

Title: **A and S DEFAULT Course Evaluation Instructor/TA Form**

Dates: **12/01/2014 - 12/10/2014**

Course: **POLSG8823\_001\_2014\_3/Debates on International Peace**

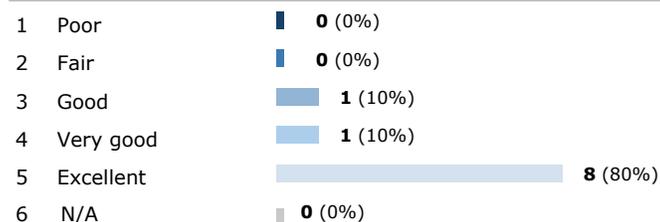
Responses: **10/11 - 90.91%**

Number of Participants: **11**

Enrollment of All Students: **11**

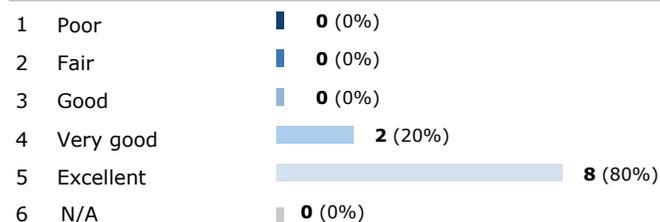
Graph Course Questions

**1 The clarity of assignments N=10**



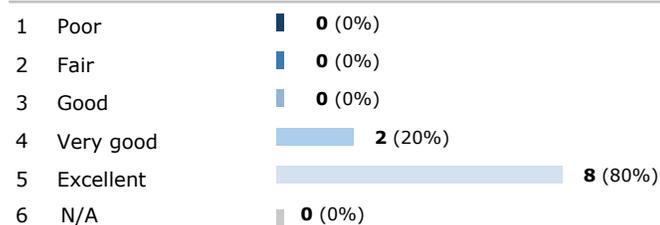
Median **5** Interpolated Median **4.88** Mean **4.70** Std Dev **0.67**

**2 Instructor's feedback N=10**



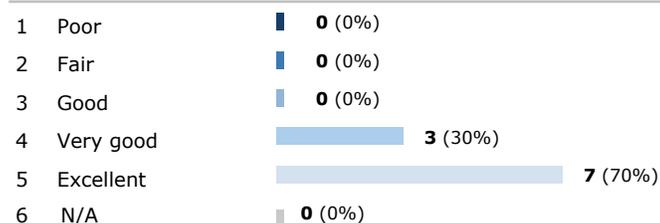
Median **5** Interpolated Median **4.88** Mean **4.80** Std Dev **0.42**

**3 Appropriateness of grading N=10**



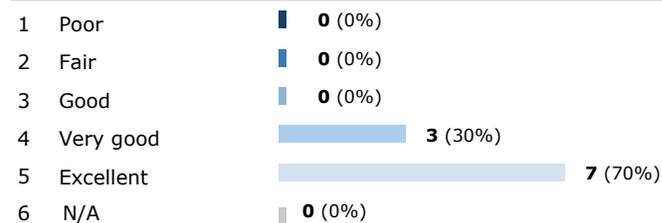
Median **5** Interpolated Median **4.88** Mean **4.80** Std Dev **0.42**

**4 Overall value of readings N=10**



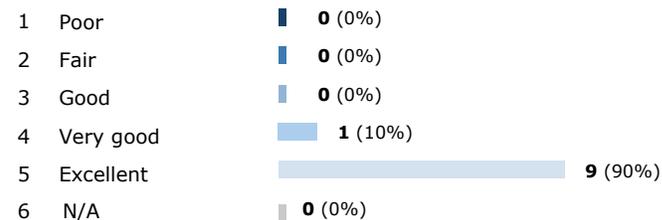
Median **5** Interpolated Median **4.79** Mean **4.70** Std Dev **0.48**

