

**Faculty of Arts 2012W2 Survey  
2012W2 2013**

**University of British Columbia  
Arts**

**Course:** URST 400 201 - Seminar in Urban Studies

**Department:** GEOG

**Responsible Faculty:** Elvin Wyly

**Responses / Expected:** 12 / 30

University Module	Wyly, Elvin K Individual					--- Comparisons --- GEOG	
	Med.	Mode	S.D.	N	Mean	Mean	Pct
<b>Q1</b> The instructor made it clear what students were expected to learn.	3	3	1.04	12	3.1	4	4
<b>Q2</b> The instructor communicated the subject matter effectively.	4	4	.60	12	3.8	3.9	26
<b>Q3</b> The instructor helped inspire interest in learning the subject matter.	4.5	5	.64	12	4.4	3.9	68
<b>Q4</b> Overall, evaluation of student learning (through exams, essays, presentations, etc.) was fair.	4	4	.94	10	3.9	3.9	30
<b>Q5</b> The instructor showed concern for student learning.	5	5	.37	12	4.8	4	100
<b>Q6</b> Overall, the instructor was an effective teacher.	4	4	.64	12	3.9	3.9	34

Number of Individuals / Survey Responses used for Comparisons: 50 / 1,495

**Choices / Values:** Strongly Disagree=1 | Disagree=2 | Neutral=3 | Agree=4 | Strongly Agree=5 **Pct** = Percentile Rank (Higher is better)

*Arts Instructor Questions*	Wyly, Elvin K Individual					--- Comparisons --- GEOG	
	Med.	Mode	S.D.	N	Mean	Mean	Pct
<b>Q7</b> In classes where the size of the class and content of the course were appropriate, student participation in class was encouraged by the instructor.	5	5	.64	12	4.6	4.1	62
<b>Q8</b> High standards of achievement were set.	4	4	.64	12	4.1	4	40
<b>Q9</b> The instructor was generally well prepared for class.	4	4	.90	12	3.8	4.4	6
<b>Q10</b> The instructor was readily available to students outside of class (e.g., through email, office hours, or by appointment).	5	5	.92	10	4.5	4.2	68
<b>Q11</b> The instructor treated students with respect.	5	5	.28	12	4.9	4.5	92

Number of Individuals / Survey Responses used for Comparisons: 50 / 1,438

**Choices / Values:** Strongly Disagree=1 | Disagree=2 | Neutral=3 | Agree=4 | Strongly Agree=5 **Pct** = Percentile Rank (Higher is better)

*Arts Course Question*	URST 400 - 201 Course				
	Med.	Mode	S.D.	N	Mean
<b>Q12</b> Considering everything how would you rate this course?	4	4	.60	12	3.8

**Choices / Values:** Very poor=1 | Poor=2 | Neutral=3 | Good=4 | Very good=5

Geography Departmental Questions		Wyly, Elvin K					--- Comparisons ---	
		Individual					GEOG	
		Med.	Mode	S.D.	N	Mean	Mean	Pct
<b>Q13</b>	The instructor attempted to provide satisfactory answers to all questions in class.	4.5	5	.64	<b>12</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.4</b>	32
<b>Q14</b>	The instructor established effective communication with students in the classroom.	4	4	.62	<b>12</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.1</b>	42
<b>Q15</b>	The instructor was helpful when students requested course related assistance outside of class.	5	5	.30	<b>10</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.2</b>	96
<b>Q16</b>	Assignments and tests were returned within a reasonable time.	5	5	.42	<b>9</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.2</b>	96
Number of Individuals / Survey Responses used for Comparisons:							50 / 1,460	
<b>Choices / Values:</b> Strongly Disagree=1   Disagree=2   Neutral=3   Agree=4   Strongly Agree=5 <b>Pct =</b> Percentile Rank (Higher is better)								

Geography Departmental Question		URST 400 - 201				
		Course				
		Med.	Mode	S.D.	N	Mean
<b>Q17</b>	For courses that had discussion groups or labs, the discussion groups or labs made an important contribution to the course.	5	5	.43	<b>8</b>	<b>4.8</b>
<b>Choices / Values:</b> Strongly Disagree=1   Disagree=2   Neutral=3   Agree=4   Strongly Agree=5						

**Q18 - Please comment on course content, or any aspects, positive or negative, of your instructor's teaching, attitudes to students, class atmosphere, or any other matters affecting the quality of instruction that you consider worthy of note.**

**Response Rate: 83.33% (10 of 12)**

The course was far too large for the type of setting we had set out to build.

