



VANDERBILT
UNIVERSITY

2019F Instructor Report for HEA 6020 01 - The Nature and Function of American Higher Education (Christopher Loss)

Project Title: **Vanderbilt University Course and Teaching Evaluations**

Course Audience: **31**
Responses Received: **19**
Response Ratio: **61.29%**

Report Comments

The following is a report for an individual section of a class. Please do not distribute, print, or share this report except for administrative purposes.

Project Audience - Total number of students enrolled

Responses Received - Number of evaluations submitted by students

Response Ratio - Percent of enrolled students who submitted evaluations

If you have any questions about the evaluation system please contact course.evaluations@vanderbilt.edu.

Prepared by: **Vanderbilt University Course and Teaching Evaluations**

Creation Date: **Tuesday, January 14, 2020**

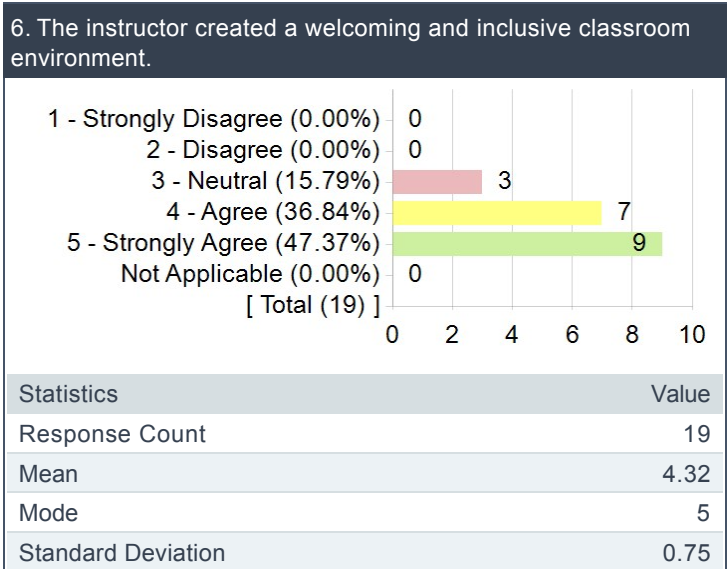
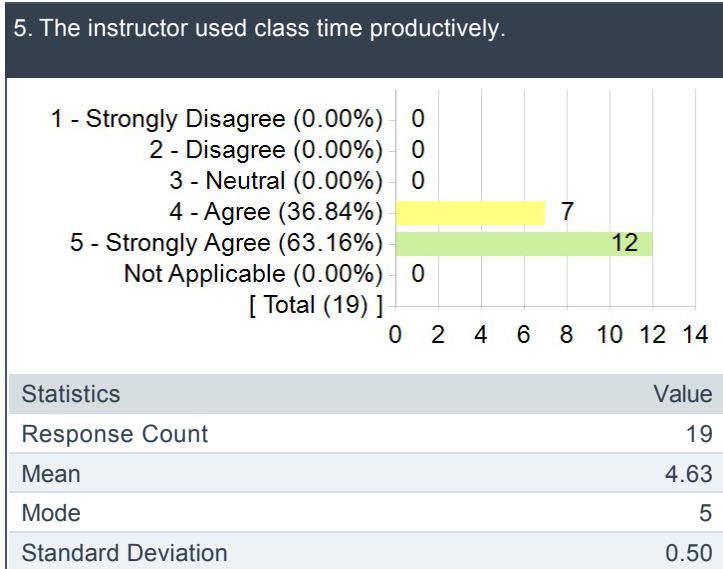
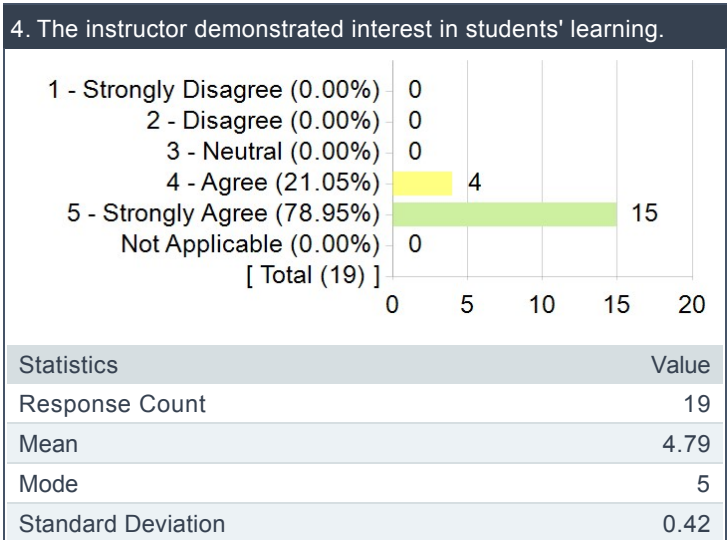
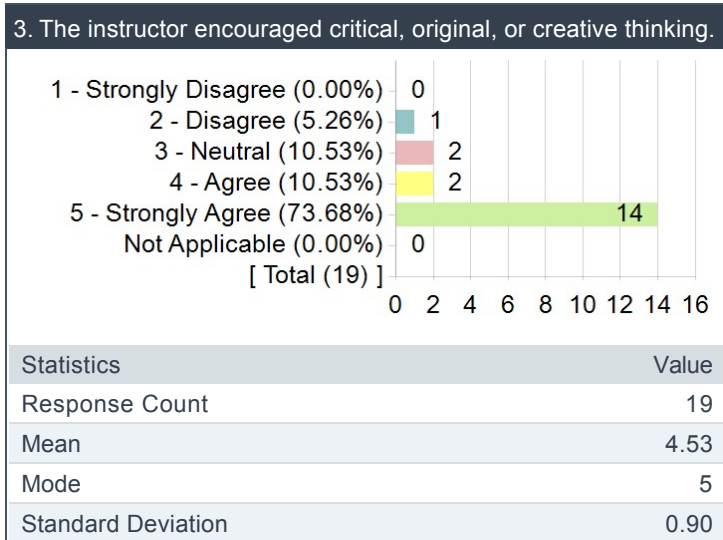
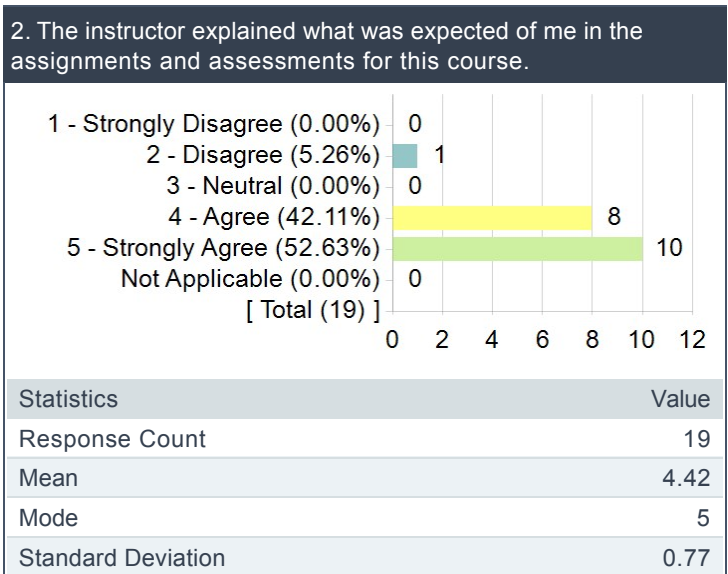
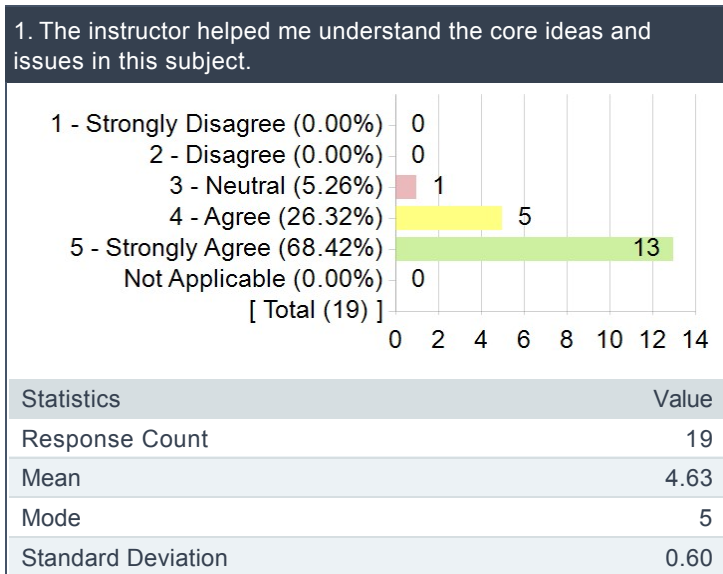
Questions about the Instructor (**Christopher Loss**):

