

YHU2241: Why Be Moral?

AY2021/22 Semester 1 | Neil Mehta

Teaching Score Analysis

Response Rate

Raters	Students
Responded	18
Invited	18
Response Ratio	100%

Quantitative

Overall Mean Score

Competency	Faculty Score
Overall Mean	4.86

Breakdown Mean Score for each statement

	# Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable	Standard Deviation	Mean
The course was effectively organized.	18	0	0	0	1	17	0	0.24	4.94
The course clearly articulated objectives and expectations.	18	0	0	0	1	17	0	0.24	4.94
The course assignments helped me learn.	18	0	1	0	1	16	0	0.73	4.78
The instructor helped me understand course materials and concepts.	18	0	0	0	1	17	0	0.24	4.94
The instructor encouraged student participation and/or engagement.	18	0	0	0	2	16	0	0.32	4.89
The instructor provided constructive feedback on my work.	18	0	1	0	1	16	0	0.73	4.78
The instructor was helpful outside of class.	18	0	0	1	3	14	0	0.57	4.72

Faculty Mean Score Comparison

Question	Faculty Score (Neil Mehta)		Major Score (Philosophy)		Division Score (Humanities)		Students		College (Yale-NUS College)	
	Response Count	Mean	Response Count	Mean	Response Count	Mean	Response Count	Mean	Response Count	Mean
The course was effectively organized.	32	4.97	78	4.65	400	4.62	18	4.94	2274	4.51
The course clearly articulated objectives and expectations.	32	4.97	78	4.63	400	4.62	18	4.94	2274	4.52
The course assignments helped me learn.	32	4.88	78	4.64	400	4.73	18	4.78	2273	4.58
The instructor helped me understand course materials and concepts.	32	4.94	78	4.65	398	4.75	18	4.94	2249	4.64
The instructor encouraged student participation and/or engagement.	32	4.94	78	4.72	398	4.79	18	4.89	2247	4.64
The instructor provided constructive feedback on my work.	32	4.88	78	4.46	398	4.69	18	4.78	2244	4.55
The instructor was helpful outside of class.	31	4.84	75	4.67	385	4.77	18	4.72	2201	4.64
Overall	-	4.91	-	4.63	-	4.71	-	4.86	-	4.58

Number of hours spent per week, outside the scheduled class meetings. [1]

Name	1hr	2hrs	3hrs	4hrs	5hrs	6hrs	7hrs	8hrs	9hrs	10hrs
YHU2241: Why Be Moral?	0	0	1	3	4	4	3	0	0	1

Number of hours spent per week, outside the scheduled class meetings. [2]

Name	11hrs	12hrs	13hrs	14hrs	15hrs	16hrs	17hrs	18hrs	19hrs	20hrs	N/A	Mean
YHU2241: Why Be Moral?	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6.12

Course Comments

What were the main concepts and skills you learned in this course?

Comments
I learned how to be precise and how to take initiative.
I learned how to organize and clearly articulate arguments and their premises. I've also learnt how to evaluate and object to said arguments systematically. In addition, I've gained a newfound appreciation of a variety of metaethical theories, the knowledge of which has helped me expand my own view of morality, or elucidate why I disagree with a particular metaethical view.
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As a part of the program, we inquired into the different concepts pertaining to the origins of morality. To this end, we thoroughly investigated the arguments of Enoch, Hume, Kant, Mackie, and Korsgaard.
How to be moral.
So many! But mainly learning how to be precise and how to structure my arguments, and coming up with objections.
– externalism, internalism, monism, error theory – evaluating arguments, different argument forms, how to express objections
5 different answers to the question, why be moral?, the ethical thinking of those thinkers. Argument forms and structures, evaluation of arguments, a number of writing and thinking skills, being precise in speaking and writing.
1) Skills on how to be a better analytical philosopher. 2) Skills on how to continue to learn in life.
I cherished both.
Philosophical skills and writing skills. Philosophical argument forms. An in–depth understanding of various philosophers' views on the metaphysics of ethics.
How to understand and break apart a thinker's argument, and how to come up with rigorous objections.
Argumentative skills, writing skills, and intellectual virtues.
argumentative & writing skills.
Ethical and meta–ethical theories – internalism, externalism, monism and error theory Writing clearly and concisely, evaluating arguments
Many skills on argumentation, writing skills, and critical thinking.
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Thinking about ethics, and how we think about ethics. Interrogating what we take for granted, which might be our own deep–seated beliefs: ideas about morality. Being charitable and thoughtful towards other ideas about morality, and in doing so, being much more open–minded to new ideas. Philosophical writing, discussion skills, argumentation, being open–minded, extending our own learning, learning to accept uncertainty were some of the many other skills we learned as well. Personally, learning about the different approaches to understanding morality was a very important and sincere experience to me.
Metaethical theories, but more crucially, being comfortable with failure.

What helped you learn? Please provide examples such as reading materials, activities, assignments, and the instructor's distinctive teaching methods.