Instead of building a barn, I think we maybe accomplished a shed.

- I was a little dissapointed from what I was told about the course, and it did not have quite the 'aha' moment I had expected; rather, it provided some great space to meet with like minded individuals who all have interested in change.

A more concrete schedule would have been postive.

URST 400 was a very interesting experience, and one that I've never encountered in an academic environment before. The seminar style round-table discussion allowed for interesting discussion in a "democratic" environment where all students were invited to contribute and where the professor, while possessing a strong level of ethos, encouraged students to disagree and treat him as just another member of the discussion. This level-natured discussion style inspired intellectual confidence in many of the students. Elvin's approachability, availability outside of class, willingness to help each and every student one by one with enthusiasm and his commitment to his discipline and his students was inspiring and made the course quite enjoyable. He would lead discussions when need be but would leave the floor open when students began to contribute. All of these very positive attributes of the course and Professor Wyly were appreciated and should be continued.

There were some limitations that should be addressed, however. Many of the discussions seemed to lack both direction and tangible or digestible substance. Many times I would leave a seminar not being able to summarize exactly what I was taking away, and usually being a little confused or overwhelmed. Tangents were many and rants & raves were common, which strayed from the topic at hand. The open-endedness of the discussions had great potential and left limitless bounds on what we could discuss, yet the number of people and the monopolized figurative podium led to a lot of back and forth rants about irrelevant topics. The abstractness of the readings also did not help to summarize what we were meant to be discussing.

Here are a few suggestions on improving the course in the future:

1. Collaborative knowledge. A wiki-style note-taking system for the class would allow students to communicate with one another and create a sort of "URST400 encyclopedia". I suggest an open Google doc (or similar interface) invited to all students, who can write notes on one collaborative document. It'd be great to be in seminar and open up the Google doc to see the page being updated in multiple places - definitions and discussions of terms like gentrification or de-centralization or monopoly rent, concepts like Marxism and "the right to the city", and people like David Harvey or Karl Marx himself. This would also allow for people to pose questions in or outside of class and have them answered in or outside of class by students and/or the professor, and by the end of the course a tangible collective of knowledge would be created by and for the class.

2. Clearer learning goals. The open-ended nature of the course was in many ways appreciated, but overall left confusion and ambiguity pertaining to what exactly we should be taking away. Even a theme or keyword for each lecture (ie: "history", "urbanism", "the right to the city", "Marxism", "gentrification") would allow for a better understanding of what exactly should be discussed. Then if the discussion strays too far from the keyword to another topic entirely, the class as a whole can pause for a moment and evaluate whether the discussion should be returned to the theme, or evolve and adapt to the new theme being discussed (in other words, whether the tangent is relevant and of value or one person going off on a rant).

3. Meeting once per week led to the course almost being forgotten about in the rush of other commitments and classes throughout the proceeding 6 days. Assigned readings would often be forgotten or lost in the jungle of other readings and assignments for other classes. This may be a problem pertaining to the individual and their time management, but a second event in the week would help keep URST on our minds (positively). Something like a pub night, coffeehouse meeting, second discussion group, or something of the sort would help.

Overall the course was a very positive experience and I think with these improvements much more would be taken away upon completion. Thank you, Elvin!

The course had too many students, an impediment fruitful discussion. Paired with the lack of a coherent goal for the class, I have to say that I enjoyed the seminar but had hoped for a much more enriching and intellectually stimulating semester. The class size led to domination of the floor by confident individuals, but also made it all too easy to veer off and skip over topics instead of critically discussing them. The practice of going around the table to share our personal exploits gave depth to our discussions, as we got to know each other better -- still, the process ate up a third of our time together. By the last few classes, Wyly's plans for our three hours of class, and an increased feeling of comfort within the group, supported more interesting debates as we figured the readings out together. I would love to re-take this course in a different format.