Question	This Class Section		Department (DLPO)		School (PBDY)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
The instructor helped me understand the core ideas and issues in this subject.	4.63	0.60	4.38	0.88	4.42	0.85
The instructor explained what was expected of me in the assignments and assessments for this course.	4.42	0.77	4.32	0.93	4.29	0.94
The instructor encouraged critical, original, or creative thinking.	4.53	0.90	4.41	0.90	4.43	0.87
The instructor demonstrated interest in students' learning.	4.79	0.42	4.54	0.81	4.57	0.76
The instructor used class time productively.	4.63	0.50	4.21	1.05	4.24	1.02
The instructor created a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment.	4.32	0.75	4.56	0.78	4.58	0.77
Overall, the instructor (Christopher Loss) was:	4.44	0.70	4.24	0.98	4.26	0.94

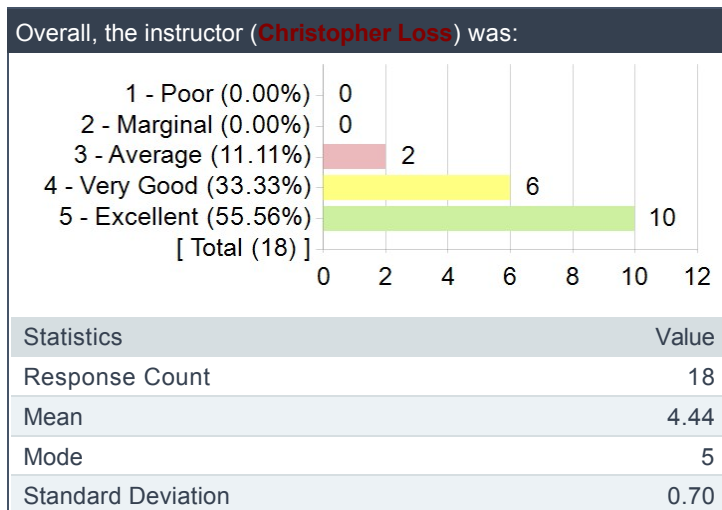
Questions about this Course (**HEA 6020 01**):

Question	This Class Section		Department (DLPO)		School (PBDY)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
This course helped me appreciate the significance of the subject matter.	4.68	0.58	4.28	0.99	4.31	0.97
The components of the course, such as class activities, assessments, and assignments, were consistent with the course goals.	4.63	0.50	4.26	0.95	4.32	0.92
The feedback I received during the course was helpful.	4.44	0.86	4.06	1.10	4.15	1.04
I felt comfortable asking questions in this course.	4.22	1.06	4.43	0.87	4.42	0.88
This course helped me consider connections between course material and other areas of my personal, academic, or professional life.	4.56	0.70	4.33	0.97	4.40	0.93
Overall, the course (HEA 6020 01) was:	4.28	0.75	3.88	1.07	3.94	1.03
Compared to other classes, the amount I learned in this course was:	4.22	0.73	3.44	1.09	3.45	1.06
Compared to requirements in other classes, the workload assigned in this class was:	3.67	0.77	3.32	0.87	3.26	0.89

Please respond to the following questions about the instructor (**Christopher Loss**).

