

WIU Midterm Course/Instructor Feedback Fall 2008

Whenever I teach, I always do a midpoint anonymous survey to find out what students think is and isn't working about my courses. I know that so far this has been a somewhat disjointed semester as I became more familiar with the WIU campus culture and as I moved from teaching less "traditional" students to those more typical here. Because of all the changes so far, I wasn't quite sure if I should go ahead with my usual practice of getting mid-point feedback from students. However, I decided to ask anyway and would like you, as you comment on the following few questions, to focus on what you think you will/do like and what you think you won't/don't like about the course as it is now. Of course, though, feel free to make whatever additional remarks you want.

I cannot determine who has responded to this midterm survey so please be candid - I really do want your thoughts -- good, bad, or indifferent!

Thanks for taking the time - I want my courses to be as useful to students in content, format, and as far as my teaching style goes, as I can make them.

Sharon



Course	% of Total Responses	# and % of Responses out of Students Enrolled by Course
POLS 302 Introduction to public policy	21.4%	3 out of 8 (38%)
POLS 393 Environmental politics	50.0%	7 out of 13 (54%)
POS 223 State government and politics	28.6%	3 out of 4 (75%)

1. **As you understand the course to be now, what do you think is working/will work for you as a student? What do you like about the course structure, the content, and my teaching style? In other words, what would you keep the same?**


- i like the open disscusion because it is more like life. you do not just sit and get lectured to at your job, people want to hear your ideas and opinions on important topics and i believe this class allows us to become more confertable with that aspect of our future.
- I like the freedom we have to do our assignments, i like the discussions and the freedom from hearing a boring lecture.
- I love the structure of the class discussions. It is a fun way to learn about these issues.
- I enjoy the class discussion format and the liberal homework due dates.
- The discussions, adjustments to syllabus, flexible grading and due dates.
- I like the openness of the course structure, and how quickly Dr. Chanley is to identify that students are having trouble grasping the material.



Summary of Comments on WIU Midterm Course evaluation as of 10_26.pdf

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Sequence number: 1
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/24/2008 4:54:41 AM

 I appreciate the POLS393 and 223 students making an effort to give me feedback -- while it would have been nice to have even more students participating at last it was over 1/2 in 393 and 75% in 223!


I know there are reasons why student feedback here and in almost all surveys I've done or heard about tends to be low. Some of the reasons include busy schedules, students think their viewpoints really don't matter to the teacher anyway, fear of the responses not being anonymous, and believing their views are probably already represented on the surveys.

It is a common problem throughout education - but it does always disappoint me whether for my courses or for those taught by others. The reasons I hear for not participating (like those I listed above) sound very much like the reasons people give for not voting.

Sequence number: 2
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/26/2008 3:51:08 PM

 Thanks to those of you who did complete the survey. I know you have lots of other more pressing things to do but I do care about your views. Sharon

Sequence number: 3
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/26/2008 4:00:08 PM

 What I need for students to do in this regard though is let me know when they are having trouble understanding the readings - since we struggled with you all even reading at all if I don't hear anything about them I have been just assuming they weren't getting read -- I'll try to remember to add that to the class sessions. You all can also ask about the readings - that would be a help to me as well.

- I think everything we are doing know is working for me as a student. I enjoy listening to other peoples' perspectives during discussion. The videos we have watched are very imformative and provides an easy way to understand different issues and are a good teaching tool. I enjoy the different activities we do that provide us with an easy way to understand and see how politics work, example being the black and red card game.
- I like that this course is discussion based. It is more fun in this format! The only thing is I dislike, is the fact that it can be at times a little un organized. Overall though I like it!
- I like that the class is set up in a discussion format. You let us come up with solutions and find our thoughts about the weekly topic, even though many of us would just like to listen instead of give our own feedback.
- I love the style of this class. I learn so much more, and so much more efficiently when the class is a disscussion format with the teacher as a moderator. I wouldn't change anything.
- the class discussions, it makes the learning process much easier and everyone seems to be enjoying doing things this way
- I think the open discussions are working great. I would keep the class the same and I like that we always have atleast one debate per class.
- I enjoy the discussion type of classroom that we have. It is a good change in the middle of my day full of 4 lecture classes.
- Enjoying the small class size, helps with the discussions. I like how the discussions have progressed to a more collegate and mature level. The new meeting times are better because they allow us to go more in depth with our discussions.




2. **As you understand the course to be now, what do you think won't work/isn't working for you in terms of the course structure, the contents, and as far as my teaching style is concerned? In other words, what other changes would you make?**




- i might change the description of assignments, that just seems to be confusing people or atleast it was. now we just ask you but in the begining it was hard to understand exactly what you wanted for some of the assignments.
- Small lack of organization, understandable though because your adjusting to a new school.
- I would have made the reading journals due each friday. As a student it is hard to get motivated to do the assignments when they arent really due.




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Sequence number: 1
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/29/2008 9:25:13 PM


 I'd like to do more that actually measures this more concretely - I'm working on that.

Sequence number: 2
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/29/2008 9:20:05 PM

 I think it would help if I review the requirements each week and clarify any questions. But, I certainly am open to figuring out how to make the written instructions more clear. Any ideas?


