

Patrick Frierson

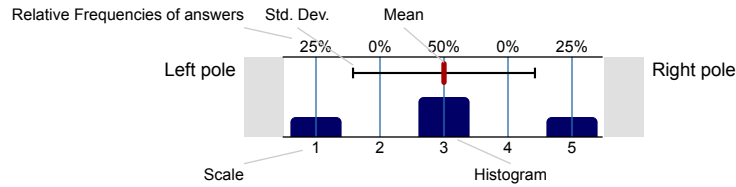
Modern European Philosophy (PHIL-202-A-20fall: Modern European Philosophy)
No. of responses = 14



Survey Results

Legend

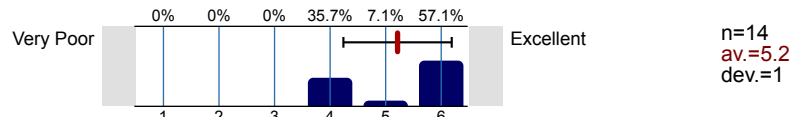
Question text



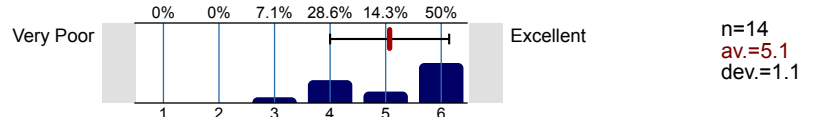
n=No. of responses
av.=Mean
dev.=Std. Dev.
ab.=Abstention

1. About the Course:

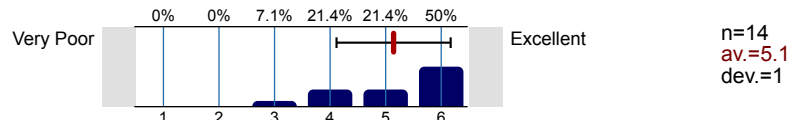
1.1) This course as a whole was:



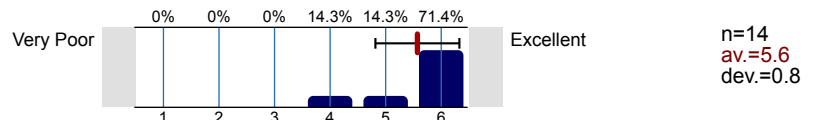
1.2) The course organization was:



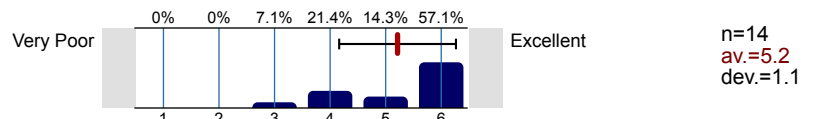
1.3) The clarification of student responsibilities in this course was:



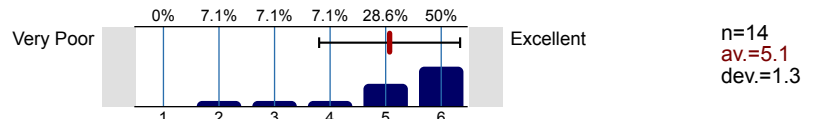
1.4) The value of the course in increasing your analytical or interpretive skills:



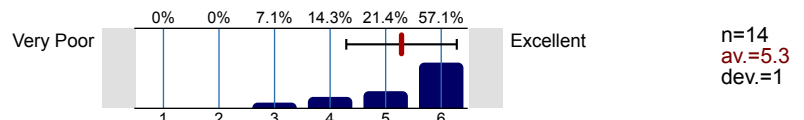
1.5) The extent to which this course stimulated your intellectual curiosity was:



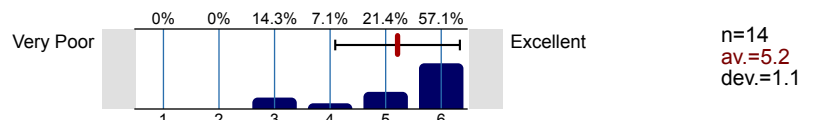
1.6) The value of the assigned work was:



