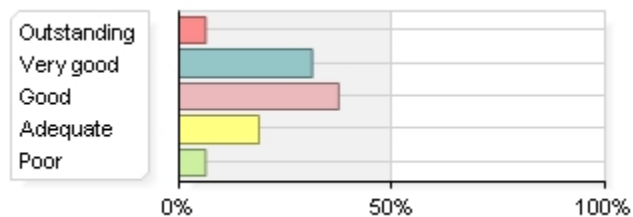


Relative to your knowledge at the beginning of this course, how would you rate the learning that you have achieved in the subject?



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Outstanding	5	1	6.3%
Very good	4	5	31.3%
Good	3	6	37.5%
Adequate	2	3	18.8%
Poor	1	1	6.3%

Statistics	Value
Mean	3.13
Standard Deviation	1.02

Additional Comments for Jeffrey Elhai

Comments

Jeff is taking a big stance in trying to educate students on how to think on their own in a society that has spent years trying to teach them otherwise. While I am appreciative in some aspects of this course, I do also feel sometimes Jeff could have been more understanding of this and patient with students. I mean, he may very well actually be, sometimes he just comes off as condescending and snarky. Overall, thankful for some of his feedback and his quotes. He offers really great quotes.

There are so many assignments and so much information packed into this course that I maintained a constant high level of stress throughout this semester because of it. I know that you've been teaching it this way for years, and have gotten this complaint many times, but it's almost too much work for a 3 credit class. You're a great professor, I loved all of the feedback, and the questionnaires were an integral part of how I learned so much from this class, but it got overshadowed by the amount of work.

This class should be turned into an online course where the research proposal is assigned and is a semester long project for the class. Exams and problem sets were of no education since they required time and not provoked thought to complete, and use of the BioBlke was almost like using a 1982 IBM prototype instead of the current and updated technology that is present and relevant to the field. Professor Elhai is well suited for providing feedback on the scientific method but can not effectively and efficiently teach it to students. Again save the class space and student time and make the course online.

In order to get students to be engaged in the course and have buy in for the material, this class really needs to be graded in the traditional A-F scale. Otherwise, students will slack and makes this course less about making them independent but a bottleneck course which prevents students from graduating and is seen as a meant to break you. The materials can easily be put into a point scale where different assignments can have different point values and students can choose what assignments they want to complete and leave others they do not want to do. That or a complete grade replacement with the final project presentation.

The biggest problem I have with this course is feeling lost. I have done every single assignment. Not all of these assignments were required but I did them none the less out of fear that I would get an incomplete as a final grade, a

Comments

fate similar to purgatory. The amount of work I put into to these tedious assignments, that forced us to use an online program that crashes 85% of the time (BioBike, created by Jeff Elhai) was ridiculous. The fact that they did count was really annoying and I felt that I should have spent my time on other classes. That being said, I learned a lot from them, and they definitely helped me on the exams. The second portion of the course focusing on a research proposal was the hardest thing I have ever had to do. That being said I also learned a lot from this experience. Jeff may be a condescending dickhead at times, who likes to belittle people, he pretended to fall asleep when I opened a document on my laptop, but I did learn. I put a lot of work into this class and he has recognized that and has given me very useful feedback that will help my improve my work. All I can say is that he needs to work on his people skills and realize that this is not the only class we are taking.

Jeff and this class quite simply is a nightmare. This is a soul crushing class asking way too much for the students it's geared for (sophomores). There is no defined way to assess how you are actually doing in the class. There is no metric to know if the work produced for the class is adequate or if more effort is needed to improve how a student is doing in the class. This is infuriating and terrifying--as this is my last semester, I need to pass this class and not knowing how I stand in the class significantly increased my problems with anxiety and depression.

His feedback is at times helpful, but all that stuck with me was how rude and standoffish he was during required meetings with him and the rude things he wrote in feedback. He called a friend 'schizophrenic' and said I was led by blind rage and am an idiot. Nothing else stuck out about his feedback other than the negative things he wrote in feedback. As a student with mental health issues and a friend to many people who have them, him calling my friend 'schizophrenic' is extremely insulting and not at all an okay thing to do. While I understand what he's attempting--trying to push our buttons to succeed. However he completely lacks the social skills and/or tact to effectively accomplish his goal.

