

Sample Student Evaluations for José Vergara
STEMLA 113: Coal, Oil, Nuclear: Narrative Afterlives
Bryn Mawr College
Summer 2022

“Jose always allows for the students to steer the conversation and makes sure to include the voices of students who may be too shy to speak up.”

“He has very diverse sets of knowledge and it really contributes the enjoyment of the class. It makes for very thoughtful discussions.”

“Pretty understanding of any issues we might have had.”

“Jose poses very engaging questions and provides interesting materials for students to read throughout the course. This makes room for robust conversation in the classroom, which is very beneficial for understanding the context of what we are learning.”

“Very well spoken and gave us interesting topics to discuss, kept us engaged during class.”

I think he’s really good at communicating with his students and is very accessible; he also has a really good response time.”

“He adjusted discussion format well to accommodate for different levels of learning.”

“José Vergara is a fantastic professor. He always has the student's thoughts in mind and tries to formulate the course in a way we are all happy in. When a student (or a collective of students) asks for an extension, for example, he is always fair.”

“Jose Vergara is very clearly extremely interested in the course and the topics discussed within it. This is made apparent in his presentation of the materials and the level of engagement within the class.”

“He is brilliant and great and facilitating discussions. He always had interesting material for us to look at and think about.”

“I think that his selection of the main material was very strong. I found all of the texts that we discussed in class were engaging and greatly increased my understanding of coal, oil, and nuclear power. Though I don’t always enjoy doing homework I did find them interesting and I felt that they were worth studying.”

“The major strength would definitely be the course layout. The discussion questions he proposed before classes were extremely helpful in engaging in the class discussions. Even though the class was mostly discussion-based, we had occasional different activities which made the class more fun. I also really liked our assignment in which aside from reading texts, we had other components too such as analyzing a movie or images which I believe were extremely helpful in perceiving the content.”

“Jose Vergara helped facilitate discussions in a manner that helped students tap into our critical thinking skills and analyzation techniques of the various readings that we did. He also provided in-depth feedback for students and helped me improve my writing.”

“I think the major strengths of Professor Jose are his lesson plan is engaging, chosen contents are also very relevant to understand the topic thoroughly.”

“I really appreciate the speed with which Jose replies to emails and gives us feedback on writing assignments. He is very approachable, making it far easier to talk to him and ask questions about both course work and issues outside of school. I also like that in times of higher stress or higher workload, such as a larger project, Jose was in frequent communication with us, and was available to answer all our questions as needed.”

“I felt extremely prepared when it came to taking and understanding the course.”

“I was prepared, everything I needed to know was taught to me in the readings and discussions.”

“I felt like the space was very inclusive.”

“Jose constantly made sure to listen to students who needed accommodations and made sure to prompt students who may not have spoken as much.”

“We were all seated within a circle so everyone had an equal opportunity to talk and interact with our peers. He asked for contributions from everyone but didn't push when people didn't feel comfortable.”

“Jose did a great job with making sure everyone was included and respected during class discussions and that any confusion about the topics was resolved in a timely manner.”

“Jose was very easy to connect with and made this course interesting.”

“I think he does an impressive job making sure he was accessible to us-he would always answer questions and respond to emails quickly. I think his course included a variety of works to study from different backgrounds, and I enjoyed how it was delivered through various forms of media (pictures, movies, songs, poems, books, articles, etc).”

“Jose is incredibly accommodating when it comes to the needs and wellbeing of his students. He actively welcomes students from all backgrounds and the formatting of this class allowed for respectful voicing and consideration of these topics.”

“He opened the discussion to everyone and frequently asked if those who hadn't shared wanted to.”

“I think that it was always accessible and inclusive. He was accommodating towards student who prefer not to speak a ton and didn't force anyone to do things that they didn't want to do. I always felt that my opinions were just as valued as everyone else's.”

“Jose was very accessible. He would answer emails in such a short amount of time and would give feedback on any assignments that we would need help with and is easy to ask help for whenever a topic was not clear.”

“Jose Vergara frequently reminded those of us who had not spoken much in the discussion to include ourselves in the talks, and he reached out to us when we needed help. I see no areas of improvement in the instructor's attention to accessibility because he always made sure we all had our voices heard, and he was easy to talk to.”

“He was very approachable when it comes to getting help. Also, he often emails students with suggestions and relevant things that need to be prepared for the classes.”

