

CrCrTh 645, Fall 2014, Biology in Society: Critical Thinking

Synthetic statement

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.

(Below are the Synthetic Statements from the 7 respondents who gave permission for these comments to be shared on the web (out of 9 total).)

- This course is worth taking, not only for his interesting and challenging content but because of its interesting logistics that works well.
- In this course, we had to adopt our topic into social context. We were free choosing the topic. When adopting the theme, we got benefit of regulating our learning process. Using different style of learning tools (blog, peer comment, instructor comment, feedback, presentation, reading, writing..) helped us to think critically. Our instructor was so helpful and his class environment was warm. He was good at his field. If you are interested in relating science and social life to each other, you can prefer this course. You can be familiar both historical/political cases and scientific concepts. Syllabus was so helpful but its language could be clearer. In Biology in Society course, I can formulate my thoughts to make them more logical and clear by reading my comments. To evaluate planning, monitoring, evaluation, feedback to peers, feedback from peers and feedback from teachers is so important at the end of the semester.
- This class was a lot more difficult than expected. It is more than just doing some readings and applying the reading to your topic. Often, I found that I had to really expand my thinking process to even be able to connect the reading to my project. The process does get easier as the semester moves along, but the workload does not decrease. It becomes apparent that you must to research, and there are new writings and revisions every week, which can become overwhelming. When you finally think you are caught up on readings and installments, you are struck with the realization that you still have revisions to do, as well as taking the time to read through other students' installments and comment on those. The readings themselves are also generally on the longer side, or if they are short they are still in depth readings that take some time to go through and truly understand. The best aspect of this course, though, Peter's flexibility and support, and other classmates' support a long the way. Also, it is apparent that Peter cares about every student's work. He writes very thorough comments on all of the work from every student. He is very helpful.
- The course is very challenging. The process of Critical thinking is hard, because you have to think broad. We are used to receive a message and pass this to the writing form. In the critical thinking we have to analyze the information and think in other options before start writing. Also, you have to leave it open to new positions. It is hard to adapt the themes with your subject. Also, to engage the audience. There is a lot of writing and research involved. The syllabus mention that there is about 6.5 hours of work out of class, but I found myself spending much more than 6.5 hours per week, but, to do a good job, you spend almost 10hrs/week with

the required readings for each class. Therefore, I believe it varies significantly among the students. It was a big commitment, and I would have taken less credits for this semester if I knew beforehand. I believe I would have done better in this class- and in other classes too. Although, I would still have taken it again. I actually would like to continue with a new topic.

- I think the most important thing to remember is to find a balance of doing what's good for you ("Do you" as a lot of people would say) but also improving yourself as the class progresses. Don't get stuck, ask for help, and remind yourself that the entire class is a learning process and you're SUPPOSED to be developing and changing, and change isn't a bad thing in this case. Understand the syllabus thoroughly in the beginning of the semester so you can focus on the quality of your work. You really do learn a lot, and you might not realize it until the end of the course.
- This course is teaching about the attitude to doing life science especially when it is closely related to the social issue. Students will see the history of certain big biological events from different perspectives. So they could be motivated to participate into the discussion to deal with the problems in different ways. Besides, during the course, students have plenty of opportunities to rise their questions and develop the answer with the peer students and the instructor. Each one will complete a problem based learning project during the whole semester. They adopt the thinking skills gained from each session to the project to modify their goal on certain topic.
- The process of critical thinking in society course is a personal journey that involves you, your ideas, your previous knowledge and how you will respond to a new way of thinking; of seeing the world. You should expect to evolve and grow if you allow yourself to surrender to the process. There is a saying in old Latin times about "kicking against the goads." It is a rural farming term that describes what a farmer does to oxen. A goad is a stick that the farmer would use to encourage an ox to move. However, the more the ox resisted the more the farmer poked him. In some ways the sooner you can allow yourself to surrender to the process, which include being uncertain about your ideas and yourself, the easier the process will become. Personally, my journey was fruitful and I found myself quite interested in continuing the critical thinking process and questioning "everything" in my life in general, way beyond the end of the class.