In regards to the class structure, the proposal and the molecular bio together is a near impossible feat. The proposal itself is a giant undertaking and is intimidating, but Jeff treats it as an afterthought. Having such an important aspect (usually considered the only thing needed to pass) of the class be treated as an afterthought is disheartening and the molecular bio information expected of students to read and learn is more than a standard class alone. This class has too much going on for it to be shoved into a single class and for students to feel as if it is manageable with a standard course load. This class should be split into two, one with the proposal and one with the molecular bio material.

Jeff needs to rework this class or not teach it at all. Having the proposal in the class and trying to teach molecular bio at the same time does not work well. One or the other in my opinion. This class is known to be a "mind-game" which it should not be at all. I recommend having the class completely committed to the proposal and not have it treated as a afterthought. Having assignments with no deadlines do not help and having a teacher who lacks social skills does not work either. I understand Jeff is trying to help us grow and become independent in the science field is for our benefit, but he lacks at the encouragement aspect and causes stress. Students don't come to class so that don't have to deal with him and they are less likely to reach out to him which causes their grade to suffer. Having a teacher that says your answers are "schizophrenic" (I have proof of this) or calls you an angry idiot is not good for the student. What if that student actually has a mental illness and they are trying to better their mental health? This class should not be the one everyone is afraid of, it should be the one where they are excited to take and research a proposal that interests them. Basically either the class needs to be redone or Jeff should not be teaching this class anymore.

This class would be great if Jeff wasn't so rude to people. I know people who are scared to talk to him because he is just that rude. Actually, let me rephrase the first sentence- the class would be great if he wasn't so rude and if we had a lower volume of work. Both of those things would really help and I suspect people would turn more assignments in/be involved in the assignments given if there wasn't a problem set to do every week. Once every 2 weeks might be better, OR make them smaller so that we can cover most problems during class.

Thank you Mr. Jeff for this interesting journey. I traveled through the minds of others, seen how frustration can change someone mentality, and enjoyed the "game".

in terms of addition, this course made me read and better understand the outlines of human thinking, to better understand the actually of scientific findings, and to believe in me.

thank you :)

to improve:

I struggled to find a mentor, as an international student, that was an extra burden to handle. After asking 6 people, I was so happy to find one! sadly, he wasn't that much of a help. he did help a little, but overall, I had to do every thing by myself. I benefited more from you and my phage lab professor and google more than my own mentor. So my advise is this:

this course should provide some plan b for finding a mentor.

thank you again3

Comments

To start, Professor Elhai's website contains several instances where he states the phrase "Islam is not our enemy". While I understand why Professor Elhai may feel the need to share these remarks, I do believe them to be inappropriate to be placed on a VCU website that students must visit in order to succeed in the course. If he would like to tuck the statement away into his resume/CV that would be completely fine. But, placing it in plain sight for students to view on a regular basis is not appropriate. His personal religious views should be kept to himself. As someone who seems very professional, his lack of online professional demeanor is disappointing.

Moving onto the course itself:

Any and all levels of growth that were made in this course were on my efforts and were not supplemented by Professor Elhai's role. What I mean by this, is that whether Professor Elhai was the instructor of this course or no instructor was present for this course (meaning it was completely self-taught and self-instructed) made absolutely no difference. He did not provide any guidance or support towards achieving a successful proposal. During our meeting times, he was unenthusiastically slouched in his chair, and offered no advice. Instead, he informed me of the inadequacy of my proposal with no direction on how to improve it. Instead he simply would blankly stare at me, as if I was supposed to magically pull the answer out of my head. The course itself is well structured, I just don't believe that Professor Elhai should be the one executing it. I understand the method in which he thinks he is challenging students, but I've had plenty of professors from this department challenge me in constructive and helpful ways (Professor Shozo, Professor Johnson, and Professor Huang-Wolen). I would encourage Professor Elhai to spend more time with these professors and see how he may better his methods. If not, I would strongly recommend that Professor Elhai consider research full time and retire from teaching.