**5 Overall value of assignments N=10**



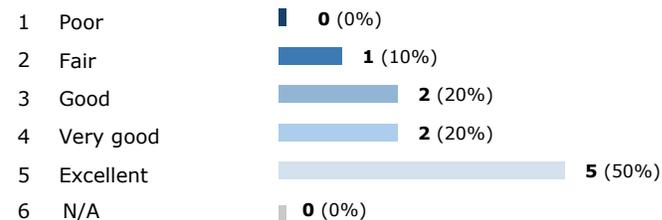
Median **5** Interpolated Median **4.79** Mean **4.70** Std Dev **0.48**

**6 Contribution to your knowledge of the subject matter N=10**



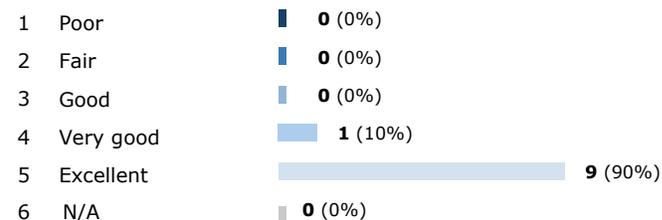
Median **5** Interpolated Median **4.94** Mean **4.90** Std Dev **0.32**

**7 Contribution to your interest in the discipline or subject matter N=10**



Median **4.5** Interpolated Median **4.50** Mean **4.10** Std Dev **1.10**

**8 Contribution to your capacity for critical evaluation of the subject matter N=10**



Median **5** Interpolated Median **4.94** Mean **4.90** Std Dev **0.32**

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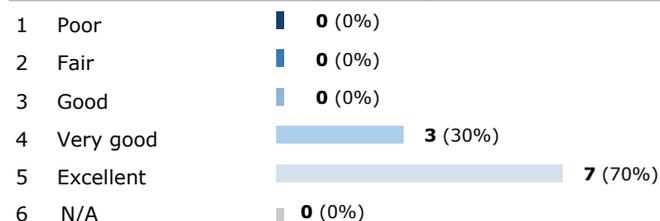
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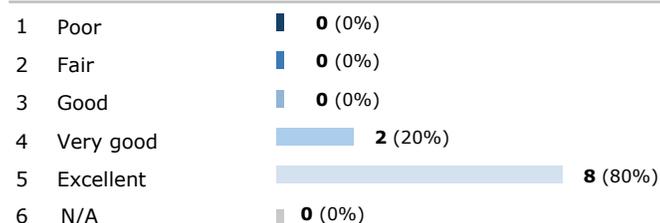
Graph Course Questions

**9 Contribution to the development of your analytical and reasoning skills in general** **N=10**



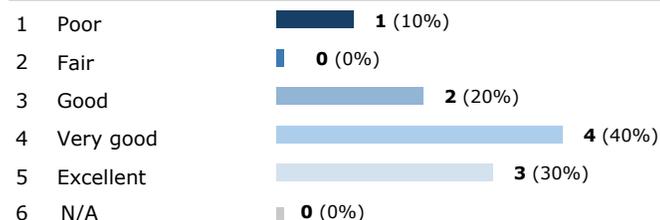
Median **5** Interpolated Median **4.79** Mean **4.70** Std Dev **0.48**

**10 Overall quality of the course** **N=10**



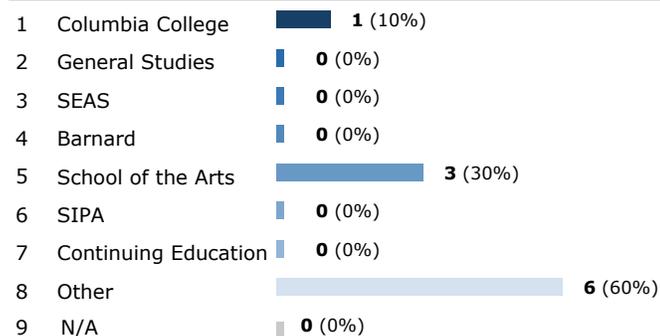
Median **5** Interpolated Median **4.88** Mean **4.80** Std Dev **0.42**