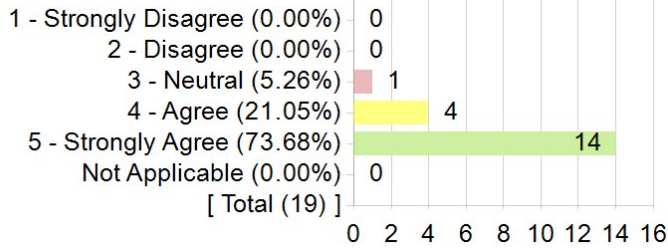


Overall, the instructor (Christopher Loss) was:



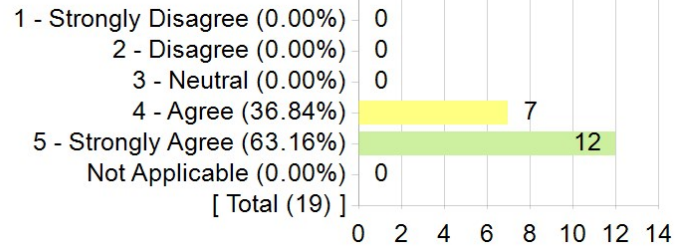
Questions About This Course (HEA 6020 01):

1. This course helped me appreciate the significance of the subject matter.



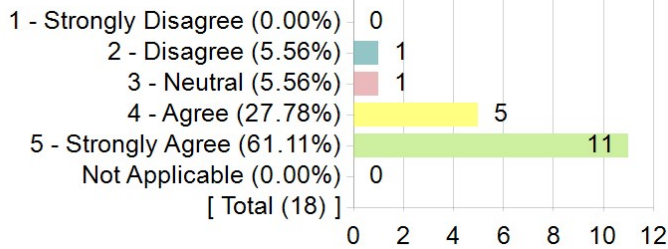
Statistics	Value
Response Count	19
Mean	4.68
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.58

2. The components of the course, such as class activities, assessments, and assignments, were consistent with the course goals.



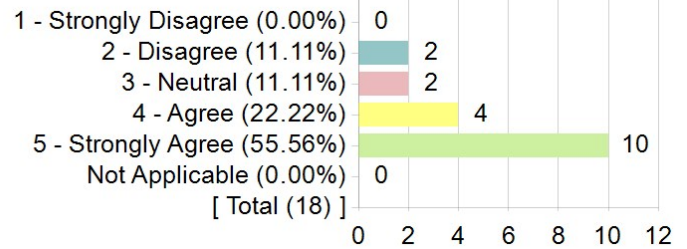
Statistics	Value
Response Count	19
Mean	4.63
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.50

3. The feedback I received during the course was helpful.



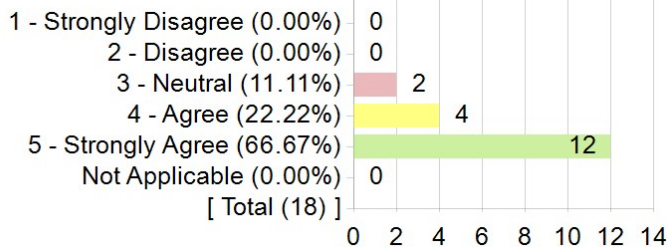
Statistics	Value
Response Count	18
Mean	4.44
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.86

