

Course Evaluations

The tables on the following pages provide quantitative and qualitative data from anonymous course evaluations at the University of North Carolina. There, students are asked to complete anonymous, online course evaluations during the final two weeks of each term.

Table 1 provides the mean responses for the two courses I have taught most recently. Data from other courses is available upon request. Responses are based on a scale of 1 to 5, where (unless otherwise noted) the students are given the following reference points: 1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree.

Table 1 Quantitative Evaluations for Courses at the University of North Carolina	Morality & Law Spring 2018 (38 students, 86.8% response rate)	Ancient Greek Philosophy Spring 2017 (35 students, 88.57% response rate)
This course challenged me to think deeply about the subject matter	4.55	4.42
The instructor clearly communicated what was expected of me in this class	4.30	4.35
I was able to get individual help when I needed it.	4.68	4.66
The course material (e.g., coursepack, website, texts) helped me better understand the subject matter.	4.13	4.20
The course assignments helped me better understand the subject matter.	4.06	3.97
The instructor evaluated my work fairly.	4.30	4.23
The instructor showed concern about whether students learned the material.	4.42	4.26
The instructor expressed ideas clearly.	4.03	4.10
The instructor showed enthusiasm for teaching the class.	4.44	4.55
The instructor treated all students with respect.	4.68	4.80
The instructional techniques engaged me with the subject matter.	3.81	3.65
The instructor provided me helpful feedback on my performance.	4.00	4.26
This course was very exciting to me intellectually.	4.06	3.61

Rate the grading standards of this course compared with others you have taken at UNC. (1=Very Easy; 5= Most Rigorous)	3.50	3.39
Overall, this course was excellent.	3.85	3.65
Overall, this instructor was an effective teacher.	4.18	4.13
Overall, I learned a great deal from this course.	4.15	4.00
The instructor was one of the best I have had at Carolina, fully deserving of a teaching award.	3.52	3.29
The instructor used examples that had relevance for me.	4.30	4.19
The instructor used class time well.	4.33	4.32
The instructor encouraged students to participate in this class.	4.52	4.35
This course was designed to keep me engaged in learning.	3.94	3.86

Qualitative Course Evaluations

When completing their online, end-of-the-semester quantitative evaluations, UNC students have the opportunity to include qualitative feedback under the prompt, “Comments on overall assessment of this course”. **Tables 2 and 3** present the full set of comments that I received for the same two courses represented above.

Table 2 - PHIL 280: Morality and Law

Very challenging material but intellectually stimulating– good for anyone interested in law.
I learned a lot and expanded my philosophical knowledge. However, I have a number of qualms with this course. First, the grading is too vague. While I don't mind rigorous grading, I am somewhat worried about it in the context of a philosophy course, especially when many, maybe most of the students are in a PHIL course for the first time. People's perceptions of philosophical ideas vary drastically based on life experiences. It is hard to objective grade something fairly when people write and think so differently from one another. If the feedback was clearer or more frequent, it would be fine, but I had to go to OH to understand the comments left on paper. Second, there was little in the way of actual law topics. Although there is a lot in the topics of morality, it is sometimes not clearly connected to law. The best classes were those where we read caselaw and analyzed those in both a legal and philosophical lens. Third, the readings were too hard or too long. Readings for a class like this ought to either be hard or long, but not both. As someone who's taking this class mostly for fun and the gain of knowledge, I felt like I was wasting my time with some of the readings, as they were either boring or way too difficult, which made it hard to enjoy nor learn anything until it was explained in class.

I really enjoyed the topics and the readings for this course, and the instructor was enthusiastic. My greatest problem with the course was that there was little to no time for small group discussion, and the group discussion was greatly diminished because the instructor chose to summarize the reading and arguments every class. I felt it was a waste of my time to do the readings because I would get the same information in class, only I would be bored because I'd already read the information I was hearing. I think many students made this same calculus. Because we were not expected to know the arguments or reading when we came in, we didn't do them and the little conversation we could have suffered as a result. I think a better way would be to treat the course more like a law class where the instructor called on students to recount the facts of the paper or state their opinions or even ask questions before giving any explanation of the reading, and creating minor consequences for students who obviously hadn't done the reading.

I thoroughly enjoyed the fact that it was discussion based, and thought the blogs were a useful way to synthesize the information presented.

I thought the way the course was taught (lecture—> notes—> study for exams/papers) worked very well together.

Pretty challenging. Kinda interesting.

I enjoyed the course a lot, I thought that the way it was structured was very organized and I appreciated the fair grading practices.

I loved the way Professor Larisa taught this course

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Lots of reading— not able to dive deep into the meaning of the pieces, have sufficient discussion on objections. Would have been nicer to have less readings and be able to think critically about them. Also, too much information to connect back and reflect on.

It was very interesting and exposed me to a lot of different viewpoints on the topics we discussed.

Course materials and readings were varied and interesting. No single perspective dominated the discourse. Readings were challenging but not frustratingly so. Times which assignments were due (online blog posts) seemed unreasonable for meeting time of class. Instead of having them due at 5 PM the day before class, I think midnight or class start time would have been more appropriate.