**11 Condition and function of the physical classroom** **N=10**



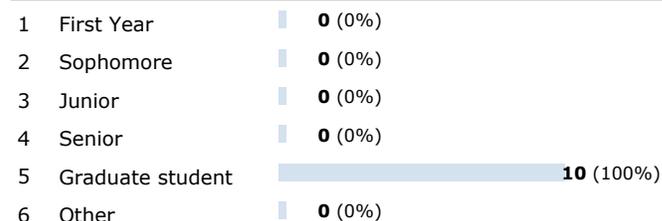
Median **4** Interpolated Median **4.00** Mean **3.80** Std Dev **1.23**

**12 Please select your school affiliation** **N=10**



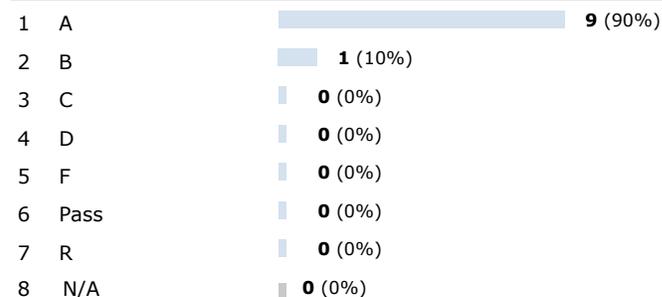
Median **8** Interpolated Median **7.67** Mean **6.40** Std Dev **2.37**

**13 Please select year** **N=10**



Median **5** Interpolated Median **5.00** Mean **5.00** Std Dev **0.00**

**14 Please select your expected grade** **N=10**



Median **1** Interpolated Median **1.06** Mean **1.10** Std Dev **0.32**

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Comments Course Questions

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**Q1 Comments on readings, materials, assignments and examinations**

- The readings were interesting and the reading load was quite balanced. I might suggest a slight rearrangement of the syllabus, moving some of the heavier reading loads to the beginning/middle of the semester. This would leave students with less reading to complete in the last 2-3 weeks of the term when they should be focused on papers.

I found the short response papers and the presentation quite helpful as they forced students to really contemplate the material.

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- The weekly response papers are useful to write, and I felt better prepared to contribute to class discussion after preparing them. However, I believe it would be helpful to alter the format of the weekly response papers. It was often difficult and time consuming to express the main points of all the week's readings in half a page and then give provide a critical reading of each text in the remaining 1.5 pages. I also am not sure how helpful it is to have students give equal weight to each text in the response paper, some are short articles and others long texts, such that focusing the critique on the main text would be productive and natural. A longer format for the review or one that allows students to focus on a single text at a time would seem to maximize the benefits of the assignment to learning while minimizing time spent worrying about formal requirements rather than substance.

Clarification on the subject of the paper would also be helpful. I felt that topics that adhered closely to the theme of the course might have been better although Professor Autesserre was flexible in terms of the paper topics that she was open to. However, given that the assignment was to be used to evaluate our command of course texts, the final papers would be more likely to fulfill this criteria if students were limited from the beginning in terms of the topics they could choose. It was difficult to relate some of the literature from intl peace interventions to my constructivist IR topic, at least more so than it would have been if the subject of my paper had been intl peace interventions, rather than just a constructivist topic in IR. Prof. Autesserre's willingness to be flexible on paper topics is praiseworthy, but in this case it would probably benefit the students in terms of their final grade and ease in writing the paper if they were more limited in what they could choose as a topic.