- “The discussion-style classes made it easy for people to talk. I can commend Jose on the breakout groups he had us form every class, since they gave even quieter students an opportunity to speak up. Jose did an amazing job including more sensitive students who wanted to be warned of disturbing scenes in the readings and course content. He even took the time to write up time stamps of potentially distressing scenes in movies and our literature in a content guide for those who wished to be prepared or could skip those scenes!”
- “The class was very interesting, I learned a lot about energy humanities.”
- “Yes- it was very interesting, and the workload prepared me for future literary analysis during my college years.”
- “Yes, it is very intellectually enriching.”
- “I would recommend this course to other students because it helps build strong connections with peers and the material being discussed.”
- “Yes I would, you gain a much broader view of different energy types.”
- “Yes, I think it does an impressive job of making you consider different perspectives on topics that you wouldn’t have thought of before. I also found the different analytical methods used and applied to texts helpful and versatile in the grand scheme of things.”
- “I would recommend this course because it taught me a lot about the influences of oil, coal, and nuclear energy sources and how they are represented in media.”
- “Yes, it is not for every student, but the course is taught exceptionally.”
- “Yes, this course is very interesting in terms of its content.”
- “Yes, I would. It was very interesting and made me think about a lot of new topics/ideas. I wasn’t particularly interested in studying this topic but I still found it a very useful course in terms of improving my writing skills as well as exposing me to new ideas and how to discuss those ideas.”
- “I would! It was interesting and I learned a lot.”
- “Yes, I believe that learning about fossil fuels and their effect in humanity developed my intellect level and expanded my horizon on many aspects of the current world issues.”
- “I would recommend this course to other students because it makes scientifically-oriented students become acquainted with how to use their literary skills to explain scientific processes, and how science and ethics are related. This latter part is integral to all students in order to understand the effects that technology and the driving forces in our world affect communities.”
- “I would definitely recommend this course to students who are interested in humanity courses because this course is very much humanity based.”
- “I would as long as the students actually like coal, oil, and nuclear. If they are terrified of nuclear, maybe not, as some parts of the course can be distressing. BUT I WILL REITERATE that Jose did a great job accommodating those who were more hesitant to face distressing parts head-on! It was a very fun and engaging course to take too!”
- “Very great professor, I hope to take a class with him in the future.”

“He's very nice! He was always encouraging and accommodating.”

“He's super helpful and made the class engaging!!”

“Jose Vergara is a very kind and amazing instructor. He is passionate about what he does, and he pays attention to what students say in discussions. He is constantly engaged, and makes his students better writers, thinkers, and scholars.”

“He is a very friendly person and always willing to help if you needed.”

“I love how kind and friendly Jose is! I hope to talk to him more, whether in office hours or just in passing, during my next four years at Bryn Mawr.”

“I especially like when we move in direct engagement with the course material, such as for the Barometer activity we did.”

“I also like discussing with partners because hearing others' ideas and sharing my own stokes not only a keener sense of understanding, but closer camaraderie as we exchange interpretations of a text or piece of art.”

“I really have enjoyed the discussion aspect of the class and the insistence on hearing from most of the class before moving onto another question or topic. Getting up and hearing everyone justify their complicated and different opinions has been incredible - a lot of their opinions are rooted in prior experiences, and as a classmate, it gives me a chance to learn from and appreciate them.”

“I like the group discussions because I feed off of other people's opinions and contribution. Even though I might not speak as often as the others, I am always actively listening and having a conversation with myself and challenging my points of view.”

“I have found the discussions between students in class to be more productive and engaging because I like hearing what my peers think about the reading and being collaborative. I also like that we have our own independent work at home so we can reflect on our own thoughts about the readings and understand where we stand with them.”

“I've found our in-class discussions more engaging and productive for my learning because they offer clarity on what I've read while offering me different perspectives on the works that I had never considered before.”

“I think our discussions in class as a group are very helpful! I love hearing other people's perspectives on the material. I also think the texts that are more metaphorical/thought provoking are great for making us look for meaning on our own and come up with some really interesting interpretations. Also it seems like the photographs and videos have been of particular interest to most of the group. I love the first hand perspective that they give. I think the various activities we do in class are great for engaging us in different ways.”

“I enjoy the prompted discussions as well as your insight into the texts- they help me to see things that I hadn't noticed before.”

“I think that I found almost all aspect of the course productive and engaging.”

“I think that the discussion questions are very helpful for me to really think through a specific thought/idea from the reading. They also help me to put together ideas before our in class discussions.”

“The spacing is great, especially since you placed the longer assignments over the weekends. The substantial amount of reading only becomes too stressful for me when I haven’t managed my time right, which is an excellent skill to develop for college, so I’m not concerned about the actual amount you assign. Given that we’re touching on three distinct types of energy (coal, oil, and nuclear) and the time constraints are four weeks, I believe the amount of work corresponds nicely with the material.”

“I think the spacing and the number of assignments has been appropriate. This course was supposed to be preparing us for the academic year with the same amount of work given by a humanity class.”

