

Report on Knowledge and Reality B CEQ's for year 2008-09

Lecturer: Nikk Effingham

Note: The lecturing was split between two lecturers. Only one CEQ noted which lecturer their marks related to (not that this was easy to do given the presentation of the CEQ). I have not distinguished between the two lecturers because of this, although further comments do make clear which lecturer some students preferred (*q.v.*).

The comments of the module convenor are found in square brackets('[' and ']').

Question 1: Did you find the module... (1 = too difficult; 5= too easy)

67 respondents: 1 answered '1'; 21 answered '2'; 44 answered '3'; 1 answered '4'.

Average: 2.7.

Lecturer's Comments: Perfect score. Notably, the student who found the module too difficult also noted that they never prepared. I believe there might be a connection there.

Question 2: Did you find the module... (1= well organised; 5= badly organised)

67 respondents: 11 answered '1'; 30 answered '2'; 24 answered '3'; 2 answered '4'.

Average: 2.2

Lecturer's Comments: Could be better.

Question 3: Did you find the lecturer... (1=helpful; 5=unhelpful)

67 respondents: 11 answered '1'; 40 answered '2'; 14 answered '3'; 2 answered '4'.

Average: 2.1

Lecturer's Comments: Acceptable score.

Question 4 Did you find the lecturer... (1=clear; 5=unclear)

67 respondents: 15 answered '1'; 36 answered '2'; 14 answered '3'; 2 answered '4'.

Average: 2.0

Lecturer's Comments: Relatively acceptable.

Question 5: Did you find the lecturer... (1=enthusiastic; 5=unenthusiastic)

67 respondents: 30 answered '1'; 26 answered '2'; 10 answered '3'; 1 answered '5'.

Average: 1.7.

Lecturer's Comments: Acceptable score, except for one person who found the lecturing to be utterly lacking in enthusiasm.

Question 6: Was the opportunity for discussion... (1=sufficient; 5=insufficient)

67 respondents: 7 answered '1'; 25 answered '2'; 28 answered '3'; 7 answered '4'.

Average: 2.5

Lecturer's Comments: Acceptable score.

Question 7: Did the series of lectures make sense as a whole? (1= well; 5=badly)

67 respondents: 12 answered '1'; 29 answered '2'; 23 answered '3'; 3 answered '4'.

Average: 2.2

Lecturer's Comments: Acceptable score.

Question 8: Did you prepare adequately? (1=always; 5=never)

67 respondents: 3 answered '1'; 26 answered '2'; 24 answered '3'; 13 answered '4'; 1 answered '5'.

Average: 2.7

Lecturer's Comments: Below the level of acceptability, especially given the spread and that if only 67 people attended the final lecture one can only imagine what everyone else was doing and what their preparation was like.

Question 9: Was the library provision (1=adequate; 5=inadequate)

66 respondents: 4 answered '1'; 20 answered '2'; 25 answered '3'; 14 answered '4'; 3 answered '5'.

Average: 2.9.

Lecturer's Comments: Another bad score again. See general comments below.

Question 10 What was the most helpful aspect of the lectures/classes?

Handouts/powerpoints; discussion; Having handouts and presentations on website – interesting and humorous; Clear vision [I'm glad we had the fog generators removed after last year]; lectures – clear run through of topics, classes – opportunity for discussion; ran through the topic fairly well; Goff's Happiness; Handouts/powerpoint; Handouts; Make sense of difficult papers and theories; handouts/ WebCT [presumably this refers to the web resource more generally as nothing is stored on WebCT itself]; That seminar groups were small and so discussion was easy and able to talk freely; having the lectures available online; Clear, concise, handouts; Lecture notes; Have to *love* the coursepacks – great value for money!; Reading pack, first half; powerpoint; Clear, insightful, James Holden; Handouts and discussion in seminars; James Holden; Lecture notes are clear and easy to understand; handouts; Clarification on areas which hadn't been fully explained; Discussion in seminars was helpful; The amount of explanation and examples; The opportunity to discuss topics in classes; Clarity and enthusiasm of lecturers; Slides on the powerpoint and handout; Discussion of reading material in seminars; Enthusiastic lecturers, which made the subject really interesting; Handouts; Enthusiastic/knowledgeable lecturer, laid back seminars with discussion; The 2nd lecturer [Philip Goff] is a lot better, engages with students more!; The notes from the lectures and the discussion in the seminars, although more discussion is needed i.e. more seminars; Can ask question if don't understand; Handouts and all material being available on the net; Everything; The handouts and powerpoint; All of it was fine; Good explanation, classes → discussion; Phil; Phil; Handouts and material available online; That lecture notes were available online and clear introduction to topics; Opportunity for discussion; they were very clear; discussion; discussion in classes; good explanations; clarity of lecturers; handouts; lecturer's explanations/diagrams.