- Matt Reyes talks too much!
- If you assign reading, please discuss it with us. The biggest problem I feel the class is having with the readings is that we are bombarded with readings that we don't use in class, so we often don't do the readings.
- I think while it will work for some, because the lenient homework policy won't work for others might be better suited to be tightened.
- The Gridlock book is very difficult to read, it is hard to sit down to skim the chapter and then do the reading journals. You have to force yourself to read it.
- Just sometimes it is unorganized  
- I would stick to keeping weekly journals due on Friday for points, because without a weekly structure of having things due each week people will just wait to the last minute to do them; leaving you with a lot of work to do at the end of the semester.
- The textbook is boring, other than that--see above. 
- having readings to do and then we do not talk about them in class, its a waste of time to read/skim through them.
- I think that everything is working.
- One thing I would suggest would be due dates.
- No problems to discuss at this time.

3. What other thoughts do you want to share with me?

- i just thought i would let you know that you are a good teacher and that it is good to step out side the expected boundaries of any working group such as the political science department here. the only way in which change is accomplished is if some one steps up and does something new and that is what you bring to this university. keep up the good work.
- None
- I absolutly love that you are open with your party affiliation. It makes the class more fun because since you are open about it so are others which means we can actually have debate that is constructive. Also I dont feel like you are trying to brainwash the class into thinking your way. Several Political Science teachers will not say that they are liberal but teach that the liberal way of thinking is better than the others. It makes it a much better environment for class discussion. 

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Sequence number: 1
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/29/2008 9:42:42 PM

 I appreciate the feedback on the reading journals but I'm pretty committed to keeping the due dates as "suggested." In part because I want students who need that flexibility to have it but also in part because you all could benefit from having to determine your own internal motivations for doing the work required. If you take the due dates and follow them, you won't find yourself behind - but that responsibility is yours.


That, however, is a separate issue then when they are due for discussion - that remains a scheduled date, whether we discuss them or not. Requiring the reading journals on a set date didn't seem to have any impact on whether students came to class prepared or not - neither, by the way, did any of the other strategies I've tried so I think that is something you all as students will just have to figure out for yourselves.

I am reconsidering whether being very consistent in having the discussions on the readings will be helpful in that regard, but I am not yet decided on what to do about that.


Sequence number: 2
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/29/2008 9:24:53 PM

 Yes, they have been disorganized. In part that is just the nature of my courses because I like to adapt them to the particular students each semesters (e.g.. syllabi revisions) but it is also true that I have been more disjointed this semester then most - I hope the rest of the semester goes more smoothly for you all. I'll work on this aspect!


Sequence number: 3
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/26/2008 4:00:46 PM

 I am considering the part of this feedback having to do with being more consistent in discussing all the reading assignments in class. I'm not yet decided but I am thinking about it.
With regard to it being a "waste of time," well, I just disagree - there are many reasons to read something and only *one of them* is whether they are discussed in class or graded. There are other, in my view much more important reasons , to review the assigned readings including a desire to learn, intellectual curiosity, to expand your knowledge base on the topic, etc. I selected them for a reason - I thought they offered some valuable information and I still do.

Sequence number: 4
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/26/2008 4:24:28 PM

 Thanks for this feedback. One thing that I particularly like about WIU is the real sense that students are actually liked here - I rarely hear anti-student comments, sometimes, in my experience, very common at some other institutions. And, it appears to be a place where there is room for many different teaching approaches.

Sequence number: 5
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/26/2008 4:01:29 PM

 I'm glad to hear this - I wouldn't be able to keep this a secret anyway even if I was so inclined - all any student would have to do is look at my professional background to get a pretty good sense about my political leanings. But, more importantly, I actually do believe, truly, that while I *think* my "liberal way of thinking" is the best approach, I also believe two thing: First, I believe that where we stand has a lot to do with where we come from, to what we've been exposed, and our own life experiences. How could I say someone else's perspective based on their own experiences is wrong simply because they are different then my own. Second, I believe that we are all, as I wrote in the syllabus, all just trying to do the best we can to make sense out of very complicated issues. I simply do not *know* the answers - no one can - with information always limited (bounded rationality) all we can do is take our best shot at what we think is the best alternatives.



- I really like the way you are willing to connect with your students. Most professors that I've been in contact with don't know my ideas or interpretations, let alone my name. I think this makes for students to be more apt to have a desire to learn the material if the professors have a desire to learn the students.


- nothing




- You do a great job mediating during arguments, some teachers would force their own opinions on their students, but you are able to stay pretty unbiased.(even you know someone is wrong). Unless they are really wrong.
- You are one of the few professors who actually challenge the students.
- None at all. I enjoy this class compared to my others because I like being involved in the discussion, rather than having information thrown at us.

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Sequence number: 1
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/29/2008 9:25:05 PM

 Thanks especially for this comment -- I really do have an interest in students, and I'm glad that is coming across, because it is true.

Sequence number: 2
Author: Sharon Chanley
Subject: Note
Date: 10/29/2008 9:25:07 PM

 I believe very strongly that we have to learn to have civil discourse on these sometimes contentious issues or we will never be able to solve even the most simple of problems.
