

CrCrTh 653, Spring 2017, Epidemiological Thinking and Population Health Students' Synthetic Statements, from the Final Course Evaluation

The synthetic statement is the fourth question on formal course evaluations for the Critical and Creative Thinking Graduate Program. See the text of questions 1-3 by choosing any evaluation from this page: <http://cct.wikispaces.umb.edu/CourseEvaluations>.

Question 4: "Building on your comments from Questions 1-3 in the formal evaluation, compose a synthetic statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) evaluating this course. (Imagine readers who might not be willing to wade through all the answers to Qs 1-3, but are willing to read more than simply the numerical averages of standard course evaluations.) Please make comments that help the instructor develop the course in the future and that enable some third party appreciate the course's strengths and weaknesses. Among other things you might comment on the overall content and progression of classes, the session activities, and the use of mentors to support the learning in the course."

Below are the Synthetic Statements from the respondents who gave permission for these comments to be shared on the web.

- I had no background or real understanding of epidemiology coming into this course. While I enjoyed the topic and was able to connect to my own areas of interest, the main thing I really gained from this course was a new way of thinking about health and science. I think I'm a more inquisitive and educated consumer of research from taking this course. There were times when the reading became very technical, and I still don't understand everything I read. There were also times when I felt concepts could've been introduced a bit more simply and then built up for better comprehension. For example, the week we talked about modeling, the first model we looked at was a very complex model that was really overwhelming. Maybe starting simple and building into complex models would have helped me personally. This is also true of the first class. I would've benefited from more attention to basic ground principles of epidemiology since I had no background in the topic, but we jumped into some fairly deep research very quickly.
- This course is not a standard epidemiology course that focuses on the mathematics used by epidemiologists but rather looks into the thinking used by epidemiologists. For students whose study of focus is not epidemiology this concentration on epidemiologic literacy may translate into concepts of epidemiologic methodology being transferred over to their studies. For those wanting to be able to conduct epidemiologic studies after having taken the class the lack of the technical aspects may be somewhat frustrating and a class in the health sciences more appropriate. A student wanting to learn biostatistics would not get what they want from this course. Where this course has merit is in teaching complexities of causation and how to come to it.
- This course provides a deep dive into epidemiology--methods, interpretation, and application in the sphere of public health. There is a large amount of reading, and some of the concepts (statistical analysis, epidemiological theory) can be technically involved. But the course is nicely organized into weekly themes and assignments that each focus on a specific area. The most important part of this course is the applicability to science in general. The analyses and critiques of epidemiology used are easily applicable to any scientific field.
- This class really opened my eyes to the complexities of the health of the population. It also showed me ways in which social inequities effect the health of a society. I was not sure how it

would apply to my future career, but I think learning how to critically read scholarly articles will be a huge help throughout graduate school. It is expected that you read many articles each week and it is important to keep up with them as they truly apply to each weeks theme and helps to clarify the idea of it. Professor Taylor is also very responsive to any emails or needs for office hour conference calls. He very much will help with any assignment you have questions with. Use the other students in class as well. He gave out the UMB email addresses and it was nice to be able to communicate with each other as I was an online student.