Question 11 What, if anything, was least helpful about the lecture's/classes?

N/A; Maybe the lectures one a bit too fast; Sometimes a bit too fast; moved on too fast, seminar unclear; No powerpoint; size of seminars; Seminar groups are too big; Didn't always offer advice of where to take reading further; The lectures moved too fast to keep up making notes; Some of the tutorial questions were a little off [actually, I agree with this- it's a result of having to select the questions before the lectures have been written. Will be remedied, with my apologies]; giving examples to understand the topic [I'm thinking this might have been intended as an answer to question 10]; Not being given all of the readings when we changed lecturer halfway through. Led to a pretty useless seminar; reading was only given short notice; classes, lack of handout material; N/A; Over explanation = confusion; No questions in lectures; Went too fast through certain slides; Seminar work two weeks ahead of lecture material which covered that topic; That I had the seminars before I had the lectures; Seminar discussion before lectures; Only fortnightly seminars, don't allow everything to be covered; The election people taking up 10 minutes of our time for pointless talks. I don't pay 3k a year for that (these are the ones running for SU officers) [Agreed, I'll look into that. SU officers shouldn't be canvassing during lectures]; Nothing; Change of lecturer very disruptive; Seminars were pointless; Tutor wasn't particularly clear, reading too hard, seminar before the lecture; Lack of Phil; Lack of Phil; they were after the seminars; The lecture topics were after the classes which is inconvenient; I didn't particularly enjoy some of the topics e.g. time; lectures too fast.

Question 13: How many hours a week, on average, did you spend preparing for classes/seminars?

Less than 1: 4
1 hour: 11
2-3 hours: 30
4-5 hours: 7
6-7 hours: 2
10 hours: 2
21 hours: 1

Average: 2.8 hours.

Lecturer's Comments: Hmm... almost on the recommended three hour a week mark. But there's a disturbing spread, with too many students under that level (and, again, a large portion of the class were missing so gawd only knows how many hours the large portion of them do). As for those doing 10 hours, bravo. As for the person doing 21 hours per week solely prepping for seminars, I do hope you misread the question, and if not that you try and relax a wee bit more.

Question 14: Were there any specific texts that it was difficult to get hold of? Please give details.

N/A; Dr Who and Philosophy; The recommended reading was not available from the library, even early on in the term; any books from the library needed for essays; All the reading for the essay, I could not find in the library so had to use different books; No, as photocopied the suggested reading list straight away [good man]; Some library books; Those on the reading list for essay near the deadline were impossible to get hold of; Some of the library books were difficult to get hold of; Time ones set by P. Goff (only one copy of each in library); No; Nothing specific. Hard to get hold of anything in the main library. OLRC a bit better but still limited; most of the suggested list for the lump essay; No; No; N/A; Some texts on reading list, especially at essay period; None really, just more time to discuss those texts needed; The Miracle of Atheism. Nope – short loan was well stocked; most of them; most of them; No;

Question 15: What changes, if any, would you make to this aspect of teaching and learning?