Wyly is a wonderful, eccentric and deeply caring teacher. It felt as though he had too much on his plate to dedicate himself to a course as demanding as URST400 -- and is unable to answer e-mails in the crucial, final two weeks before our \*only\* assignment is due.

In seminars, the contribution of the students and the instructor is expected to be somewhat symmetrical, but in this class the share was quite asymmetrical in that the students contributed the most to making the discussions engaging. Perhaps more prodding from Elvin to spark intriguing conversation and prevent dead-end conversations would have been helpful. Making a compulsory paper outline due date somewhere mid-semester would have been wise, and then have a "convention" on the last day to share all of our findings to one another and spark further meaningful conversation in urban issues. Overall, too much freedom may have been given to the students in this case but Elvin was a very inspiring instructor.

I enjoy the seminar and discussed-based class of URST 400. Elvin is very enthusiastic and supportive of student learning. He attended to student writing with attentiveness and passion. I appreciated the opportunity to input into the class syllabus and direction. Though, because the process of deciding on our readings was based on majority rule, the topics focusing on race and gender were sorely absent from the readings, which left out critical voices on the issues. I also liked the opportunity to delve into one topic over the term for the term paper, rather than have many smaller assignments. It would have worked better for me to have more structure along the way with the term paper (different structured research and writing assignments due at different times). I often found the class discussions unfocused, which led to more surface level discussion rather than delving into one topic deeply and critically. I would have preferred the class vote on a few topics for the term and then we could organize readings around those topics (and plan this mostly all the first week, so we had a sense of what was upcoming for the rest of the term). This would have allowed us to delve deeper and to get a variety of perspectives from different authors in order to contrast and compare perspectives on that topic. Another idea it to assign people to lead the class discussions on particular weeks to help focus discussion and structure the class setting more. I think student's in the class felt as though the structure helped to put learning back into their hands and encourage more engagement with the issues and material.

Elvyn is a great professor but I feel like this class size was too big that sometimes discussion go further away

from the topic.

I hereby nominate Elvin Wyly for every teaching award there is. Elvin makes students feel smart, such a refreshing feeling when you are surrounded by so many other smart people at UBC that make you feel dumb. Anything you say is worthwhile, you feel that you can and that you do have something to contribute to the class. The passion that Elvin has for cities is contagious, and made me want to learn more about cities. Although this class is a work in progress, which I believe could use more small group discussion, I think Elvin is on to something big here with "The Seminar". This wasn't my first Wyly class, and it won't be my last.

A bit more structure would have helped me in this course, but I appreciated the 'barn-building' metaphor. More specific parameters around expectations for assignments would also have been helpful - how many written submissions were expected, for example. A clear outline of submission requirements and due dates might be more effective than the open ended "every class students have an opportunity and I (Elvin) have a deadline" approach.

Perhaps Elvin's generosity was both a positive and a negative in terms of class size: anyone who really wanted or needed to take the course was allowed in, which is good, but the class ended up being a bit too large for a really effective seminar.

Most of my feedback for this class was shared on the last day. It's a great seminar that just needs a bit more structure to make it effective.

I really appreciated the democratic approach Elvin used in the seminar. It was definitely different from all the other seminars and lecture classes I've taken. We got to choose the books we wanted to read. I also liked the various handouts about the pedagogy of learning that Elvin gave us (such as Michael Kahns The Seminar). It was interesting to see how we went about building a barn together. I really appreciated Elvin taking the time to promptly send back thoughtful emails regarding my concerns and course suggestions as well as recommendations for my paper. He clearly cares about his students and has an approachable and friendly demeanour.

Id have liked the class to be smaller as it was often difficult to contribute or jump in when so many opinions were being voiced. I think that if there are 30 students in the seminar, itd be far more effective to split us up into smaller discussion groups every class to maximize our participation, as opposed to having one big class discussion. Also, the reading load was not really manageable for me considering all the other readings and assignments I had in my other courses.