

**Sample Student Evaluations for José Vergara**  
**RUSS 232: Coal, Oil, Nuclear: Narrative Afterlives**  
**Bryn Mawr College**  
**Fall 2023**

“Jose’s class structure is largely discussion based, which had enabled us to explore our thoughts, questions, and confusions throughout the semester as we read and address different readings spanning between varying topics. [...] Overall great class.”

“The strengths in the course were the variety of work we encountered. I felt very engaged with the coursework because of different assignments I turned in. It was great to focus on prose/poetry, presentations, and data projects because it expanded my academic horizons.”

“Prof. Vergara gave great feedback on assignments and was very accessible via his office hours for additional help. He was also very understanding and really helped to make sure that we understood what was being asked of us and how to succeed.”

“I think Professor Vergara chooses good material & texts to talk about during class.”

“You have been well-prepared for class and have had a good understanding of the material, and I appreciate the fast feedback that you give.”

“José’s major strengths are undoubtedly his ability to connect with his students and communicate with them in ways that keep the class engaged and focused. That’s a distinctly important quality for a teacher/professor to have!”

“Professor Vergara brought a variety of interesting texts to the class. I enjoyed the discussions we had in his class, and the discussion questions we prepped beforehand. He had creative ideas for projects and I liked the exercises we did, like tying cards together to make connections.”

“I think that Professor Vergara’s passion and knowledge are a great strength in the course. He is very engaged and provides many opportunities for students to share their thoughts and opinions. Over the course of the semester, I have found Professor Vergara’s structure of class time and assignments helpful and engaging. In class, I think there is an effective combination of student-led discussion with lectures added in. I have wanted help understanding some of the texts we’ve read in class, and I appreciate Professor Vergara giving my peers the opportunity to share their thoughts in addition to his own.”

“I think Jose’s major strengths in this course were his ability to facilitate student conversation and his

creative assignments. There were a lot of different ways for us to engage, and the questions he asked were thought provoking and helped me understand the texts. He is willing to be flexible with students and is very knowledgeable about the topic.”

“I would say I was prepared, and there were no other courses that would have helped me be prepared for this course. The course is at the appropriate level.”

“I felt well prepared to take this course and I do not think any other courses should be required or suggested before this class. I do believe that this course is listed at the appropriate level.”

“I felt fully prepared for this course. I believe it was listed at the appropriate level given the participation and writing expectations that were part of the course. I could also see it offered as a 100 level potentially, but honestly I don’t know much about how those are listed outside of my own department.”

“I believe this course is listed at the appropriate level. I felt challenged but not overwhelmed with the difficulty of this course as someone who had never taken a Russian or Comparative Literature course before.”

“Jose made all the readings free and made everything we needed to access readily available on his Moodle page. He is very friendly and responds quickly to emails when needed.”

“The experience was accessible because of the extensive work to set up resources. The Moodle page and syllabus was exceptional. The readings were accessible without having to purchase books but the level of readings was not compromised. The syllabus also included very clear instructions and resources were provided for major assignments such as meeting with the digital librarian.”

“I would say the course was pretty inclusive. He always used preferred pronouns and the syllabus included lots of sources from non colonialist sources. Also we didn't have to buy any books.”

“I appreciate having the opportunity to join class on zoom if needed and not having to buy books/other materials for the class.”

“I highly, HIGHLY commend the reading selections; they were designed to be neither onerous nor burdensome, and every reading was available on Moodle for absolutely no charge. This is a lofty standard that I believe all professors should strive to reach in designing a course: making the readings affordable and accessible while still being interesting and not burdensome. I truly appreciated this aspect of the course!”

“Professor Vergara made himself available and accessible for meetings. I appreciated that we didn’t have to pay for any of the texts!”

“All the readings were free and easily accessible. When students were sick, he was very accommodating with making class available on Zoom.”

Jose effectively created an accessible course environment, as he provided many different options for engagement and made zoom an option when people were sick and/or unable to attend class.

I also like that Jose makes himself very available to students and is always willing to work with you if you have problems.”

“Loved this class and the 360!!!”

“Yes I would [recommend this course]! it was super interesting and cool to think about energy in this way. Additionally the 360 component was super wonderful.”

