Course Evaluation, Critical and Creative Thinking, UMass Boston
CRCRTH 694 Synthesis of Theory and Practice
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Hybrid, 2017 Spring

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 goal was to understand my working process and find connections to the greater world. I did what I set out to do and I would not change anything.
b) My goals were to acquire the skills or the correct processes required to venture into 'grown up' research and reporting of that research. I wanted to be able to have some credibility with my audience.I enjoyed the independence that this course offered and appreciated the step by step nature that the skills were presented. Personal obstacle is always time, I need to carve out dedicated time to complete my goals.
c) I reached my goals. If I had to take this course again, I would started my writing earlier.
d) To complete a project that demonstrated my learnings from the program while also working towards promoting a more collaborative practice amongst my team and individual development for myself. Overall I feel confident that I've been able to do that, but foresee additional focus on my personal development well beyond this program. A personal obstacle was just trying to do a lot in a short amount of time.
e) I have exceeded my goals. I started this course without much reflection build into my project and by the end it had grown beyond what I could've imagined. It is a reflection/introspection of what I want to strive for going forward. I don't think I would've done anything differently because it was a process I needed to go through in order to discover my true project.
f) My main goal for this synthesis course was to take the opportunity to reflect upon my work throughout the program as a whole. I was able to achieve this goal by using this synthesis to reflect on previous coursework and identify themes and concepts which have been the most meaningful or most challenging for me. These themes help me to see what I have learned in the program as well as indicate areas for further work in future. My main personal obstacle, and what I would do differently in future, related to time management as I struggled to balance personal and family obligations with school work.

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) Engaging in the process and working with others made the course stimulating.
b) I really enjoy getting together in the meeting space and developing relationships that are just not possible in the virtual world. However the online format was the only possibility for me to be able to complete a program of studies.
c) I have learned that taking online course is actually convenience.
d) While I've taken both formats, I find that the face-to-face course sections are my preference. I'm able to stay more engaged and focused.
e) I appreciated the interaction between the people online and those in class. Our support groups helped to break down the separation and provide me the support I needed to get through the course.
f) I find that having the face-to-face element of online classes helps me to remain engaged, as well as ensuring that I keep the camera on and minimize external distractions (family, pets, noise, etc.).

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) For me this course worked very well. Of all of my classes I feel that this was my best and most productive.
b) I like the discussion basis for the course and the importance of reflection. That is not to say that it was easy, if fact some of the discussions were difficult and it took a lot of courage to articulate what was going on in your mind.At times I would have liked to have seen some more explicit discussion questions prior to the class, however at the same time this may have tried to direct the discussion too much and in fact stiffled the reflective turn that many discussions took.
c) I knew myself more and I know what I would like to do with my life. That is what I need.
d) We had writing support groups that we met with weekly which were really helpful for getting feedback and even help with clarifying ideas and thoughts for our synthesis. While I was nervous about the synthesis presentations, I found this last round to really be a moving experience. It could have been because of the personal narratives intertwined in the stories, but I think hearing them prompted even further personal reflection for myself after graduation. I didn't have a ton of expectations for the program, but I felt it would be challenging in a good way. I think starting the course a few weeks before the semester was a good transition to the work ahead once the spring semester started.
e) The style of this course is more unique than any other in the program. It allowed me to steer my own learning in a way that help me grow and become an independent learner. It also allowed me share and learn along with others going through the same process as support.
f) I found that the dialogue process used in this course was a really positive aspect. Due to the small class size, and personal nature of the work and reflection, having that period of dialogue with classmates and the professor really helped to make this a cohesive and supportive group to work with. In this way, the course more than met my expectations as a capstone to the overall CCT program.

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) My attitude did not change during the semester. It was what I thought it would be which is a good thing. I recommend that students use this time to to work on ideas that are central to their identity.
b) I think I realized that the course was not about the material I was researching, the course was about who I was, and who I am becoming.
c) I thought this course was going to be a really difficult course but then I learned that I enjoy doing my project. I think that students who take this course should thinking about planing ahead before taking this class.
d) At first I was really focused on getting the paper and presentation completed and less so on the process of learning and reflection that naturally evolved as part of the class. My approach and attitude changed from "getting it done to get the degree", to more of a reflective process for thinking about how I've used what I've learned so far and where do I see it taking me after the program.
e) In the beginning I had a feeling that my project needed to be somewhat finite. Towards the middle after changing my project I felt that it would be more analytical. Now I see that it is a project of reflection that is ongoing and will guide me throughout my career now and in the future.
f) As the course began, my initial attitude was a feeling of energy and excitement to have reached the capstone. As the semester wears on, the energy shifts as the hard work of reflection and being one's own taskmaster set in. Ultimately, though difficult, it was a good litmus test to see how ready I am to carry forward as my own motivator in making change and doing deep reflective work. It compares with other graduate courses in the energy and commitment required but it perhaps differs in the amount of personal responsibility that we must take to move our projects forward. Though the professor is always available for consult, the onus (rightfully) is on the student to do the work and with sufficient time and attention. I

do recommend the course to prospective students as a good segue into the next stage of more independent work.