I also was uncertain as I finished the preparation of the outline and the final paper if the former should have a bibliography and the latter an abstract. Professor Autesserre provided very specific oral outlines of the assignments in class, but I could not resolve these questions from reference to my notes. If very strict criteria are used to evaluate the different submissions for the paper, it might save time and be useful for both instructor and student to post the requirements for each on the website. Then, less class time may be spent on going over the requirements and there is an authoritative version that students can refer back to as they complete the assignments.

I would also suggest moving back the submission date of the paper. While it is helpful to have it due on the last day of class, so all students show up with paper in hand for the last discussion, minimizing any failures to submit the paper, the last week of class followed Thanksgiving break and was also very hectic. Allowing students reading week to work on the paper might decrease their stress level and also improve the quality of their paper and hopefully the final grade.

Overall, the reading selections were fantastic! One weak spot for me was the Duffield text. I understand that it

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made a great impact on the policy community and that it represented a critical theory approach to intl peace interventions, but the book itself could be better organized. Critical theory may be difficult for students who are not already familiar to learn, so it might be better to have a book with a stronger presentation of a critical theory approach for that week.

Another great interest of our class was ethnographic methods. If future classes were similar more emphasis on how to conduct ethnographies either as an insider or outsider, both of intl. peace interventions or other IR topics, would be beneficial.

Also, some students wanted to devote more discussion time to the practical consequences of the texts, particularly if they were not interested in doctoral training but working in the field. I'm not sure of how best to encourage more policy-focused discussion in a group with many academics-in-training, but perhaps devoting a part of class every few meetings to a policy brainstorming session would allow this to be the center of discussion more often.

- It takes a few submission / feedback cycles to get a feel for the preferred writing style of any instructor, so the number of submissions prior to the final paper was good.
- I appreciate the detailed instructor feedback on all graded requirements.
- There's a bit too much reading for the course. It seems a bit repetitive at times. I would not cut any one article or book, but I would assign less pages from each of the books.
- The reading was all very interesting and relevant to the course.

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#### Q2 Please comment on ways to improve the course

- The incremental deadlines for the paper were very helpful, as was the feedback we received on them. With regard to the requirement to meet with the instructor to discuss the paper, it would have been helpful to have been given more information on what this mandatory meeting was supposed to consist of. I also would have appreciated if the discussion-leading assignment was noted in the syllabus - it felt sprung on us. I don't necessarily doubt the usefulness of it, but I really disliked leading discussion. I think it's worth taking into consideration that there is a different dynamic leading conversation of your peers in front of a professor versus leading a discussion of your own students, and that I would have liked to have at least done this fewer times during the semester.

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#### Comments Course Questions

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- The group work was good. Exchange of papers was awkward as the paper writing was running late for members. We exchanged our abstract / outline early though so we started exchanging feedback early. Exchanging abstracts / outlines as soon as group mates are assigned should be strongly recommended, as well as potential list of sources.
- During the very first class, instead of spending so much time on the syllabus, I would spend some time going over more in depth the difference between positivist and non-positivist IR theories. Instead of just focusing on the general differences, I would go into the positivist theories (realism, liberalism etc) and explain the differences between them. Having this foundation at the beginning of the course would be really helpful.
- No change.

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Comments Course Questions

- It might complicate the structure of the course to include a week devoted to recent American interventions, but given the number of former American military personnel in our class and number of students generally interested in the American interventions, there might be interest in doing so in future years as well. There were references made in our discussions to the intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it was always a bit unclear as to how we should treat them in relation to the material of the course. They probably belong outside this literature given that they weren't planned in the same way other kinds of intl peace interventions have been, but if there was a week devoted to the topic, the instructor could provide more guidance on how to evaluate the commonalities and differences between intl peace interventions and recent American military occupations.

As someone interested in comparative politics in addition to international relations, at times I also wished we could incorporate some of the comparative politics literature on regime change, democratization, ethnic conflict, and political arrangements for diverse societies into our discussion. At times I referenced some of this literature, but didn't always feel that it was understood or perhaps seemed out-of-context. If the class is mostly composed of phd students interested in IR and comparative politics in the future, then moving in this direction might be helpful, in terms of drawing connections between the intl peace interventions literature and that of ending civil wars and democratization - what works well and doesn't, etc.