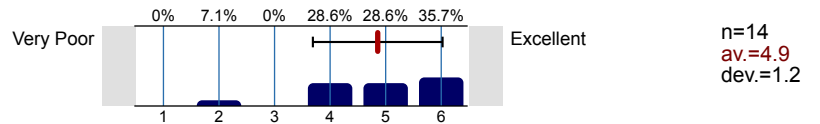
1.7) The instructor's ability to present the subject matter clearly was:



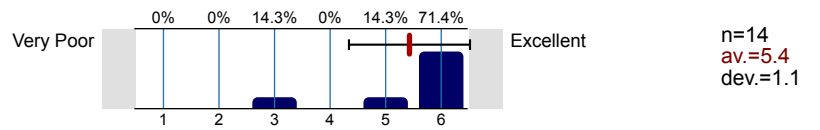
1.8) The instructor's answers to student's questions were:



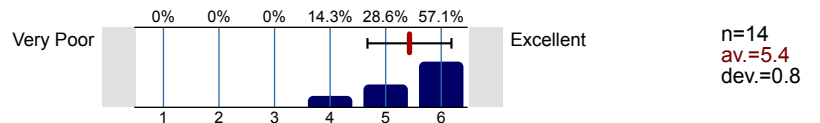
1.9) The evaluation methods (tests, papers, projects, performances, etc) were:



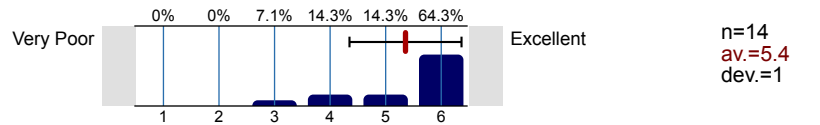
1.10) The value of the instructor's comments on tests, papers, projects, performances, etc were:



1.11) The availability of extra help when needed was:



1.12) The general, overall teaching ability of the instructor in the course was:



Comments Report

1. About the Course:

1.13) What aspects of the content of this course were especially good?

- I enjoyed the diverse range from which the professor pulled our reading material, it felt very comprehensive without leaving anything important out.
- I know I'm going to be very thankful for being exposed to not only the canonical thinkers of the Modern Period. Additionally, the format of presentations for the philosophers we didn't focus on was a great way to get loosely exposed to a large body of thinkers.
- I liked that we read Sor Juana as part of the course. It was interesting to have a work that was completely different, in medium and content, then everything that we had read before it, which were very similar to each other in style and structure. I also thought the mind/body day to be very interesting, if anything for the reading of so many different philosophers. I think that comparing the ideas of philosophers and rigorously trying to both find holes in their arguments and apply their ideas to over things, and to try to marry different ideas from different philosophers together, is possibly the most valuable skill learned in college.
- I loved that Sor Juana was included in this syllabus. Her perspective on these big philosophical questions was fascinating but what I really appreciated from her inclusion was that her philosophy was conveyed via poetry. This gave allowed us to have fun trying to interpret what her metaphors meant and led to very interesting conversations and papers. Also, I think that the final paper was the perfect assignment to cap off the semester and test our ability to engage with philosophers and philosophical queries.
- I really enjoyed learning about different philosophers, especially Sor Juana. The visiting professor also helped a lot with the understanding of Sor Juana's work.
- Patrick did a good job ensuring that we covered other philosophers outside of the main three we focused on.
- Presentations were hard but super interesting, and actually required learning a lot about the philosopher (meaning bullshitting was not possible). And then more generally, I think all 3 of the major people we touched one were great.
- There was an active effort to decentralize the voices that are thought important in modern philosophy.
- This course's ability to engage with lots of different philosophical questions across lots of different philosophers was really valuable for my philosophical education, especially as a major. I thought we worked with a nice variety of texts to improve close reading and cultivating our own individual ideas.
- This is not the style of philosophy that I gravitate towards, and yet I found myself (more in papers and presentations than in class) becoming engaged with the ideas and getting invested in the material. I admit that though the exegetical paper and encyclopedic papers were not forms I would have ever taken up myself and thought I would slog through, I found myself engaged with them and really having to hone a different kind of writing. In the end I think they were really meaningful in cultivating my analytic skills but also my ability to take something dense and unfamiliar and find what is really interesting in it and work with it deeply. I especially loved learning about Sor Juana. Prof. Frierson also brought two incredible presenters into the class.
- hardest class I've taken most rewarding so happy I'm a phill major

1.14) What aspects of the teaching of this course were especially good?