4. I felt comfortable asking questions in this course.



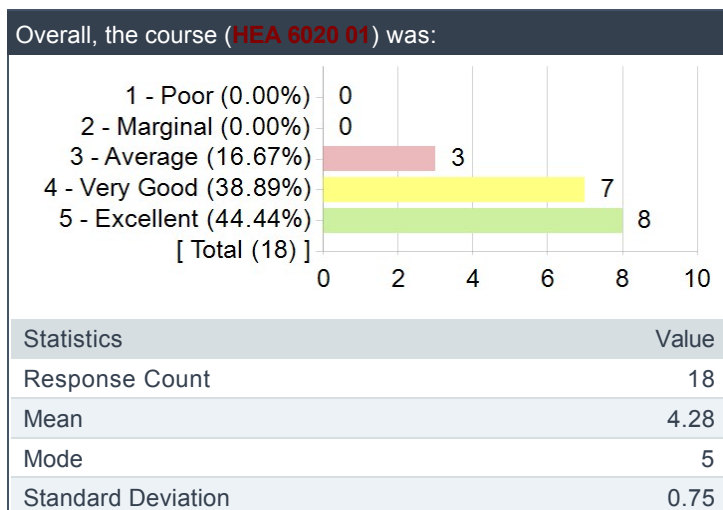
Statistics	Value
Response Count	18
Mean	4.22
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	1.06

5. This course helped me consider connections between course material and other areas of my personal, academic, or professional life.

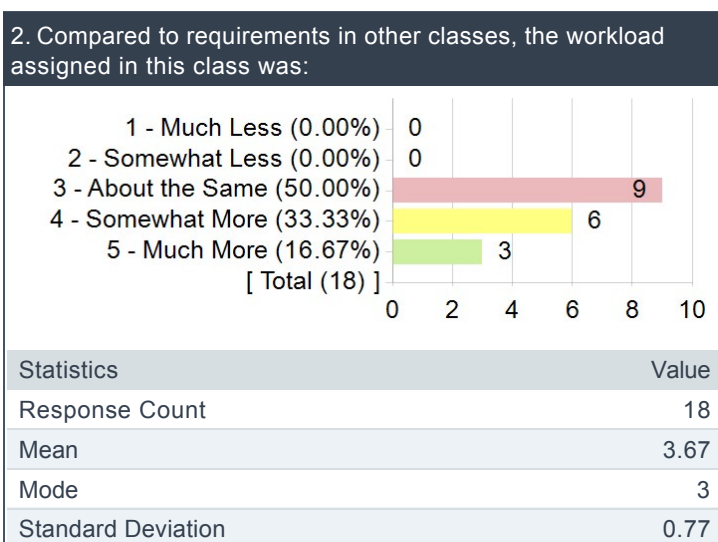
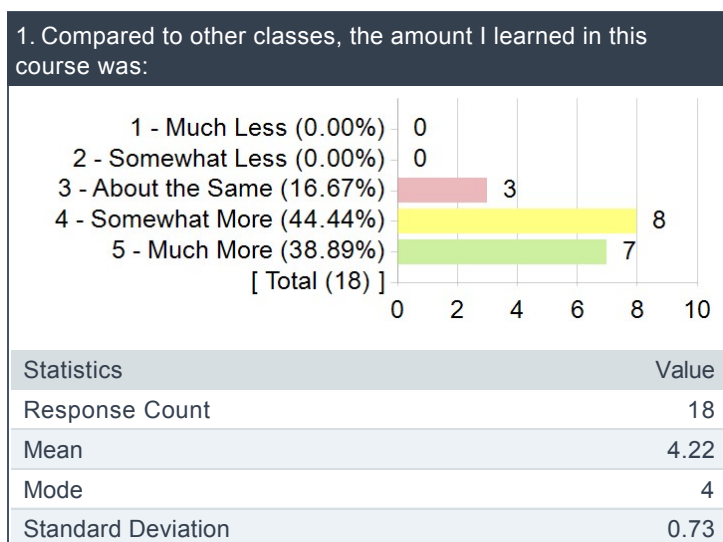


Statistics	Value
Response Count	18
Mean	4.56
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.70

Overall the course was:



Questions About This Course (HEA 6020 01):



What elements of the course (HEA 6020 01) most contributed to your learning?