Yes, I thought it was interesting and it exposed me to a lot of readings/films/concepts that I wouldn’t have known about otherwise.”

“I would recommend this course to other students because I feel that José is, overall, an understanding professor and very good at teaching.”

“Absolutely! The course was accessible, almost entirely stress free, very interesting, it exposed me to lots of new works and ways of thinking, and I would recommend this course to people who like textual analysis, because the selection of texts was really valuable!”

“Yes, I would. As a part of a whole, this course was great in my 360 experience, and I have enjoyed the structure and form of the course. I really enjoyed this course and the knowledge I gained through both the coursework and my conversations with other students and Professor Vergara.”

“I would recommend this course as taught by Jose, as the content is interesting and definitely expanded my writing and analysis skills. The projects were difficult but interesting and I learned a lot of new skills, both in the classroom and with digital media.”

“It was super interesting, I loved the class discussions and the readings.”

“I greatly enjoyed the course! The readings were interesting, engaging, and thought provoking.”

“Great instructor! So passionate and informative.”

“Great prof! You are super accessible to students and I could always tell you were really passionate about the class subject. I loved talking with you about the class materials. Thanks for being

so understanding.”

“José is a very considerate professor, he is easily accessible at the request of students, and his feedback to students is always thoughtful and helpful. He is passionate about the material he teaches and clearly wants his students to succeed. He facilitates discussions well, allowing ample space for students to share their own thoughts and ideas. José is also personable and cares about knowing his students beyond the classroom. He gets involved in things beyond class time which I really appreciate.”

“I found him to be engaging, a wonderful teacher, and even somewhat of a friend through our shared course cluster experiences. I could greatly detail many ways in which his contributions enhanced the course, but I’ll limit it to saying that he was a wonderful professor and great instructor of the material at hand, particularly to someone who had never taken a Russian course and had only taken one ‘Literature’ course in my college career.”

“I think Professor Vergara is a good professor with a kind heart.”

I really like our readings and talking about them. I also really liked the in class photo analysis we have done. I think the readings have all been really awesome and I think we tend to create really good, insightful, educative class discussions. I also appreciate when you step in and share the points you want made! I also find the discussion questions and responses actually really helpful, it’s helpful to see what other people are thinking about in regards to the readings before class.”

“I enjoy having small group conversations before we talk in a larger group. I like doing creative/kinesthetic things like tying written ideas on cards together, writing on posters on the wall, or drawing what we heard in ‘Vampire Alberta Blues.’ I find peer review really helpful for my writing. The classroom atmosphere feels like a space of contribution, not competition, which I like a lot.”

“I have found the weekly online discussions to be very productive. It helps to have a system in place that keeps me accountable to being engaged in the coursework.”

I’ve found it engaging to have group discussions; since I know everyone in the class fairly well, I am really able to appreciate the group outlook on topics and readings, moreso than other classes where I don’t know all the class members well. It feels like every person’s opinion really adds something!”

“I find it productive/engaging to have activities where we are moving around the classroom or discussing in smaller groups in some ways (such as the day when we had posters on the walls and we were walking around to add quotes or comments). I find it helpful to be physically engaged in some way.”

“I found the essay a good way of practicing analyzing media and I felt like that expanded on my skills. I also really appreciate class discussions because I feel that discussion is the way I learn best and it is helpful for me to talk through questions with a group. Responding to the discussion questions online is also productive to me to engage in discussion in a more focused manner and in a different form.”

“I find the close-reading essays and the discussion boards helpful. I also like the one-on-one partner discussion.”

“I have really enjoyed our discussions guided by the questions people have put in the documents. I find it helpful also to discuss and analyze images together since I find that more challenging than literature analysis. I also liked when we each had to write a question on a poster and then go around responding to that.”

“One thing I found very engaging was the exercise where we tied notecards together and made connections. I also found it engaging where we walked around and wrote on posters with pens!”

“The classroom discussion is productive - I learn a lot from others and how they interpret a text.”

“I have found the most productive and engaging aspects of the course to be our more active discussions and dissection of the texts we have read. I have particularly liked the lessons where we did collaborative work on the chalkboards and group brainstorming/discussion. I also really liked our lesson in Arnecliffe and our discussions with authors. I feel like I have gotten more from these classes than from a traditional pure discussion-based English course.”

