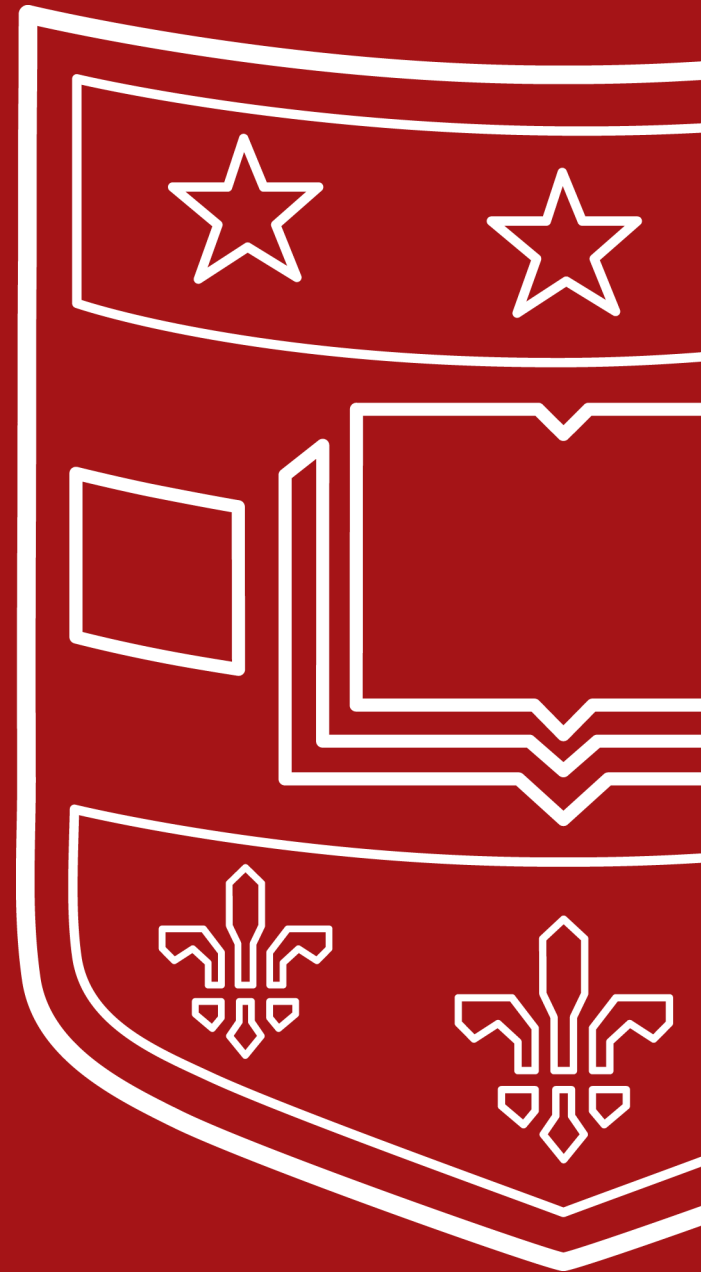


# Effective Student Course Evaluations and Question Personalization for Instructors

Rick Moore, Center for Teaching & Learning  
Kim Daniels, Office of the University Registrar



# Overview

- Partnership between the WashU CTL & Registrar
- Tips for Instructors on Writing Effective Questions
- Instructor Strategies for Encouraging Response
- Wrap-up & Questions



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*“Making Student Evaluations Meaningful”*

*“Effective Student Evaluations and Question Personalization”*

*“Putting Your Student Evals to Work in the New Semester”*

Coming this fall: *“How's it Really Going?: Making Use of Mid-Semester Opportunities for Student Feedback”*

Teaching Resources

# Course Evaluations

RESOURCE OVERVIEW

What you need to know to make the most of the student course evaluation process

## Category

Course Design & Evaluation

## Effective Evaluations

How can you make the most out of student course evaluations?

