

Student comments- PHIL 231: Modern Philosophy

The comments provided below are complete and unedited (except when needed to protect anonymity).

-The professor is easily one of the best professors I have ever had. If a student needed help in any way, he was always willing to meet up at a later time to go over the material more in depth.

-Dr. Smithson is one of the best educators I've ever had.

-I like that Dr. Smithson doesn't hand out grades. You have to work. I reference his class constantly because I feel like I take so much away from it.

-Dr. Smithson is honestly one of the greatest teachers I've had at Rollins, and I'm not even a philosophy major. Rollins should seriously consider hiring him again soon...

-I feel that I have been given a good survey of major themes in the philosophy of science, and that I am equipped to form opinions about other readings I have come across in the discipline. I also feel that Dr. Smithson has given me exactly what I need to piece together in order to understand the over all structure and movement of the discipline. A great deal of the benefit I derived from the course was due to the professor's demeanor and style of teaching...

-Dr. Smithson is incredibly knowledgeable and has published multiple works pertaining to the philosophy of science. His teaching style is unique and incredibly enjoyable. His lectures are informative and a joy to listen to. He is without question one of the most knowledgeable professors I have had, and certainly conveys the course material better than almost anyone. I wouldn't say I experienced any weaknesses of his should they exist.

-EXTREMELY available and supportive. Best work ethic I've ever seen in a professor. I'm sad he's leaving.

-The assignments Dr. Smithson gave were always so downright reasonable. I don't know how else to say it. Like, it was all to the point. I felt like I could really focus on learning and demonstrating an understanding of the material. Dr. Smithson never weighed us down with lengthy assignments, so the course was nothing but enjoyably challenging to me. It was so nice not to stress. I could just...learn! And Dr. Smithson always gave constructive feedback on my work.

-I've purchased a few philosophy of physics books for personal reading because of this course. I'm definitely excited to learn more.

-I've never thought about science this way before and as a science major, I think it is extremely important and this class has inspired me to think and learn about it more.

-The instructor knows the material extremely well and is passionate about it.

-Dr. Smithson's teaching style and helpfulness, as well as the engaging class lectures. Outdoor class sessions didn't hurt.

-Dr. Smithson was the main reason this course was enjoyable. He did a great job engaging with the material, bringing in relevant examples, and ensuring to take breaks when the discussion becomes too dense.

-Dr. Smithson made this course a positive learning experience from my perspective. His depth of knowledge and expertise surrounding the subject, as well as his timely

implementation of humor to break up the intensity of the course material, was incredibly enjoyable and facilitated a deeper understanding of the material.

-Dr. Smithson has a different style than most teachers. He breaks up difficult theoretical discussions with engaging digressions to make sure everyone stays engaged. I also thought he chose good readings that clearly explained the material.

-I love Dr. Smithson's personality and teaching style - everything is great, his personality makes him great and entertaining

-Funny

-The humor and enthusiasm of the professor

-The course overall is very challenging but that is on the student to ensure he does well

-While I enjoyed the unit on physics, I would've preferred to spend more time on the biology unit. I guess because I've never taken a physics class, so it was more difficult for me to grasp it all. And biology is a favorite subject of mine.

-Before I took this course the philosophy of physics seemed intimidating and intractable. At no fault of Dr. Smithson's it still is, but now I have a greater sense of the general outline and direction of this incredibly important field. In all honestly, this was perhaps the most important and fascinating portion of the course and our the time we spent reviewing core concepts within was well spent.

-The philosophy of physics section of the course was difficult to understand for a lot of reasons, so I think it would be good to go slower and explain a little more because if you missed anything, then you would be lost the rest of the unit. Plus for non science majors the topic is even more daunting.

-Dr. Smithson is extremely receptive to our mid-course evaluations and addressed the concerns I had immediately.

-I think we spent too much time on the Philosophy of Physics segment, or perhaps misused our time. i do not understand physics

-Parts of the discussion could have been moderated better. The professor was very welcoming of students' questions, but oftentimes the class would have to wait while students who seemed unprepared asked questions that did not benefit the class as a whole. This was slightly irritating and made for fruitless discussion sometimes. Also, though I thought the unit on values/feminist philosophy of science was important, I felt it could have been made shorter. Perhaps the time we spent on that could have been allocated to the stuff about the new problem of induction.

-I think the only thing that would've been better was if we had spent more time on physics subjects like quantum mechanics.

-The background readings at the beginning of the semester were very helpful, I would have liked those to continue. Also, a bit more variety in graded assignment.

-I do not think anything could have been changed for the better.

-I don't believe there is anything that I would change about the course.

-He thinks incredibly quick on his feet and he is able to provide helpful analogies and metaphors whenever requested. Pedagogically, the good sense of humor shouldn't be underestimated, and Dr. Smithson could probably be a stand-up comic if he wanted to.

-Strengths: Able to explain complicated material in various ways and is able to come up with new ways of explaining if people don't understand. Also, he is great at bringing levity to class which helps us focus in the long run. Weaknesses: Spilled oil one time.

-The professor is very knowledgeable about this subject and very enthusiastic

-Dr. Smithson is great at being relatable to students, keeping class morale high, and guiding students through the material in a logical, intuitive manner. It would have been interesting to do some formal debates in this class, or have gone to one of the speakers on campus to bring current scientific trends into the classroom.