Another enduring question of class discussions was evaluating constructivist or critical theory analysis against mainstream realist or liberal institutionalist explanations. In our reading of the practice turn, Professor Autesserre explained that constructivists doing practice work did not always intend to challenge the realist or alternative explanations, but rather present their analysis as complementary or offering a more detailed explanation about how power is exercised. We returned nearly every class to the question of whether what we read invalidated in some sense mainstream IR scholarship, or undermined it, but I am not sure that is the purpose of critical theory. More guidance on how to understand the contributions of constructivist IR research in relation to more traditional kinds of scholarship at the beginning of the course would improve students ability to discuss the contributions of different texts vis-a-vis conventional scholarship over the course of the semester.

- See comments in the sections above.

Also, I felt the peer review exercise wasn't entirely effective. By requiring students only to submit a draft to their peers without a deadline, many waited until the end of the semester. The end of semester crunch means that many students just rushed through the paper, not truly providing the best feedback. One recommendation is to require a more involved peer review process (i.e. proposals, research questions, outlines, etc) are provided not only to the instructor but also to the peer reviewer.

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Comments Course Questions

**Q3 What were the best aspects of the course?**

- The sections on the practice turn, bureaucratic politics, and the first week of foundational readings were incredibly helpful and interesting.

I found the section on research methods a bit less useful. While the readings provided a general overview on the ways constructivist-leaning researchers conduct their work, I still don't feel like I have even a basic grasp on the various methods. I realize that a semester long course and years of experience are required to develop this expertise, but I didn't gain too much out of those readings/discussion. That being said, I don't think the block should be eliminated. Instead, it might be helpful to have more of a lecture following those readings than a class discussion.

- Class discussion; response papers were helpful; student led discussions were insightful.

- The best aspects of the course were its excellent structure, the wonderful texts that we read that were enjoyable and often captivating, and the lively discussion. It was also helpful for students to have the opportunity to lead the discussion. Severine Autesserre provides excellent summaries of the literature and has deep understanding of the various course texts. Her explanations were always very useful, in particular in relation to explanations of constructivist IR in other courses.

- I thought the readings were all very interesting and excellent. The instructor was approachable, helpful, interesting.

- When we had to teach a class- this was really a great tool.

**Q4 General comments**

- I think there should be a greater emphasis on constructivism in the political science department at Columbia.

- Overall, great course. I've recommended it to several colleagues. I feel like this class provided me with valuable information that will shape my future research (and undoubtedly helped with preparation for comprehensive exams).

- Great course overall.

- Constructivism is not a subject that is taught much at Columbia, so this class was very useful. A course that teaches constructivist methodologies, similar to the comparative methods classes, is sorely lacking.

- A great course!

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**Comments Course Questions**

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- Highly recommend this course to students in the future, both with policy and academic interests. Highly recommend the political science department at Columbia to continue offering this course and to engage Severine Autesserre in addition to teach a graduate course on qualitative methodologies.
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**Q5 If you received instruction for this course by another person who was not listed (or evaluated) above, please provide comments here**

- N/a
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**Q6 Location of classroom evaluated**

- IAB501B
  - IBA 501
  - The IAB elevators are always bad. Going from a class on the 13th floor to the 5th floor in 10 minutes was barely doable. If the prior class ran late (and it often did by a few minutes due to the clock in the classroom being 3 or more minutes late) running down the staircase was the only way, and even then no time to stop off in the bathroom.
  - IAB502
  - IA 501A
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**Q7 Please indicate your major or majors (if applicable)**