Comments
The various texts and readings from the course was one of the most helpful components that contributed to my learning. I found that the material had a range of authors and ideas which made it easier to understand the different aspects of a specific topic.
I enjoyed the group project at the end of the semester that allowed us to focus on one institution.
The papers helped synthesize my thoughts throughout the semester, and they were spaced really well. Some of the readings were interesting, too, and applicable to other courses and assignments.
The class discussions were very intense. Dr. Loss could put you on the spot at any time and there was a lot of pressure. But in response, I made sure I always did the readings and thought critically about the content in order to be prepared for the class discussions. As a result, I ended up learning quite a lot. Dr. Loss did a great job of helping us see connections, themes, and patterns. He gave detailed specific feedback on essays that allowed me to improve my writing.
I loved the way Dr. Loss facilitated discussion by asking critical questions and allowed for small table conversations to discuss main ideas. It really allowed me to absorb the material and learn about the issue from different perspectives.
Dr. Loss is an unbelievable professor. Helped stimulate phenomenal class discussions. I am confident in being able to express what I learned in the class, both in speaking and writing assignments. I enjoyed the paper(s) component, I felt that the prompts for the essays were stimulating and enjoyable to write about.
This course gave a very comprehensive overview and understanding of the history of higher education. The lectures explored deeper questions that connected the readings, which didn't always seem connected at first. The ability to go deeper into these topics and see how history impacts higher education as an industry and institutions themselves is interesting.
The open discussion
The readings were well chosen. I found myself wishing we had more chances to write reviews of the books we read, like essay prompt #2. We had so much to read that sometimes I wanted a more direct chance to compare the larger books with one another. I honestly wouldn't have minded weekly two-page book reviews that forced us to be concise in the analysis of what we read. That might also give students more chances to build their writing skills.
I learned the most from readings and lectures. I also learned a great deal from the feedback Dr. Loss provided on my writing. I will be forever grateful.
This was a challenging, and very rewarding course. I appreciated Professor Loss' ability to navigate between levity and gravity, depending upon the topic at hand. He kept the class moving at a brisk pace throughout a broad time period, and was generally able to foster a very robust class discussion on difficult subjects such as race and identity. He has a strong command of the material and is clearly passionate about student learning.
Reading
Professor's passion for the subject matter
The class discussions were extremely helpful. Dr. Loss has a wonderful way of storytelling, which helps us piece together all the different things we learn. The readings, while sometimes overwhelming, were still very good reads. I appreciated the different topics!
Class readings and class discussions were excellent, well framed, and well sequenced. Dr. Loss was engaging and passionate about the subject material, directed class conversation very effectively.

What improvements to the course (HEA 6020 01) would you recommend?

Comments
I didn't particularly enjoy the movies shown in class. Although they were informative, I'm not sure how much additional value it brought to the course. Additionally, the class discussions occasionally felt forced in one directions and it felt difficult for students to speak about a particular topic in a certain way. It would have been nice to be less structured for class discussions.
I would recommend that the instructor creates more of an open forum for class discussions especially on books that are not as guided so students can share their opinions on the book. The professor at times would ask questions about the book that left little room for a student's interpretation.
Dr. Loss has a really tight grip on the class, and I think more conversations and discussion could happen if he loosened the grip just a little, especially toward the middle-to-end of the semester once classroom norms have been established and etiquette is no longer a concern.
The assignments were given irrespective of breaks and holidays which was stressful and frustrating. I was not able to fully take a break for either fall or thanksgiving break. Considering how few assignments there are in this class, I feel like they could be assigned a little more intentionally timing wise.
Perhaps utilize more powerpoints and tech to cement the conversations we have.
Sometimes, I felt that feedback might have been somewhat unspecific. This is mostly regarding the first paper. It was very much—Go Crazy! Might have just been that Dr. Loss and one of my cohort's professors had different styles they preferred writing-wise.
The expectations for writing essays were very unclear. Since this is our first semester here, it would have saved a lot of stress to have gone through some expectations for graduate level writing, because often the feedback on our essays was unclear and I was often left very panicked about my grades but not knowing how to improve. I'm not sure if I'm prepared for future courses in terms of my writing – the way I wrote in undergrad appears not to be how they want it done here...
Maybe spend more tme discussing the issues in history that are still relevant today, like race and gender.
I would guess that the majority of HEA students plan to go on to take university staff positions. For that reason, I would've appreciated a more in-depth study of the role of an administrator within the university, and not just the Chancellors and Presidents. What about context for the kinds of jobs we're most likely to enter? How do we fit into the higher ed. narrative?
I wish that Dr. Loss conducted a mid-semester course evaluation in an attempt to gain information on whether or not the format was working for the class. The reason I say this is that about halfway through the course I started to become a bit frustrated with the facilitation of some class readings/discussions. This could be partially due to the fact that our class wasn't always quick to add to the discussion on the topic. I think that students could then share what adjustments might help them. I know for me that I read thoroughly each class and had points that stuck out in my mind to discuss, but there were a few classes that I left thinking about how none of the major points I took away from readings had been touched upon. Sometimes, we returned to them in the following class which I always appreciated.
I very much enjoyed the documentary about the development of the atomic bomb as well as the free speech movement, the only thing I would recommend is that students be provided links in the syllabus or on brightspace to watch these outside of class so as to maximize in-class time for discussion.
More small group work.
none
Revisit the amount of pages you are assigning. I cannot remember one class where I had actually finished all the readings that were assigned to me. The week of 11/5 was extremely stressful since we were responsible for two books. Do Babies Matter was good, but very repetitive. I valued Paying for the Party a lot more.
Another thing I suggest is diving in to the hard topics a little more. When it came to race, gender, and SES inequalities, it felt as if we avoided discussion on how these issues still occur. Additionally, we ignored the fact that some of our cohort members have experienced some of these inequalities. Maybe they would have liked to share some insight.