“As hard as the Morton reading was to get through, the term ‘hyperobject’ has become a valuable part of my vernacular. I’ve learned more about dissecting texts in 2 weeks here than I did in my entire High School years because I was challenged severely, and I feel like I’m stronger and more ready for college as a whole because of it. So, if the goal of this course was to teach me about the impact of coal, oil, and nuclear power while also setting me straight on my path to college literature, consider that goal accomplished!”

“I like writing the discussion question responses because I think they’re necessary for all of us to review what the rest of the group has written. They additionally allow us to connect our thoughts outside of class.”

“The discussion posts are very helpful in reinforcing the week’s topic. The essay was also helpful for me to put my thoughts and ideas together and support my argument more formally.”

“I like the discussion questions because I am able to access everyone’s opinions on the text that we read in class. It is also interesting to see different perspectives that I would have never thought of.”

“I enjoy the writing assignments, including the essay and the discussion posts, as they allow me to properly express my thoughts and questions to my peers.”

“Really fun! I’ve been really happy that everyone can develop complex thoughts on topics they are interested in from the multiple readings we’ve gotten to choose from.”

“The writing assignments, namely the essay, have been instrumental in my understanding of the texts assigned in class. I have delved much deeper into the course texts as a result of writing my essay which asked me to analyze a reading that we discussed in class.”

“I personally enjoy the discussion questions and I like going through everyone’s responses. I also think they help me prepare more for class and help bolster my confidence when discussing assignments during our class seminars.”

“I like the discussion question format. I think they help create community and allow people that wouldn’t usually talk a chance to share.”

- “I like the fact that there's no word limit set on the discussion questions. It helps take the pressure off of it a little- making it feel less like an assignment and more like an actual discussion like the ones we have in class, which I find much more helpful than replying to a faceless icon with a question we all know the answer to.”
- “I enjoy the classroom atmosphere and have seen from discussing in distinct groups and partnered pairs that everyone in class has important, thoughtful points to discuss.”
- “I think that the discussion component of this course is very productive since I think that I grasp the ideas more when I listen to and observe various perspectives and comment on them.”
- “I enjoy the discussion component of this course very much; I think it's awesome that we all get to learn each other's opinions and build our understanding of the material in that way. The atmosphere of our class is very comfortable, and I feel confident sharing my thoughts with everyone, which is very important to me.”
- “I really have been amazed at the discussion component of the course and how well the STEMLA fellows have been able to carry conversations with each other, and I believe that the questions asked gives everyone room to express their ideas. The collaboration aspect through the partner assignments has been really useful for fostering friendships through likemindedness.”
- “It is very good so far. I think there is ample time and space for everyone to express their ideas if they wish.”
- “I like that the class is discussion driven and that we get to share our ideas in a class atmosphere that is supportive and nurturing. I find it amazing to be able to express my ideas and collaborate with others in order to get a sense of how others' perspectives affect the way they process the material we are looking at.”
- “I like how casual our seminars are, and how we aren't being forced to speak, which I believe makes the conversation evolve more naturally towards different motifs and topics. And because the seminars are so casual, I find it easier and more comfortable to speak up and express my own ideas. I also like how we've established unofficial rules regarding how to let each other speak and respect each other because it allows everyone to contribute easily knowing nobody will cut them off.”
- “I liked the walking experiment we did because it got everyone involved and moving.”
- “I think that we have a very positive classroom atmosphere. I know some students are more reluctant to speak up in class but with the other activities we do that don't involve speaking to the entire class I think you do a good job of at least getting everyone's thoughts out there in some form. Discussion goes very well and I always find I learn something new when listening to my classmates.”
- “I really liked the opportunities to share both through speaking and writing. Hearing from others build on my understanding of the concept.”
- “I really like the atmosphere and the ability to discuss my ideas without fear of thinking that I interpreted something wrong! It's really different from high school- a lot of people are willing to share :)”