- Political Science
  - Human Rights Studies
  - Political Science
  - Human Rights MA
  - Political Science
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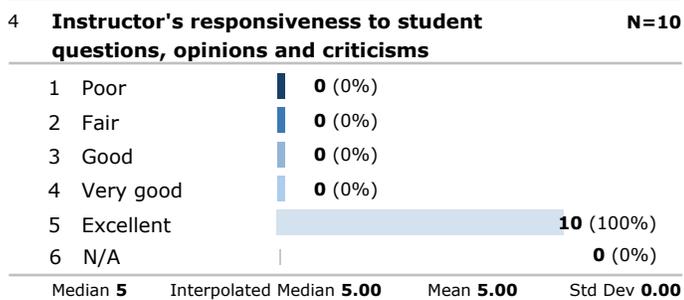
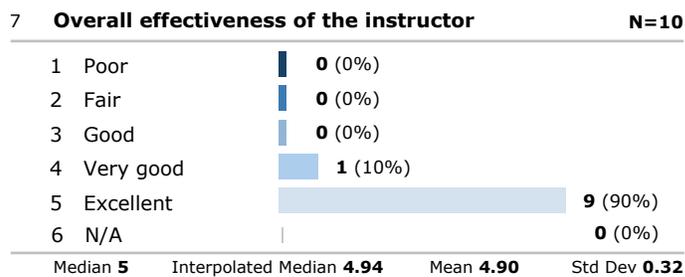
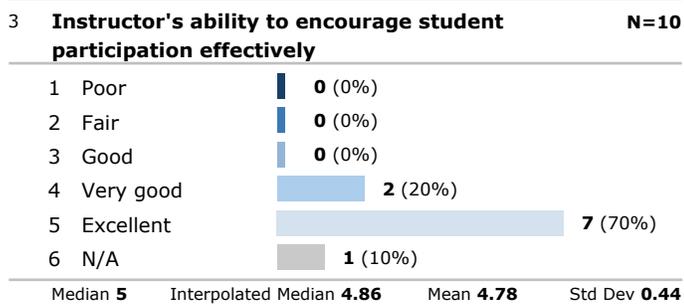
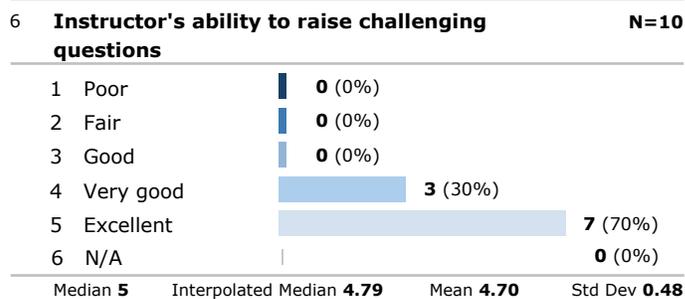
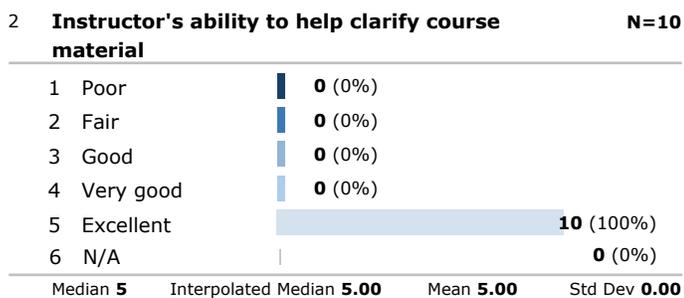
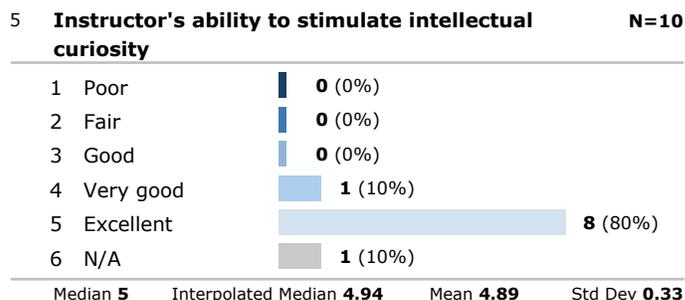
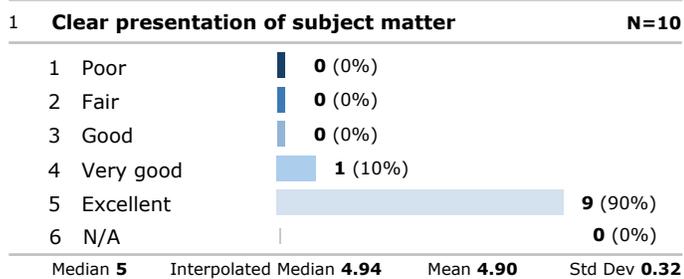
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Instructor Graph Report for: **Severine Autesserre**