-never really any weakness, he engages with the class and that's great

-Strengths: Highly knowledgeable (more so than any professor I have ever had in my years at Rollins). Always available for questions after class. Seems to be thoroughly invested in teaching philosophy. Is really good at stepping back and assessing the overall structure at play, but can also offer very meticulous information on a given topic. Very understanding. He's principled and thoughtful. For example, I got the impression that every assignment was given for a reason, that every reading or point or joke made in the discussion was supposed to do something particular, and when his assignments, say, didn't fulfill an important purpose, he scrapped them. Weaknesses: -He sometimes assumes that students (especially philosophy majors) have more background than we do. He doesn't do this as much during class, but in office hours he can talk forever. Everything he says is useful, but it's difficult to keep up. (I am sorry for saying mostly nice things, but my criticism is *actually* limited).

-Highly knowledgeable and passionate, however sometimes expects the class to pick up on material that we fail to go over in class.

-Dr. Smithson is good at getting to the heart of issues and explaining them clearly. He is also great at working with students and finding time to meet with them if they need help. Perhaps he does go too fast in explaining complex ideas, and I am sure only a few students in the class could understand everything completely. It would help to slow down and think about some of the more important stuff more so that students can feel the full extent of problems and their implications.

-Strengths: -humor, listening to students' desires, ability to explain complex ideas in a way that is digestible. Weaknesses -occasionally overestimates the abilities of undergraduate students. Sometimes I feel like even if I put in 15 hours of work I'll still do poorly on assignments. But he is always there to help.

-Major strength: Earnestness. He's honest and practical about teaching. He's perceptive to the energy of the class, and when it wanes he's not afraid to diverge from the material to make us laugh and regain our attention. Weakness: Maybe this is just me being sensitive, but sometimes Dr. Smithson would talk about something like it's easy to understand, or like we should be familiar with it already, and it made me feel self-conscious because I didn't get it. This happened with the physics unit a few times. But he usually realized it and apologized, or made sure we knew he was joking.

-Some major strengths of the instructor are that he knows the material very well. He teaches in a way that makes sense, and always does his best to explain all the material. The instructor also has a good sense of humor which makes the class that much more enjoyable.

-Vegetable oil

-The professor showed excellence in all areas.

-Dr. Smithson is an incredibly gifted and dedicated professor who puts the needs of his students first. He has the devil-may-care attitude of a slightly disillusioned PhD grad which fosters camaraderie between himself and his students, yet he is also skilled at maintaining a healthy level of power distance through his quick wit and theatrical style.

He was almost always available to help students and takes almost ludicrous amounts of time helping students as they wrestle with concepts in office hours.

-It was very clear that Dr. Smithson understood all of the material and was able to engage with all perspectives on the readings. He also seemed extremely passionate and engaged in the material himself.

-Dr. Smithson was always incredibly helpful both inside and outside of class. He's aware that every student learns differently, so he takes the time to explain the material in a variety of ways. I really appreciate his use of examples – he's left his mark on Rollins, that's for sure.

-He is very concerned with helping students succeed.

-Always able to draw and keep our attention and is able to explain material extremely well. I never tried to meet him outside of class so I'm not sure about his availability.

-always happy and joking around makes the class light

-Science experiments

-Professor is great, patient, and respectful

-Stellar to say the least.

-There were no pointless assignments or busywork.

-The homework was challenging but helped the learning process

-he is super dope

-The class was very well organized and he was a fair grader.

-Because of the nature of the course, it was easy to feel lost. Especially due to its interdisciplinary nature, I sometimes felt as if I did not know what was expected of me on certain assignments pertaining to math. But Dr. Smithson is always present to help.

-I would have liked to see some rubrics for grading on papers.

-We always have great discussions in class and the readings are very interesting.

- Great at everything - Course was put together very well.

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- Dr. Smithson is probably one of the most prepared professors I've ever had and takes his subject as seriously as a professor in the sciences, which is rare to find. I wish more philosophy classes were structured like his classes.

-This class was one of my favorite classes i've ever taken.

-This course was great. While some topics were harder to grasp than others, it was all a nice challenge. I looked forward to investigating new topics. I feel like the course really helped me to improve my ability to think critically. Science is often seen as an unquestionably authoritative thing, but even the "harder" sciences like physics have their gray areas. It was interesting to turn the subject on its head.

-Difficult yet worth it.

-Loved it

-performance is always on point

-I struggled quite a bit with learning the concepts and doing the activities of this class but it was enjoyable nonetheless

-I could have read the material a bit more critically.

-Good Class!

-He draws engagement from the students and did from me as well. - I credit/no credited this class so I didn't always try my best, but I still enjoyed learning everything we did and I was excited to come to this class every day.

-Challenge: The course would have been more challenging had we focused on induction and philosophy of physics, but rigor is not always the goal and the topics covered made the class a good survey of the field. Maybe we could have focused on more challenging issues in the values/feminist philosophy unit? - Participation: I didn't participate much in class, though I was always engaged. I did ask the professor all of my questions after class. This was partially because I felt that many of the questions being asked by students in class detracted from the clarity of the lecture instead of helping the class grasp the concepts.

-More knowledgeable now than before taking this course.

-Professor is very effective and will be missed at Rollins

-Great

-This class allowed me to see the world in a different way with the knowledge gained.

-Problem sets like the special relativity exercises really drove the concepts into my head and helped me to solve problems in ways that I later found were necessary to understanding the material. ... He taught the course like a good philosophy course should be taught, so students were required to think critically. I was particularly affected by the demarcation problem and by the problem of induction. These were topics that I had been thinking about, but I had not explored the literature, so the reading was very helpful. And I changed my position with regard to both topics. The philosophy of physics unit had a similar effect on me.

-It was an interesting and important topic.

-This class truly engaged me to consider scientific theories in a new light.

-10/10 would take this course again