“I really like the way our group works together, I think the most helpful resource in this course has been the other people. I also enjoy how the class is structured as a discussion rather than as a lecture, and I think this aided in forming connections with others. I feel like I learned more through this structure than I would have otherwise. I also really like how accessible the professor is, and that if I need extra help/time on an assignment I don't feel like I've failed in any way by asking for it.”

"[The course] feels super manageable to me!"

"The texts are extremely valuable and interesting, and mostly not overwhelming!"

"I think that the spacing of assignments has been appropriate; there's nothing that I would change."

"Yes, I really like the structure of the course and I have felt that the pacing of assignments is appropriate."

"I like the structure, I have enough time to absorb the readings."

"Yes, I think the spacing and number of assignments have been great. I also like the diversity of types of assignments, and the opportunities to compare across mediums. I have liked the thematic progression of the course."

"Yes! I think the readings are very doable, interesting, and substantial enough for discussion. I also think the pace of essays and time for revision has been super helpful and definitely has helped my writing."

"The spacing has been good so far."

"Yes! I have found the number and timing of assignments very manageable."

"The communication between the professors in this 360 has really helped us space out big assignments so that we don't get too overwhelmed. This feels like other 200 level courses I've taken."

"SO great! I enjoy what we read and am happy I read it after the fact, so everything's perf :)"

"I had fun writing the analysis essay, I think the first draft and revision were appropriate opportunities! I also like that we did an in class photo analysis project before it was due! That helped me see/hear/understand what I would be writing a lot!"

"There has only been one formal writing assignment so far, but I think that having us turn in drafts, peer reviewing, and then submitting a revised draft is a great structure for turning in essays! I had fun writing my essay."

"I think the writing assignments have been set-up in a very effective way. It was useful to have the revised version be due at a certain date and a writing partner to receive notes from."

"The major writing assignment felt fair, and the feedback on it was appropriate and valid. I also appreciated the feedback given to me by the other student, so I am thankful for the structure provided that made that possible. Your feedback was also super helpful."

"I found the close reading essay super fun and helpful for refining my visual analysis skills. I really

appreciated the way the feedback was structured too because I enjoyed reading a peer's essay and getting to discuss with them and refine my essay based on their feedback. I usually have trouble with the revision process but the focused peer review really helped me."

"So far so good. There's always a lot to say about the texts/photographs you assign so writing assignments are never an issue."

"I really appreciate the opportunity for peer review on my paper. It was helpful to get another set of eyes on my paper."

"I think the close-reading essay was great and I liked the prompt and how we could be very creative with it and bring our own interests while still answering the prompt. Often the discussion questions, while tedious, help me think about the reading more deeply and focus on questions within the reading."

"I really liked the experience of writing our close reading essay! I appreciated the process of discussing some of the works in class and then going through multiple drafts. I particularly liked the peer review aspect of the assignment, and I feel that both Jose and [student's] feedback really helped me to adjust and rework my essay."

"The discussion questions have been helpful in orienting our understandings of the readings, and I actually enjoyed writing them for the most part. I think it's helpful to read a piece while thinking about what I don't understand and think other people could benefit from thinking more about. Our close reading essay was also fun to write, I've never analyzed a photo before but I think it was a good exercise in different ways of thinking about art. Our peer review and revision processes were helpful as well."

"I have learned a lot from our discussions and find them really insightful."

"I think the discussion component of the course is great! The classroom atmosphere is awesome. I think our discussions go really well, and I always leave feeling like I have more questions and deeper understanding."

"I have enjoyed the discussion component of this course."

"The discussion has felt great."

"The discussion is great for me! I like the way we organize it by raising hands and I feel like everyone is appropriately engaged. I don't think anything needs to change about this."

"I really like discussion time. I feel like the way that we popcorn the conversation is really natural

and comfortable, and I enjoy the opportunity to hear other people's thoughts and share my own."

"I love the discussion!!!!!! All of our classmates are so smart and always make me think about the texts in new and different ways. I also really enjoy hearing your (José's) opinions."

"Discussions are great - I like the mix of activities from the notecard and thread exercise to the chartpaper one. These activities help switch up the pace!"

