

# Sample Teaching Evaluation with commentary

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In this document I provide the complete and unedited student evaluation for an indicative class.

When I arrived at Kalamazoo College in the fall of 2004, I taught an introductory course for 17 students. 16 of those filled out an evaluation at the end of the course. The evaluation involved several questions that requested written comments, and two numerical scores, on a scale from 1 to 5 (“poor” to “excellent”), in answer to the following two questions:

- **How do you rate the *instructor* of this course? Please respond in terms of his/her *teaching*, not in terms of your opinion of him/her as a person.** On this question 15 students marked “excellent” and one marked “very good” for an average of 4.94.
- **How do you rate this *course*?** On this question 10 marked “excellent” and six marked “very good”, for an average of 4.63.

Below are transcripts of the complete handwritten answers to the written questions provided. I copy the answers each time from their sheets simply in the order in which I received them. Not all students answered all questions however, so some may have fewer than 16 responses. I’ve organized the responses by question so that you may skip to those you feel most relevant.

## 1. COURSE GOALS. How well did the instructor establish and meet course goals?

- everything; did so by studying several arguments from famous philosophers.
- Great, very helpful and informative, was open to all questions and able to answer them. Very organized, and not confusing.
- He established class goals in the syllabus clearly.
- Seeing as his goal was to question (have us) everything, he succeeded wonderfully.

- He presented us at the beginning of the year with his goal to make us question everything. And he definitely did that. I was left wondering about many things, which was good for it made me see my values and beliefs in a different perspective.
- Steve did a good job of opening our minds to new possibilities!
- He acknowledged them daily & we did accomplish them daily. Goal make us question everything & I do because of him. Sounds sad but isn't; I lost faith.<sup>1</sup>
- Very well. He kept to the beginning outline, & he covered materials well.
- He followed his syllabus very well & he definitely confused us (his main goal)
- goals were well established & well met during the class
- very well laid out and met.
- Very well. Gave out a concept map and tied everything together over the course of the semester.<sup>2</sup>
- He did this wonderfully, we now question everything.
- Very well—confused us just as he said he would.
- very well
- Very well, he gave us a concept map and a list of what he wanted us to get out of the class. I think we learned what he expected.

2. ORGANIZATION / PREPARATION. Please comment on the organization of the course and the use of class time.

- wonderful, many notes, discussion, and lecture. Out of class read material then he would sum it up in class.
- organization was good, class time would occasionally be distracted, but was later made up for.
- Though it is sometimes hard to catch up with the class discussion, thanks to the projector & computer, I understand most of the topics in classtime.<sup>3</sup>
- Well organized with the exception of the furniture arrangement near the beginning.<sup>4</sup> Time spent relevant to the class.
- I really liked the projector and the notes being posted online. It allowed me to participate in discussions as opposed to just sitting and writing notes. I also liked the class discussions.

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<sup>1</sup>In the context of evidentialism vs. Jamesian pragmatism, we had a special use of 'faith' as "belief without reason"; in this restricted sense I think it is good to lose faith.

<sup>2</sup>I am especially glad students appreciate the concept map, which I developed in response to an earlier comment by a student.

<sup>3</sup>This was the first time I tried my "virtual blackboard" technique: I took notes on an HTML composer that was projected up on a screen, so that the notes could be posted later.

<sup>4</sup>Earlier I had asked students, in my absence, to brainstorm about what they liked and didn't like about the class; there the furniture issue came up. I agreed with them and so was able to fix it.

- The class was *very* well organized. He had a specific layout & stuck to it. He also had a good method of using a projector for notes—very helpful.
- Very organized. The online notes & whatnot.
- He did awesome. We kept on track & on subject as well as exploring ideas to the fullest
- There was a lot of off-topic discussion, but the openness to discussion helped to understand the topics.
- I love the projector! Class time discussions were thought-provoking & well-planned.
- Excellent, use of laptop & projector were awesome, allowed for more discussion time.
- All classtime was used effectively and the content was adequately explained and discussed.
- Very nice. The projector was AWESOME!
- Organization was great, I liked the notes on the web!
- Very prepared so the class always flowed well even if students weren't talking
- I think the class was very organized.