Do you have any other comments?

Comments
I enjoyed the course overall!
Nit picky, but could you change the week in the syllabus called "Gender" to "Sex"? If the only population discussed is women (which is fine), then 'sex' or 'women' would be more appropriate titles. Unless there's a chance of including explorations of gender identity and any activism around gender, then 'Gender' would be apt :)
It is clear that Dr. Loss really cares about both the subject matter and his students. All around, it was a really valuable course.
Dr. Loss could be one of my favorite professors I have ever had for all of my post-high school learning. He is dynamic, truly cares about his students, and welcomes hard questions and conversations. I have learned so much in his course and I hope he receives the recognition of being such an amazing professor that he deserves.
Would recommend this class to incoming higher education practitioners and others!
Dr. Loss is a great professor. He is fun, cool, and nice. Also, he is an ally for students, which is great to see considering that will be our job one day as well.
Sometimes Loss's tone was a little off. We covered sensitive historical topics in this course and sometimes it felt like Loss REALLY wanted us to know that he believes in the concepts of diversity and inclusion, so much so that his tone became a little... sickly sweet, I would say. He lays it on a little thick sometimes, which I don't find appropriate for a master's level classroom. We're not 18 and we're not encountering these topics for the first time. We're adults and we can be spoken to as such. This isn't to suggest that Loss doesn't believe in diversity and inclusion. Sometimes it just felt like he was trying too hard, but, honestly, I would take that over and above someone who clearly doesn't care.
Thank you for facilitating a wonderful learning experience!
(This is a very minor gripe) Although it is difficult to avoid contemporary politics, and Professor Loss did a very admirable job of keeping the class focused on the time and place under review, there were a few things that I hope can be avoided in the future. For example, at one point some inaccurate information regarding the educational level of counties supporting Trump or Clinton during the 2016 presidential election was presented to the class. The comment was something along the lines of "the top 30 most educated counties in the nation went for Hillary and the 30 most uneducated counties voted for Trump". A review the following article (https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/education-not-income-predicted-who-would-vote-for-trump/) shows a clear pattern, but also shows that the statement isn't really accurate. Professor Loss is more capable than most at staying above the fray 99% of the time, but even an off-hand comment like this can be harmful at a time when higher education is ostensibly seeking to welcome a diversity of opinion and not be viewed as a bastion of one political party or the other.
Loss somewhat sounds like Paul Rudd
Dr. Loss is an amazing professor. His class was my favorite this semester. His personality made it fun to learn and made time fly. I never found myself checking the time when I was in his class because I always felt engaged. Additionally, he offers his support in so many ways. It was reassuring that I made the right choice by choosing Vanderbilt.