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Instructor Comments Report for: **Severine Autesserre**

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### Q1 **Comments on Instructor effectiveness**

- Instructor created very good environment for open discussion and clearly covered all important points. The method used for directing discussions (having students signal whether they had a new point or if they wanted to directly respond to another's point) was difficult to get the hang of, but then was very useful after that. It was difficult at times to keep track of what the instructor's question had been, because discussions got off track at points. Addressing the problem with rambling at the mid-point in the semester was very much appreciated.
- Hardest working professor that I've seen at the university. Severine takes teaching seriously (it's clearly not a distraction for her). I'm very impressed; thank you!
- Prof Autesserre did a fantastic job leading class discussions and highlighting key themes for each topic. I particularly appreciated her summaries of the key takeaways for each group of readings as they helped to frame the content of the course. I also appreciated the pedagogical training she provided to the class. I found the student led discussions to be a bit unhelpful. Given the 8 minute limit, students were limited to just one question. The professor did a nice job organizing the students so the questions generally flowed, but I still felt like we were often forced to move on before we were ready/sufficiently discussed a concept. Perhaps requiring each student to only serve as discussant for one week, but have more time to speak might be helpful.
- There does not seem to be a good system to deal with student rambling. I think the fact that Prof Autesserre addressed it at all shows that she is a great professor willing to incorporate student feedback.

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Instructor Comments Report for: **Severine Autesserre**

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- Professor Autesserre is dedicated to ensuring the highest quality of course possible. She is the only instructor I have had to introduce a review of the course midway through in order to determine what is working well to facilitate class discussions and what is hindering discussion. She also provides extensive instructions on how to complete the writing assignments in order to meet her expectations. She has formalized the procedure of setting up meetings through her website, which is an advantage over the informal office hours that other instructors hold, but because informal office hours are often cut short at the last minute. She also makes particular effort to use class time effectively, to address all of the readings that are assigned at length, and to provide summaries of the important points raised in discussion and that should be remembered as the theoretical or empirical contributions of the weekly texts. Her syllabus is well constructed, and she emphasized distinctive phases of the course where we dealt with various topics. Overall, the course structure and instruction is far ahead of many of the other graduate courses offered at Columbia. Professor Autesserre also responds efficiently to student messages, offers additional office hours to students with full schedules that cannot make her usual office hours, and provides feedback to students on assignments so that they may improve their grades on later written work.

The only revision I would suggest is that on occasion it might be better to switch to a style more like that of a lecture in class, in which Professor Autesserre introduces the important points of texts or describes her experience in the field. Because some of the theoretical frameworks for the texts are challenging or new to the group, and given her extensive field experience, it would be beneficial to stop student discussion at certain points and provide a mini-lecture on the texts or her conclusions about culture of international peacekeeping and so on.

- Office hours and deadline for submission of physical written material difficult for people who work full time during the day and do not live near campus. They are perfectly understandable in the context of the university schedule, so this is an observation - not suggesting that they should change.
- 
-