3. CHALLENGE. Please comment on the level of challenge of this course.

- 8 (scale 1 to 10). I found material very interesting but reading, papers, and essay exams extremely hard
- Perfect for the level of a student entering into the field of study.
- Difficult. But he explained clearly.
- It was challenging in that I had had no prior philosophy experience, and it was the deconstruction of most of my accepted beliefs.
- The papers and tests were really challenging, and I also thought he was a challenging but fair grader
- The course was challenging by nature—it is difficult to question one's convictions & make arguments contrary to them.<sup>5</sup>
- Very challenging to get what I wanted to say out in a written context. And at times difficult material to comprehend but that is why it's interesting.
- This was my hardest class this semester, but my favorite.<sup>6</sup>
- It was mostly challenging to understand & remember the concepts. The papers were very general, but hard to write so much about. The readings were also harder than they needed to be.

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<sup>5</sup>I especially like this comment for its indication that I *did* manage get them to question their convictions some.

<sup>6</sup>I love this comment too! Just wanted to highlight it.

- Extremely challenging readings, tests, & essays.
- Loved it. The class called into question many fundamental & moral beliefs, asking reflection on the part of the students.
- I was always confused, therefore learning.
- Challenging, but not overwhelming.
- Very challenging, especially the text—sometimes frustrating.
- challenging readings and thought
- I found this class very challenging but it was a good challenge.

4. TEXTS. Please comment on the effectiveness of texts and other materials used in this course.<sup>7</sup>

- very complex reading
- Great, explained in class well. Apparently the text has some gaps, but all was hit upon by the instructor. Wish we could have covered more.
- Good. It's hard but not long.
- All texts were effective and necessary to participate in the class discussions.
- The book was sometimes difficult to understand, but at least we discussed it.
- The text was hard to read but useful upon Steve's explanations.
- Very effective. Key to learning various philosophers & whatnot. Informative, difficult, stimulating & interesting.
- Good. They portrayed each side to theories we discussed in class.
- The text was hard. I *never* understood the topic until it was talked about in class.
- Effective—since we discussed them all in class the next day, it was important to read them . . . [*Ellipsis in original.*]
- Great, interesting book.
- All texts were relevantly discussed and effective
- Good
- Effective but only after we went over it in class.
- very effective
- The text was difficult, but what do you expect!?

5. TECHNIQUE. Please comment on the effectiveness of the instructor's teaching techniques (depending on the course, these might include discussion, lecture, group work, projects, *etc.*)

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<sup>7</sup>My text for this course was Feinberg and Shafer-Landau (2005), with some supplements. (Yes, we used this "2005" book in the fall of 2004 . . .)

- straw polls then would persuade class on topic<sup>8</sup>
- discussion / lecture was very effective; use of computer notes posted on the web allowed students to be more interactive in class<sup>9</sup>
- Great. He is good at making students confused and discuss active ?
- I have had few classes that the matter stuck with me so well, because all was applicable to my life.<sup>10</sup>
- As I wrote before, I liked our many class discussions and the online notes.
- *Great!* The discussions were open & active, he lectured in a way that made sense, and he explained things clearly & effectively.
- A very impressive mixture of lecture & discussion. Open forum to express emotions & thoughts.
- He lectured some & they were okay, but the class discussions made the most impact & we did those every day.
- Very effective, but it might be easier to have an outline of the notes before class so that we can add our own notes to the main ideas.<sup>11</sup>
- Once again, the projector / notes online are amazing. I love the lectures & discussions.
- Straw polls are awesome.
- Great discussions and clarification technique
- Great
- Very effective, if a student dazed off in class he can catch up from looking on the web.
- nice use of technology in classroom
- I love the projector and class notes. They were very helpful in understanding the texts and topics we were covering.

6. ASSIGNMENTS. Did the instructor explain assignments clearly? Did the instructor give you enough time to complete assignments? Were assignments effective in promoting learning? [Each of these questions offers options of “Never / Sometimes / Usually / Always” for an answer, and then there is a line “Comments:”.]

- Usually, Sometimes, Usually
- Always, Always, Always; great, I wish I could have had more
- Always, Always, Always

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<sup>8</sup>Sometimes I would take “straw polls”—with heads down for anonymity, students would indicate which way they were leaning on issues like free will; this gave me a sense of which view I should press harder (*viz.*, the minority one).

