

Student comments- PAR 320: Philosophy of Mind (Fall 2019)

-Dr. Smithson is by far my favorite professor that I have had at uncw. He's an excellent teacher and made the class really interesting and fun. He has such a great personality which made the subject matter more interesting to learn about. Some of the material in this class can be very difficult to understand but he explains things in different ways and makes sure that individuals understand the material.

-Absolutely amazing course. I was excited to attend this class each day! Professor Smithson is a fabulous teacher who has clearly taken the time (i'd imagine many years!) to interpret and understand dense Philosophical works. Whilst doing this he has also clearly critically analysed the works, and introduced his own thought (I guess that's where the PhD thinking comes in). The most important part about his teaching style that I would like to acknowledge is that he does not just repeat all the Philosophical work he has learned over the years. He has taken the time to figure out how he can explain the theories simply yet extremely effectively to a class of students who are hearing the theories for the first time. I think he appreciates the fact that it's important for philosophy to be explained at a base level first so the student can understand the problem and why philosophers have pondered it. Once Smithson knew we grasped the concept, he guided us through the relevant theories of the concept with exceptional detail and humour thrown in. Smithson also took the time to create excellent hand out sheets of the topics studied in class. The class overall was taught in a logical way. I understood what we were learning each week and how it fit into the bigger picture of philosophy of mind. I've taken other Philosophy courses that fail to zoom out, and show the big puzzle, therefore it's hard to understand how each piece relates. Improvements:
-When initially introducing the concept we are learning, I think the pure amazement of what we're actually studying could be stressed a little more. I personally comprehend it and enter a different realm of thought, but when I studied with a few others from class it seems they can repeat the words in the philosophical question being asked, but aren't understanding its value. They aren't comprehending how amazing the questions truly are (maybe it's just a subjective thing though, and i'm more interested in it than others), but they sometimes seem to disengage/ zone out cause they aren't forcing their brain to grasp what the Professor is saying. As i've mentioned I think Smithson has made the content simple and effective therefore the content is fine, and it is up to the student to forcibly turn their attention to the class work and thought experiments and make their brain think - and it's not an easy task. So i'm not sure how the Professor would stress how amazing the content is, cause he already uses humour to gain our attention. But maybe use more pictures, the pictures were really good when they were used in some topics. Also maybe like bring in a fake prompt of a brain - sit it on the table so students can stare at it as the Professor is talking and think "so the Materialist thinks that the brain sitting on the table also contains our consciousness... okay". So, images and prompts help students force their brains to focus on the class content. I think that's my only improvement comment. Overall, Smithson clearly loves Philosophy and enjoys teaching. He is an inspirational person and a Professor I will never forget.

-I really liked the structure and classroom environment for this course.

-Dr. Smithson was a great and funny teacher! Always brought a smile to my face

-Really great and engaging professor. Keeps things interesting and makes it easy to understand difficult content

-Amazing and passionate teacher who does a great job of explaining difficult material. Keeps students interested and entertained during lectures despite the heaviness of the matter.

-Although the course material was very difficult, Dr. Smithson tried his best to explain topics in a variety of ways hoping one would stick for all students. However that was not always the case. As about half of the class was not majoring in philosophy, many times I wished he would consider the ways in which us psych majors learned: the building blocks are laid out and understood before bigger ideas were attempted. He tried to do this sometimes, but many times I did not understand the basics therefore the big idea seemed far bigger than I could understand.

-Great professor that really cares about his students. He works hard to keep students laughing and engaged while mastering the content. The teaching at times can be confusing but the handouts and some in-class examples help. The content is tricky, but manageable, it makes you question and think. I enjoyed this class and the high level of energy Dr. Smithson brought every class period. I also enjoyed all of his stories.

-He always took the time to explain difficult terminology in a way that could be understood. He would not glaze over things or take for granted that students understood what he was talking about. Went in-depth with things, and was always open to any questions.

-Engaging course and professor always made sure to help us with any questions.

-You are very funny and kinda cool and I enjoyed learning the content a lot, thanks for making the class fun and unpredictable. Keep on wheelin

-great teacher, thank you.

-Dr. Smithson is a true gem of a professor, his passion for philosophy is evident every class. I would recommend him and any of his classes to anyone looking to further their knowledge in the field.

-The concepts are hard to understand and follow at times. Most of the time, the prof. just talks about them and expects students to know perfectly what is going on and to follow, but it is easy to get lost on one of the topics. Since he just talks about the concepts, it would be more helpful to create Powerpoints to supplement his discussions and examples and that way follow along more easily.