- "Chalk Board," when operational, was really helpful... though sometimes the writing was a little hard to read. Use of small groups was also well balanced with larger class meeting.
- Class discussions were especially interesting and fun to participate in, the professor did a good job of keeping it flowing despite online restrictions.
- Going through the text together and trying to understand what the philosophers were saying was extremely helpful. Office hours were also really really helpful.
- In this course, I felt a very strong obligation to be ready and prepared for class, having read the reading and thought as deeply as I could to think about it. Going to class didn't satisfy my thirst for knowledge. But it did something better, it made me more interested and excited to read more, think more, and discuss more with others. Reading philosophy can feel like a place of refuge, even comfort, when you engage with brilliant thinkers who sometimes have the same intuitions you have. And sometimes it feels that you are having a conversation with them, in real time, that you can go back to whenever you want. But there is also something a bit scary about attempting to articulate these precise, often abstruse ideas and arguments to others. Although it is a lifetime process, I felt that I made some major strides in feeling more comfortable with this. At least now I realize how important it is to articulate and engage actively with these writings, rather than passively reading them. Furthermore, I find that this engagement is enjoyable to the highest degree-- there is nothing else quite like it.
- Patrick is brilliant and helps make the arguments in the text we read become more clear.
- Patrick was always available to meet for extra help which I greatly appreciated. His office hours were incredibly helpful and encouraging. I thought he did a good job of balancing making his students wrestle with the texts and tell each other what our readings were saying with

recognizing that these texts were quite difficult and sometimes we needed to be told the right answer.

- Patrick was always very approachable and thoughtful in how he taught the course, and that came through both in class and in how he provided support outside of class. I appreciated the variety of full class discussion, lecture, and small group discussions in class as well. He did a very good job helping us through difficult texts without just providing us with the answers. I also loved the guest speakers!
- Prof. Frierson clearly has so so much knowledge. Of a ton of philosophers of the modern period, but also so in depth in all of their works and thoughts. That takes a ton of time and dedication and it was clearly evident. I appreciated that Prof. Frierson really tried to make these sometimes antiquated or literary dense ideas intelligible. I think he did so quite effectively. Prof. Frierson clearly loves what he does, and is extremely dedicated to his students and his work.
- There is a genuine interest in the subject matter and whenever the class would be stuck on a point we would be guided to a place in the text that could explain and resolve our problem.
- – comments on written work were quite helpful, if not a little harsh.
– availability in office hours and extra meeting time was exceptional

1.15) What changes could be made to improve the teaching or content of this course?

