a matter of finding the "right" answer it was about thinking critically and understanding different perspectives. Once I was able to shift my thinking, the installments came much more naturally for me and I wasn't googling to find the response. My overall recommendation would be to stick with it and come with an open mind. I had doubts in taking the class at the beginning because I "wasn't a critical thinker and never would be" I thought it was a character trait you had or didn't. I realized through the class it could be something you learned, through practice and discussion. The class discussions really fostered critical thinking. It is definitely important to have a supportive classroom! (which we did)

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**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.**

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The syllabus description pretty accurately described the course. We absolutely discussed topics in light of "scientists' historical location, economic and political interests, use of language, and ideas about causality and responsibility" - for example the beriberi case. I am not sure we discussed stimulating greater citizen involvement unless that was your audience for your installment. It might be good to touch upon how we can get more society involvement or discuss how we could foster critical thinking in the greater society. It seems we all have this linear based learning that we need to get away from.

#### **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.**

Overall I really enjoyed taking the course, especially looking back on it at the last session. I don't know if I would have had the same reaction if you asked me during week 2 or 3. I struggled in the beginning with the class structure (or lack of structure) and didn't understand why I continually was asked for revisions. However it was in this struggle that I learned. This struggle although frustrating at the time was the best part of this class. Without having this tension, I might not have pushed myself as hard so I appreciate that now! It was a great way to get back in the classroom because although it challenged me, it made me realize how much I genuinely enjoy the learning process. It was a class that I enjoyed coming to every week because of its active participation and would recommend it to anyone. Thank you for opening my eyes (and the class') to critical thinking!