Comments
The warm ups and cool downs helped me to learn the most
Prof. Mehta's weekly assignments were well structured and useful in developing my writing and argumentative skills, in addition to helping me understand certain parts of the readings better. His lessons are also extremely compelling, and I feel like I've genuinely learnt a lot from his seminars.
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Assignments and handouts were particularly helpful. They were well-organized and thoughtful. The workload was manageable and well-planned.
Seminars and homework exercises were highly helpful.
All of the homework handouts were wonderful! Neil's teaching is fantastic.
– weekly handouts – seminar time
The handouts were really helpful! Having the content you wanted us to pick up on right next to questions where you got us to apply them was a very format to have. Having feedback halfway through the week and then an opportunity to adjust for the cool down exercise is also very smart. Application of those skills in class is also very useful. I think just being very specific and knowing what skills exactly you want us to develop and cultivate, and giving us all the opportunities to apply them is very useful. The readings were also all pretty interesting. The Wang felt like the weakest link, but was still largely enjoyable.
Most helped me learn the most was grappling directly with the arguments themselves by considering objections and how they would talk to each other.
In-class engagement from the prof and group discussions were the most effective. The prof is no doubt very engaging. However, some of the homework assignments were repetitive – especially the questions catered towards extending learning to beyond the classroom and self-reflection. While coming from good intentions, the second half of the course had too much of these questions that it felt like a chore doing them.
The no-screen policy made everyone more engaged in class, and I like the slow pace of using the whiteboard, giving us time to process the information. The method of calling on us also made sure everyone kept paying attention.
The handouts were helpful and the instructor's very structured class and being clear on his expectations and what learning outcomes were to be achieved were helpful because I would then know what work I need to put in in order to satisfy (+go beyond) the learning outcomes.
good structure of learning materials.
Readings, weekly assignments, class discussions and questions
Homework assignments, though tiring, were really good for applying skills and practicing for essays. The assignments also ensure that you cannot slack off. Neil's method of calling on students randomly also prevents people from zoning out in class, and keeps everyone very engaged. Finally, Neil's essay comments are extremely helpful and precise.
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Neil is always very prepared, organized, and structured with his lesson plans and homework assignments. His assignments are designed such that every student will come prepared with the knowledge required to understand the class, and I find this very important. He also ensures that every student speaks at least once in a class, and tailors the class environment such that nobody speaks too often or too few times. This is extremely important. Maintaining a balanced class atmosphere is key to a good class, which Neil delivers every time!
Class was very well-structured and the mini-lectures at the start of class really help to clear up and confusion that happens when attempting homework.

Please elaborate on your previous responses or address other issues such as class dynamics or atmosphere.

Comments
I think the only issue I had with the class was the way class participation worked. I think Neil was too fixated on making sure that everyone got a chance to speak that sometimes people would have to answer questions that they had not yet thought about yet and weren't ready to (which other students may have. I left many classes frustrated with the time wasted asking people questions they didn't want to answer or not being able to answer questions that I wanted to because that would help me clarify my doubts.]
I really appreciate how Prof. Mehta facilitated an environment where failures were encouraged as part of a larger learning process.

Comments

He also takes care to ensure that everyone in the class has ample time to consider (and then answer) the questions asked in class. The only genuine complaint I have about his classes is that they aren't longer.

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I have a few suggestions on how to further improve the course:

1) More readings, especially those that elaborate on the context and implications of the analyzed discussion, might be assigned. These could even be optional, but I feel that it might be helpful to satiate the interest of those who would want to delve deeper into the academic debate.

2) Some questions in the assignments can be asked with less regularity. For example, the questions on the mistakes we made inspires self-reflection. However, because this questions is asked for every seminar, I have felt the need to come up with mistakes, even though I felt that I did not make any significant mistakes. Perhaps, asking this question on a weekly basis would inspire more mindful deliberation.

Class dynamics fosters learning, but I'd like to see more freedom in class. Sometimes classes feel too structured.

The class participation was fruitful and intentional, greatly appreciated it!

good class dynamic, liked that it was a very structures class discussion

Class dynamic was good, though I felt like at points when the class was struggling we perhaps spent a bit too much time floundering waiting for someone to get it right/provide the correct answer. I think with some more difficult passages or concepts, it would've been good for you to lecture more about the content. I liked the extra context that was given from the second half of the semester onwards, I think it's good to know even if it doesn't particularly enhance our philosophical understanding, from a historical perspective it's neat to know about that sort of thing. While I think it's good to make students be stumped and to intellectually challenge them by putting them on the spot with questions in class, I think guidance could sometimes be a bit more forthcoming when it's the case that they don't know where to start. Some time dedicated to going over weekly exercise questions during seminar could also be good, particularly if there are common areas of weakness or things that the class didn't do well as a whole.

I liked how Neil controlled the class dynamics. It meant that no student felt less able to speak up and the benefit of those who would.

It was a great idea to loosen up the usual structure of the class to allow students to ask more questions. I think this relaxed the atmosphere of the class since the prof is rather intense.

Class dynamic was always very focused, but sometimes a little tense because of the calling-on-students method and because none of us were mentally absent on our screens like in our classes.

As the professor controlled the class participation quite well, making sure everyone had a chance to speak instead of a few classmates hogging the floor/asking questions no one else cared about, the class dynamics were always balanced. Most people paid attention, which adds to the overall learning atmosphere (especially during discussions).

class feels very accommodating and fair

Readings were short but very clear and effective in bringing to light certain arguments. Class discussions focused a lot on depth and rigorous evaluation of arguments, which was very satisfying. It was quality over quantity, and completely changed the way I see philosophy.

Neil created a very dynamic and engaged class. Most important was the addition of question time. It is also excellent that no matter how hard someone struggles to answer a question, Neil keeps encouraging them to give it a try.

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Neil is a fantastic seminar professor. He is kind, supportive, encouraging, and very real. He doesn't really over-give help, he always pushes us to learn and it is through our struggling to come up with the appropriate answers either in writing or discussion that makes the learning shine through the most. He always encourages us to answer even and especially when we don't know the answer, because that shows that we are learning. Neil has also showed his flexibility in seminar by making class more Q&A based so that people can ask more questions outside of regular discussion turn. I have never dreaded a Neil class, his classes are always a joy to go to.

Perhaps owing to half the class being sophomores, this class feels slower, with a bit more hand-holding. That in itself is not a bad thing, but there were some classmates intent on forcibly pushing their own intuitions during question time which I found sometimes disrupted the flow of the class.