- I loved that we were able to dive deep into Descartes, Hume, and Sor Juana, but I wish this class acted more as a survey course that gave us even more foundational knowledge of key philosophers we should know as philosophy majors (I understand that this is a lot to ask from a 12 week course). I also felt that the final exam was a bit redundant to the final paper. Both were about wrestling with key philosophical questions and putting philosophers in conversation with each.
- I wish we would have spend more class time talking about the other philosophers, the class might be better suited to be three times a week.
- In spite of my above approval of reading Sor Juana this semester, I was a bit disappointed that we did not read more Kant. While I confess that I probably could not get that much out of Kant unless an entire semester were dedicated to him, I personally felt that I was on the verge of bettering my understanding of the Critique's preface, when I had to switch to Hume's morals. While, I would not have wanted to skip Sor Juana or Hume's morality, I think that one of them could have been truncated a bit. Given that I actually could have used more time on Sor Juana, I would choose some of Hume's morals to be replaced by Kant. While I think that thinking about the racism in Hume's writings was incredibly stimulating and worthwhile, I think simply less time could have been spent on the other aspects of his morals. This is just a personal preference; I didn't find his morals as interesting as the other stuff we spent time on, and I felt that focusing less on morals and more on the other stuff could have richened the reading of Sor Juana (perhaps), as morals did not seem as obviously relevant in her poem.
- Make the Reading guide less oppressive or not include it, the reading guide actively tries to walk the person filling it out to read the text carefully but the many questions and the specificity of them feel like busy work because the thing they ask of the one working on the reading guide is not to think creatively and be thoughtful of the text but to find the right answer. When presenting material be careful to not ask leading questions or be fishing for answers because you tend to do this a lot discouraging participation in class and creating an atmosphere that only the professor holds the right answer (an attitude that does not allow for new insights either for the student or the professor).
- Maybe a reading guide or some form of guidance when reading Sor Juana might be helpful.
- Personally I can see the value in cold calling in order to get students to talk, and I certainly don't propose infantilizing students, but I do notice in myself feeling at times more afraid to speak or feeling like the content of what I say has to be totally right when there's cold calling, and I think that actually shuts some students down or makes them less likely to talk. I wonder if other strategies of encouraging certain kinds of conversation might be more effective where the expectation doesn't feel like you have to get the answer right. I recognize though that this is difficult in a course where so much of the material is trying to interpret with a high degree of accuracy what the texts are saying. I think times when we had to debate each other, for example, were more fruitful and less anxiety producing when we chose to speak up and let ourselves be drawn into an argument rather than just being called on to support a side. I think one other things that could be improved in this course is more time spent not only of what the philosophers are saying, but engaging that with why they are important, and complexities that have arisen since then. I think the class on Hume where we talked about racism was a great example of this, as well as the two presenters who came in. But I think spending more time not just on them, but doing some more work to contextualize them historically and draw connections to their legacies. For example, talking about Sor Juana the way that we did with Prof. Sofia really helped me get super excited about Sor Juana because I understood more of where she was coming from and the legacy of her philosophy.
- There were some unclear moments from the syllabus, which I understand is partly a symptom of being taught fully online. In general though, I think that the timing of the schedule ended up being confusing or overwhelming at times, as we would sometimes move between philosophers very quickly or break up a longer unit (on, say, Descartes or Hume) with a day or two on a different philosopher. It ended up feeling a little disjointed at times and harder to fully understand the thinkers' ideas, even though we were able to cover more philosophers of the modern era. I also would have appreciated more time spent on Sor Juana as one of the major thinkers that we used in the course, especially given the requirements to use her in our final paper. Her writing being a new medium that many of us hadn't been introduced to in philosophy made it especially challenging to only have a few days with her before needing to start on a long final paper.
- Though I realize I didn't ask for one, a reading guide after Descartes would have been helpful--but also time consuming. I simply wouldn't have had the time to complete a Hume/etc. reading guide as thoughtfully as I did the Descartes one, but maybe if it were slightly less detailed and/or optional it could help us structure our thoughts a bit more.
- none

- – I was a little bit frustrated by the grading system. At some point, when you try to take the pressure off of grades, or you try a more alternative approach, it just ends up being more stressful.
- I don't think the activity where we filled in a google doc as a small group was very helpful, but I'm not exactly sure why. I think theres just not enough time to let a conversation develop and wander, as well as having a responsibility to fill something in.
- I think sometimes, especially for Hume, there was enough reading where it was a hard to really focus in on important passages. I think alerting students to those beforehand, or assigning less and having students do a closer read, would be helpful.

1.16) Additional Comments

- I don't see how some of our assignments specifically the written documents that came with the presentations were of any value to the course or achieved any of the course goals. At most the documents were there to prove our research individually or collectively and yet research skills are not part of the goals of the course in fact the active discouragement of finding secondary sources for most of the course's material suggests the course is not concerned with teaching research skills. I think the course goals are ambitious but there may be too many of them, the content goals I cannot think of when we paid more than a passing thought to point five otherwise these points seem to base themselves mostly on Descartes' interpretation of the world and insistence of having "solved" it, instead of being overarching and connecting to the other philosophers, for example the mind body problem only made "guest appearances" if at all after Descartes and even then we did not pay as much attention to the problem when we focused on Descartes.
- Thank you for a really challenging but rewarding semester!