- “Most certainly! I found the article you sent me on Reverse Outlining very helpful. I appreciate the promptness with which you replied and commented on my essay.”
- “The feedback I received for my essay outline was constructive and helpful as it made me realize and fix the missing components of my thesis and flow of the essay overall.”
- “The feedback is constructive, and I don’t think there needs to be changes to how it is discussed.”
- “I really appreciate the feedback I receive, both online and in class, as it properly conveys what I lack in my work without making me feel as though I have done something wrong.”
- “I have only gotten feedback a few times but I appreciate being told what I have been doing right, and if I’m doing something wrong, how to correct myself. I believe you are incredibly receptive and considerate of your students.”
- “I think the level of feedback is good. I think the means for giving feedback is ample, I think people need to want it in order to seek it out if they aren’t getting enough. I.e, office hours, emailing etc.”
- “The feedback that I receive is very constructive and guides me on which direction I should take on assignments. I don’t have any complaints.”
- “Yes, I like how we’ve received feedback and I like how it points out our limitations so we can improve them. I’m pretty satisfied with the feedback, so as of right now, I don’t have any constructive criticism on improving it.”
- “Based off of our most recent essay, yes, the amount of time for feedback is great. In terms of emails, your responses are very timely.”
- “The instructor does provide feedback in an appropriate amount of time.”
- “Yes, the instructor provides feedback quickly, with respect to both homework help and email response.”
- “Yes, I think the instructor is very diligent with providing feedback and is accessible when needed.”
- “I have never been left waiting on an email for an extended amount of time. I think you respond in a very timely manner.”
- “I haven’t emailed much so it would be hard for me to comment on it. However, we have received emails about reminders for class or things that we didn’t get to in class. I think those type of emails has been helpful to me.”
- “You’re the fastest email replier I have ever met- seriously. Thank you so much for always responding quickly! It helps me get a move on with my work.”
- “[I learn best in this class when] I write discussion questions about a piece. Forming such questions draws me deeper into the text and I noticed that as a result, I have better understanding of those materials.”
- “I learn best in this class when we have class discussions and engage in different activities, such as analyzing interesting paintings.”
- “[I learn best in this class when] [t]here are plenty of group discussions and time for me to listen and synthesize information and opinions from others. Also, writing helps me to get a really good handle of the material.”

“[I learn best in this class when] we are able to convey all of our ideas effectively, as we did when participating in the activity [barometer] in class.

“[I learn best in this class when] [w]e are working in smaller group discussion or more interactive full group activities.”

“[An aha moment] The first was when I reviewed my notes on a bench under a tree near the East Pem construction zone. I hadn’t fully grasped Morton’s *A Quake in Being*, as I’d stayed up late to finish reading it. But I wanted to cement my understanding of hyperobjects and metalanguage, and how Morton’s logic tied in with the overall theme of the course, so I reread my notes from the night before and wrote an outline of key points. Rewriting these main ideas, I could see new connections I hadn’t made the night before, which helped me follow along and participate in the following class discussion that day. Secondly, discussing in a partnered group with one of my classmates made me realize a more international perspective of nuclear energy. I hadn’t understood before that there is a fear of nuclear-caused catastrophes in certain places that aren’t familiar with it. However, several of my peers come from towns where they live near a nuclear energy plant, and although they broach the topic with apprehension and sarcasm, they don’t seem as scared of it as I do, as my only knowledge of nuclear energy pertains to disaster and pain from the accidents and warfare that have occurred over the years. I was soothed to know that although atrocities can happen when using nuclear energy, most of the time the use of nuclear doesn’t result in horrible radiation poisoning or mass death.”

“Reading about the natural resources, especially about the coal and how harsh the working conditions are for those who have to work in mines to make a living have made me realize how cruel the industry can get in order to gain wealth.”

“The concept of hyperobjects was really interesting to me. The fact that something has to be reduced in order for humans to understand it is something that I have thought about but I never knew that there was a term to define this idea.”

“I grasped a new concept during office hours when almost all the students came together to clear up confusion about hyperobjects.”

“When I hear everyone share their ideas, I often feel myself comprehending a material I may have only read last night or before then and forgot about. I realize that I may have interpreted things differently, and it is really beautiful being able to see why someone may interpret something the way they do.”

“There was a time in class around the first or second meeting when we were talking about hyperobjects. I didn’t fully grasp it until I listened to what others had to say. Together with the reading and discussion I was able to paint a visual picture of what hyperobjects were and are.”

“[An aha moment] The class was outside after lunch discussing the topic of hyperobjects. The instructor explained the topic in a way that made me understand the difficult concept more completely.”

- “My ‘aha’ moment was during one of our class discussions over hyperobjects. Someone mentioned that hyperobjects were things that needed to be scaled down to understand, which helped me make a connection to our timeline assignment in Geology. Being able to connect these two things was meaningful to me because it felt like puzzle pieces falling into place and helped me realize that I finally grasped the concepts we learned in class.”
- “During a discussion someone read Athabasca Story very differently than I did. In talking with them I was able to see it from a different perspective and combine our ideas to gain an even deeper appreciation for the piece and the ways in which it connects to my life as a consumer.”
- “I had an aha moment when we were talking about Coal by Audre Lorde and I was listening to the class’s thoughts. I hadn’t really understood the poem when I read it on my own but I felt like I understood it so much better after the class discussion.”
- “Watching the Womb video really made the rest of that night’s readings click into place and become much more impactful.”
- “I think learning about concept of hyperobject was meaningful to me because we have been relating the concept to the new texts we are exploring. As we are learning different things, we are referring things back to hyperobject. Therefore, I found this concept very meaningful to learn about.”