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.

The learning objectives for this course are met by addressing the three frameworks related to the synthesis of theory and practice in a program of study (such as in the area of critical and creative thinking or some other):
1) Taking Yourself Seriously: By the end of the semester, the goal of the course is that you no longer need the input of an instructor or the structure of a course to initiate, plan, and carry through projects in your life involving research, writing, and outreach. You will have come to "take yourself seriously" -- not in the sense of "without humor", but in the sense of not relying on external directions to motivate or reward you, where you (re)discover your capacity to the leader of your own effort to develop change. Such inner-directedness is described in the text by Palmer as "letting your life speak" or finding or acknowledging your vocation, but it is recognized that this goal may take more than one semester to achieve (and may be one that gets renewed at many stages of life)
2) my project demonstrates the 10 goals based on the Phases of Research and Engagement (see syllabus/exit self-assessment for 10 goals)
3) my project demonstrates the 10 goals of Developing as a Reflective Practitioner, Including Taking Initiatives in and Through Relationships (see syllabus/exit self-assessment for 10 goals)

a) I think that sums it up nicely. I got a lot out of this process.
b) I believe that this course closely follows or reflects the description. It is a course of self-discovery and you may not always like what you find, but the course allows room to grow and direct your development in a way that is more in keeping with your ideals.
c) I did take myself seriously in this course and my project meet that goals of the course. I take initiative to develop my project and make it better.
d) I think my synthesis meets the goals of this course. Over the course of the program, I've grown to take myself more seriously as a learner, as a teacher, and as a leader in my center. I've begun to trust my own voice and feel more comfortable sharing my thoughts.
e) The course does effectively walk through the Phases of Research and Engagement. Our weekly meetings allow us to discuss the theme for the week and any thoughts we have in way that helps us as a group move forward and gain support. Our support groups further provide support by sharing our work and getting constructive feedback.
f) I feel that the goals of the course as expressed in the syllabus were very well met. The synthesis course, offering the freedom to design a project according to our own interests, allows us to identify what we want to say and to whom we want to say it. This flexibility and responsibility allows each of us to find our own voice and become our own advocate for the change we want to make and the information we want to share. Leveraging the framework of Phases of Research and Engagement provides some guidance and structure but leaves the execution and evaluation to us to manage and develop as we work through the semester and going forward after completion of the course.

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) This course is an opportunity to put all of the skills acquired during the CCT program to the service of the thing that is most central to yourself. All of the courses have been helpful in different ways but this is where you can put it all together and feel that you have accomplished something.
b) Working with a professor who pushes you to be a better version of yourself through reflection is what this course is all about. Oh and by the way, you get to research and write about something important to you at the same time.
c) I think that over all I think that this course is a great course. I have learned so much and the instructor is really helpful.
d) While I initially wasn't a fan of the course starting to meet a month before the semester officially started, I am grateful that we did because I can only imagine the amount of stress I would be under right now. It was good to have us start reflecting and thinking about our synthesis because I feel like that's what really takes the majority of the time. I appreciated the focus on daily/weekly writing logs although it became a bit cumbersome to keep up with after while. Because we met with our writing groups every week, I felt that was a better accountability system for me to continue writing over the semester. I also appreciated as with many classes the reflective dialogue we would engage in about the writing process. It was helpful to hear where my classmates were in the process and also talk through ideas or challenges we were having or even shared as part of the writing process. Overall I enjoyed the class and feel that I have a direction to work towards well after I finish.
e) The design of our weekly meetings may seem to some to start off may seem a little intimidating in that we are the ones steering our own learning but soon become comfortable and natural. I feel that this course did help me learn how to maintain learning outside of the program. Having a support group is crucial to developing as a learner. Support groups helped me to maintain motivation for my project and helped see my work from a different perspective.
f) This synthesis course offers students the opportunity to design and implement a project on a topic of their own choosing. This flexibility and responsibility allows each student to find their own voice and become their own advocate for the work they are doing and the change they want to make. The small class size and focus on dialogue allows the class to develop into a very cohesive and supportive group, which can be incredibly helpful when doing a significant research project and/or deep reflective work. The professor is always available for support and guidance but the onus is on the student to leverage the tools and skills learned within the program, to self-motivate, and to lead the project where you'd like it to go. This is by design as this course is meant to prepare students to continue this type of work on their own going forward. This can be challenging, and at times exhausting, but also very rewarding as you see your project take shape, gain confidence in your work, and discover more insights about yourself and the work you are driven to do. Overall I highly recommend this course as a capstone to the overall CCT program.

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) Yes
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) 5
e) 5
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) 5
d) 5
e) 5
f) 5