At WashU, course evaluations are administered by the Office of the Registrar in partnership with individual schools and programs. Details about the logistics of course evaluations can be found at [WashU Course Evals](#). This includes the login to your Course Evaluation Dashboard, contact information for school/program eval administrators, and answers to frequently asked questions.



**Have questions?**

Contact me today!

# Question Personalization

LOGISTICS

DECIDING WHAT TO ASK

OPEN VS. CLOSED QUESTIONS

QUESTION WRITING TIPS

## Encouraging Student Response

TALK ABOUT EVALS

GIVE TIME TO COMPLETE IN CLASS

CONSIDER INCENTIVIZING RESPONSES

DEMONSTRATE YOU CARE WHAT YOUR STUDENTS THINK

## Interpreting Results

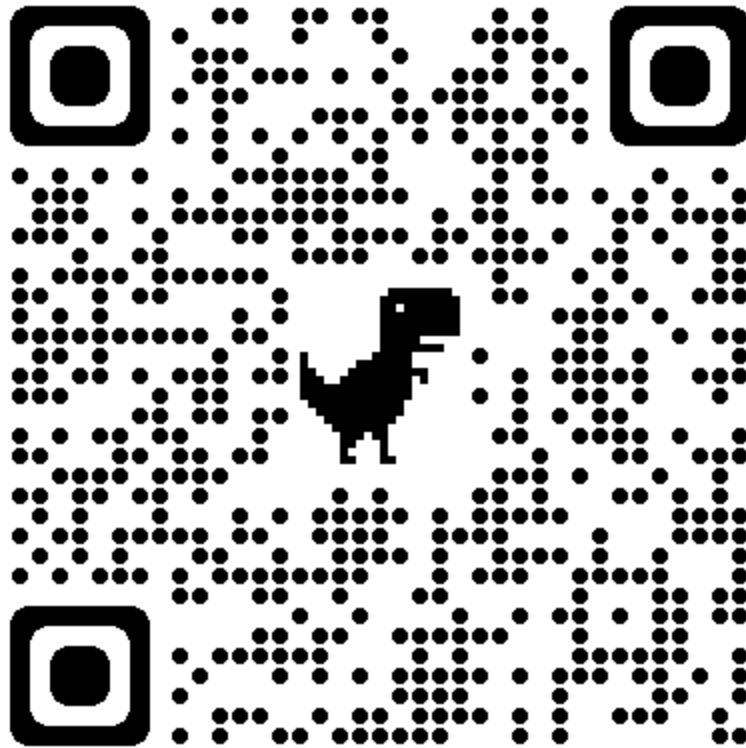
STEPS FOR RESPONDING TO STUDENT FEEDBACK

INTERPRETING QUANTITATIVE ITEMS

INTERPRETING QUALITATIVE ITEMS

APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED

# Course Evaluations Resource Page



<https://ctl.wustl.edu/resources/course-evaluations/>

File Message Help Acrobat



Delete Archive

Reply Reply All Forward

Share to Teams

Delete Respond Teams Quick

Center for Teaching and Learning News and Events

 The Center for Teaching and Learning <ctl...>  
To  Moore, Rick



### Coming Program ing Student Evalua

**Tuesday, November 16, 3:00 p**  
Student evaluations can be stress teaching. How can we make the discuss the role of student evalu how to encourage student partici our evaluations so that they give

Learn more and register [here](#).  
Please contact [Rick Moore](#) with

### Teaching for Social Imp

**Friday, November 19, 10:00 am - 11:30 am (via Zoom)**

Teaching and learning the last 18 months has been challenging for many instructors and students. We