"I have found the discussion component of the course to be very important to my experience. I have felt very at-ease expressing my ideas, despite not having a large background in literature or visual analysis. I also really like all the collaboration and group work that we do."

"I think that the close relationships with other students has really helped foster an environment of trust and understanding in the classroom that has made it easy to share opinions and have real discussions without worrying that our intentions will be misconstrued, which has opened the door for difficult conversations."

"I really enjoy reading other's posts because sometimes having different perspectives before discussion in class helps me form my interpretations and ideas for when we chat."

"I think [feedback] is very constructive! I appreciate peer review work I actually think it is so helpful and interesting to hear from my peers about what does/doesn't work for them. I also think the peer review rubric we were given was super awesome and well laid out. Feedback has felt good thus far in my opinion?!"

"I think the feedback I have received (on my essay, through google form, etc) has been very constructive. I think the exit ticket was very useful for a boost of academic confidence and also to acknowledge others."

"Honestly, it's been great. As mentioned above, the feedback from the professor and students for the assignment was very helpful in improving for the final draft, as well as the detailed rubric."

"The feedback online for my essay was super helpful."

"Yes super constructive! I think the rubric you give out for essays is very clear about what we need to improve. Also your written feedback on essays is very helpful and clear on what is good and what we need to improve."

"The feedback is great - I have never had a Professor give me feedback that is almost half the length of the paper I submitted! I like the combination of written feedback and a rubric."



“I have found the feedback I have received to be very constructive and thorough. The feedback I got on my close reading essay was so helpful and really made me think about how I could revise and rework my essay.”

“Yes! I think the structure of the feedback has worked for me.”

“Yes, the instructor provides feedback in an appropriate amount of time. When I was sick, he answered my email promptly and let me join class on Zoom.”

“Yes very good at communicating with students and supporting.”

“Yes! Jose is extremely helpful in both of these aspects. I’ve always felt that I’ve been able to contact him.”

“Yes, you are always quick to respond to emails and send out information in a timely manner. Your feedback on my essay was clear and returned to me quickly which I super duper appreciated!”

“Yes, your comments on my close reading were helpful.”

“Yes! You are very speedy with revision and give plenty of time for revisions.”

“Doing the string theme things was super cool to me. I think this helped me see some major themes coming up in our classes that had been swirling in my head but needed to be strung together. I also think it helped me understand what my classmates were seeing and the connections they were drawing as well. I also think the activity was so fun. The ‘aha’ moment is realizing the importance of identity through the course cluster and how identity is both an afterlife and influenced by the afterlives of the energy extraction, production, and consumption we are discussing. Now after thinking with Ernestine Hayes I’m curious about identity vs. essence, can coal, oil, and nuclear energy touch our essence?”

“Honestly, I’ve felt like this [aha moments] almost every week. ‘Coal Mountain Elementary’ was a really impactful read for me. I loved discussing “Coal” and *Apricots of Donbas* in class because I walked away with a much deeper understanding of the poets’ intentions. Writing the essay was also really helpful for me in grasping the concept of a hyperobject.”

“The Donbass-Chocolate photos being used to explore the societal difference between ballet and mining was a big ‘aha’ moment for me. The analysis of the photos was a new tool I had never really engaged in, and thus, I enjoyed doing it in class and in small and large groups.”

“Reading ‘How to Make Good Baked Salmon from the River’! Changed my perspective on food and

people's relationship to food when they are in different places.”

“I had a hard time understanding the photography in *Donbass-Chocolate* and it was really helpful for us to have a class discussion.”

“I think for me an aha moment was object-oriented ontology. I still don't fully grasp it, but it has been a very cool way for me to think about the world and to grapple with both in this class and outside.”

“I think reading Ernestine Hayes' work was very important for me in conceptualizing indigenous ontologies of thinking about place, belonging, and extraction.”

“The first time we analyzed the paintings, right at the beginning of class, I felt like I was actually reading a painting for the first time, and that I actually understood the process.”

“I've greatly enjoyed it.”

“I have really enjoyed this class and having you as a professor, thanks for all the hard work!!!!”

“Overall, I'm loving this class - you're doing a great job, Jose!”