Larissa is very well organized and clearly intelligent. I wish, however, that sometimes she would talk just a bit slower only because the concepts we learned were pretty complex.

Our professor was enthusiastic about the material. Philosophy can be difficult to teach being that at times the theories don't always line up with what is going on within our society, but I felt that she taught the course in a great manner.

Good course, good professor.

I found this class to be more challenging than anticipated, with assignments and grading more rigorous than other 200-level courses. I also feel like the professor, Larisa Svrisky, although helpful in a one-on-one setting, was sometimes difficult to follow in lecture.

Table 3 - PHIL 210: Ancient Greek Philosophy

Very good course, deeper study of a lot of topics that allowed me to have a greater understanding.

Really great course. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Larisa was an excellent instructor. She knew the material well but was even more impressive in how she handled student questions. An outstanding example of the principle of charity. My classmates asked what I believed to be outrageously bad/off-topic questions and Larisa managed to interpret them as intelligent and insightful and used them to clarify the topic we were discussing. I was astonished. This is truly a rare skill and invaluable in an instructor.

Overall this course was great, but I have two critiques. The first is that I wished that the instructor provided some sort of visual while speaking during class (ex. powerpoints or writing on the board). She usually kept the class hybrid lecture/discussion based. I found it difficult to write down what she was saying during class fast enough. She wrote on the board sometimes, which helped me a lot to piece together concepts more easily as a visual learner. My second critique would be to have at least one other exam throughout the course (maybe one midterm.) The only exam we have is the final, which is cumulative and forty percent of our grade. In this course, I have had no experience with what the test style is like, so the fact that the final is worth a large part of our grade and is cumulative is very overwhelming and might be avoided by dividing up the percent into another final, and having practice with taking an exam in this class before the final. However, overall this course has been great. I've had no experience with learning philosophy, and Larisa made it fun.

Good class overall. I wish there had been more attention given to comparing/contrasting the various philosopher's and their views. This type of synthesis done regularly would have helped my overall understanding of the course material more. I also liked when we split up into groups to discuss and would have enjoyed more classes like that.

I felt as though this course only cursorily went over a broad amount of information, and I think it would have been so much more interesting (and so much more feasible to finish the readings) if we had focused on maybe two presocratic philosophers and then did what we did with Plato and Aristotle. I also wasn't entirely convinced Larisa wanted us to do super well in the course. As someone with no prior knowledge of philosophy, it was extremely hard to figure out what I was doing — especially in relation to writing the papers. All in all the course was interesting but it didn't seem accessible.

I LOVE LARISA

I am not particularly interested in the field of philosophy, and I was only taking this course as a requirement for graduation. While the ancient philosophers had interesting view points on some things, I don't find them particularly applicable to my life or to my academic study here at UNC. The way the course was taught was entirely fitting to the subject matter, and

the teacher was competent and enthusiastic. However, I was not interested in the subject, and this course has not changed my opinion.

The course was very interesting in its content. Implementing some more teaching approaches such as visual inputs, activities or some other way to engage the students a little more in the subject might make the course a lot better. Lecture can sometimes seem long and confusing due to the subject; therefore, it is sometimes helpful to have outlines of notes or visual aids so one can digest the information more thoroughly. Assignments involve a lot of critical thinking, and the feedback at the end is perfect; however, it was hard to attain a great grade on a paper so I felt like I was just writing and hoping it was what you wanted even though I covered all bases in the paper. Still don't know what the final will be like, maybe would be nice to have an outline down as well.

Frequently found that this course was challenging to participate and therefore discuss in class because confusing but such an interesting class and really glad I choose to take it with Professor Svirsky!

Professor Svirsky was a great professor who truly has a passion for philosophy. Although I know her field of expertise is not in ancient Greek philosophy, she taught the course with great enthusiasm and had a wealth of knowledge that allowed us students to draw from. I truly appreciate Ms. Svirsky's time and efforts and I would absolutely recommend this course to somebody else.

The way the lecture was structured did not make it super easy for me to learn. I don't do well with discussion based classes, I much prefer a lecture where everything we need to know is presented in a very straightforward fashion. With the discussion parts of the class, we jumped around a lot and it made it kind of harder to understand what was going on and what we really needed to know.

This course was extremely difficult in terms of learning the material but Larisa made it worth while and helped tremendously. I truly enjoyed the course, how she taught, and the topics discussed.

The readings were often dense and difficult to understand, especially towards the end of the course. The instructor was very enthusiastic about the topic which made it easier to get through a class that otherwise might have been unpleasant due to its complexity. A little more help with understanding how to write a philosophy paper would have been helpful. Maybe provide a sample paper that was well-written that we can access throughout the course?

Good course, wish I had a lecture on how to write philosophy papers prior to being told to write them throughout the semester. I felt blind about the writing style, as it is vastly different from what I have experience with and was definitely detrimental to my grades over the course of the semester.