<sup>9</sup>This of course was a central intention behind my “virtual blackboard” technique (see footnote 3). I’m so pleased it seems to have worked.

<sup>10</sup>Hee hee! How often do you hear *that* about a philosophy class!

<sup>11</sup>This is a suggestion I’m considering; I’m still torn about implementing it.

- Always, Always, Always
- Always, Always, Always
- Usually, Always, Always
- Always, Usually, Always
- Always, Always, Always
- Always, Always, Always; Steve was my favorite prof<sup>12</sup>
- Always, Always, Always
- Always, Always, Always
- Always, Always, Always
- Usually, Usually, Always
- Always, Always, Always
- Always, Always, Always
- Always, Usually, Usually
- Always, Always, Always

7. INTERACTION. Did the instructor encourage your participation in class where appropriate? [No / Yes / NA] Was the instructor appropriately available outside of class for assistance? [No / Yes] [Room for comments.]

- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes; any confusion could be made up in liberal office hours
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes; very available, very helpful & willing to provide assistance outside of class
- Yes, Yes; thanks for always listening to my questions & elucidating other views to my [unreadable]
- Yes, Yes; he was willing to help in any way that he could.
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes

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<sup>12</sup>This question was at the bottom of the front page, so perhaps the student thought it was for “overall” comments.

- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes
- Yes, Yes; Steve Rules!

8. EVALUATION/GRADING. Did the instructor make evaluation criteria clear? Did the instructor evaluate assignments fairly? Did the instructor give useful feedback? Did the instructor give feedback regularly and promptly? [Each of these questions offers options of “Never / Sometimes / Usually / Always” for an answer, and then there is a line “Comments:”.]

- Usually, Sometimes, Sometimes, Usually
- Usually, Always, Usually, Always; sometimes feedback would be confusing and would require more time to understand.
- Always, Always, Always, Always
- Always, Always, Always, Sometimes; having revisions back by the next paper would be very useful in the future
- Always, Always, Always, Usually
- Sometimes, Sometimes, Always, Always
- Always, Usually, Always, Usually; exams were hard!
- Always, Always, Always, Always
- Usually, Always, Always, Usually
- Always, Always, Always, Always
- Usually, Always, Always, Always
- Usually, Always, Always, Always
- Usually, Always, Always, Always
- Usually, Always, Always, Always
- Always, Always, Always, Usually
- Always, Always, Always, Usually
- Usually, Always, Always, Always

9. LABORATORY/DISCUSSION SECTIONS. [skipped by all students as not applicable]

10. VALUE. Please comment on the value of this course to your academic or personal growth.

- very valuable, really learned to ? everything even if we really exist
- Extremely. Everyone should begin college, and life for that matter, with this course.
- This class helped me a lot in terms of discussing reading & basic philosophical ideas.
- Extreme value—for both academic life and life in general.

- I liked that it made me question my beliefs and ideas and speak openly about them
- The course was valuable to me because it made me more open to ideas and thoughts.
- He made you think through your problems, beliefs, & even your ethics. He helped me prepare very well for college.
- I think it was extremely valuable—he makes you question everything!
- I would consider this class *invaluable*.<sup>13</sup>
- I value this course and its instructor greatly. I might go into this major because of this course.
- I liked learning about philosophy even though it won't be my major. I may choose to take another though.
- This was very valuable as it has encouraged me to do more thinking.

11. OVERALL RATINGS. [The numbers are summarized above.] Do you have any general comments or suggestions concerning this course?

- Makes me believe again in the academic process.
- Steve is a great professor—very effective and congenial. Keep him on staff!
- Steve is amazing! I learned a lot especially a lot on how essential it is to question everything!
- Everyone should have Steve as a professor.
- You rock.
- Priceless, just like MasterCard
- Steve is the best professor I've had at Kalamazoo. He comes into class with a spark every day and takes on the problems we discuss in class as his own. Impressive.
- I really enjoyed this class!

## References

Feinberg, J. and Shafer-Landau, R. (2005). *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*. Wadsworth, twelfth edition.

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<sup>13</sup>A joke from our discussion of Kant and the will, I presume.