N/A; More; More comedy; Go through things in seminar a bit slower and clearer; Powerpoint [previous comments indicated this meant more, not less]; A better library, though one in 104 was helpful, though needs longer hours; Longer opening hours for the library in 104. More copies of books in library; None; Slow down the pace so we can keep up; for P. Goff's lectures powerpoint slides would have been helpful; try to avoid the seminars coming before the lecture on the topic (this may not be possible); None; Better online resources [? It's got the lectures and handouts, as well as example exam papers – not sure what else to add other than designing some sort of FPS style Xbox game where you learn metaphysics by annihilating your enemies with a variety of weapons named after philosophical positions]; It would have been better if all the seminars were after the lectures; More chance to discuss; more organised seminar dates; Seminars weekly; More discussion and debates; Better seminars; seminar after lecture, easier reading; More Phil, less universals, more God; More Phil; 2 seminars a week.

Question 16: Please add any other comments.

Seminars not helpful; More library books; More Phil please <3; We liked Philip [Phil says thanks. Whereas I die a little inside]; Fortnightly seminars often mean that we have a seminar on a topic before the lecture – this makes it harder to comprehend the material and discuss the topic; More seminars, smaller groups; I lost 10 minutes of lecture for student guild election candidates. Pointless talks. Please do not let them speak again next year as it is a waste of valuable education time; Still really angry that the SU officers managed to take up 10 minutes of my lecture time in this course and others. I know it's an important part of Uni like, but I don't agree they should be allowed to eat into our lecture time [As noted above, I agree wholeheartedly, and will seek to ensure this doesn't occur again.]; Very good module, one of the best this year; Excellent lecturers!.

Overall

Overall, I'm quite pleased with the responses, but wary by the fact that the responses are only around 50% of the whole class. Where the hell is everyone else? That probably bodes badly for the actual average of hours worked etc. given that one can presume that non-attendance in lectures makes it more likely to not attend other things, or do work in general. Five points deserve special note.

Point one: The library. Again. This time round it's not so clear that the problems with the library were the result of difficulty using short loan facilities. I think the CEQ needs to be redesigned to better draw out what problems our first year body are having. But, let's work on the assumption that texts are difficult to get hold of. Next year I recommend that *all* recommended texts are removed from long loan and placed on short loan, and additionally

(following on from the HPB CEQ) the library is asked to introduce a 4 hour short loan rather than leaving it at the 24 hour level. Short of that, I have no idea what to do. If you are reading this, and are either sitting there thinking 'What the hell is short loan' and/or 'No Nikk, I know what short loan is, they just weren't there' then contact my e-mail address so I can better discern what the facts of the matter are.

Seminars did sometimes fall before lecture. This may well, as one student pointed out, be unavoidable. When it comes to time tabling next year, I recommend that the lecture is on the Monday or Tuesday and tutors are instructed to make their tutorials on a Wednesday or later. It is possible that this cannot be avoided, but I'll try my best (ask a few people, sacrifice a few goats to the gods for divine intervention etc.)

Some people commented on the size of seminars and/or their frequency. Short of a huge influx of money, the uncapping of fees, or the University of Birmingham winning the lottery, these will remain fixed. *However* I am intrigued to find out how many students followed the instruction to meet up and discuss topics outside of classes, both before and after seminar. Fortnightly one hour seminars to voice the product of such groups, in addition to my office hours (and general open door policy) does seem sufficient to me. Or, at least, I see no evidence of these contact hours currently being used to their full effect. I heartily endorse the practice of outside work groups, but it is up to the students themselves to organise these things.

Presentations. These were insisted upon by last year's staff-student committee meeting. By all accounts they failed miserably, and were removed by the final week.

Finally, a note on my different lecturing styles. Some have noted that Philip engaged more with the students during lecture. I, obviously, do not. And, indeed, as a policy have no desire to. I believe that a lecture is the one chance to introduce the material to students, and find it tricky enough to do that in a 50 minute time slot. With a class of ~100 students, if even 10% of those ask questions, each taking 30 seconds to ask and a minute to answer, then that lecture time is reduced to a mere 35 minutes. Far better, in my eyes, to retain such discussions for the appropriate contact hours (office hours, after lecture, seminars etc.). I did not see it as a problem during the course, what with the exceedingly low uptake of all contact hours outside of the lecture. I fully intend to maintain that policy in future (but, of course, will not, and have never, discouraged minor clarification questions during lectures). Obviously, Phil has different views (and reasons for those views, which unfortunately cannot be discussed at the end of CEQ I'm writing).