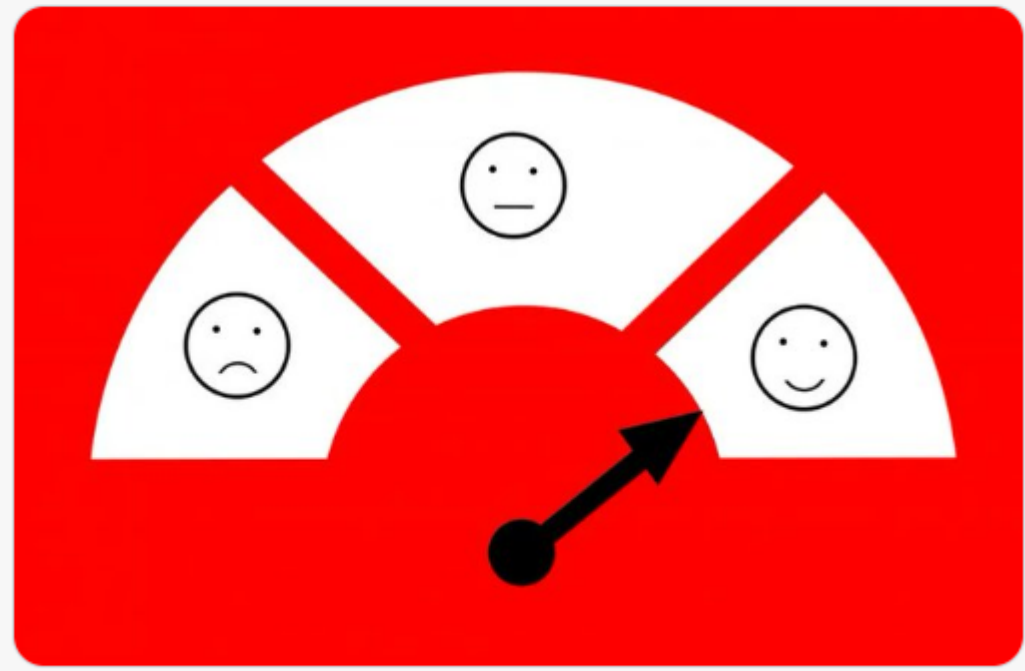
**WUSTL Center for Teaching and Learning @WUSTLCTL · Apr 15**

Got the email about "Question Personalization" for your student evals but not sure where to begin?

"Effective Student Evaluations and Question Personalization"

Monday, 4/18 at noon

[buff.ly/3wYgJuV](https://buff.ly/3wYgJuV)







## Last Chance for Question Personalization



WashU Course Evals Team <evals@wustl.edu>

To Moore, Rick



Wed 4/20/2022 10:10 AM

Start your reply all with:

[I completed it.](#)

[Thank you!](#)

[Just submitted it!](#)

[Feedback](#)

**Dear Rick,**

This is your last chance to submit up to three additional custom-worded questions to your course evaluation. Question Personalization will close tomorrow at 10pm. If you have questions please contact the Course Evals Team at [evals@wustl.edu](mailto:evals@wustl.edu).

**The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) can assist instructors with question design. For links to QP events, consultations, and other information from the CTL:** <https://ctl.wustl.edu/resources/course-evaluations/>.

[Please click here to Edit and Submit your questions.](#)

Sincerely,  
The WashU Course Evals Team



# Why bother with all of this?

- Overall, student feedback about teaching can be better utilized to improve courses
  - Writing effective survey questions is a skill that must be learned
  - There are proven strategies to increase response rates
  - Interpreting and using evals isn't necessarily obvious
- Evals can be stressful for faculty

# WashU Eval Basics

# WashU Eval Basics

- Partnership between schools and the Office of the University Registrar
- Each school sets its own default questions
- For semester-long course, evals open to students 2.5 weeks before last day of term
- Results come back to instructors a few weeks after end of term

# WashU Eval Basics

- Many quantitative results are public within WashU community
- Procedural details found on Office of the University Registrar's website
  - Includes contact person for each school & FAQs
- Other information hosted by the CTL

# WashU Eval Basics – Question Personalization

- Instructors *may* add up to 3 questions to their courses
- Question format is either open-ended OR Likert-style questions in the same scale format as their school
- QP begins 11 days before evals open and lasts 7 days
- QP use is ~9% on our main campus & ~18% on our Med Campus

# Question Personalization Tips for Instructors

# How to decide what to ask?

- Don't **HAVE** to ask anything
- Return to your course learning goals





In this course, participants should...

- 1) Differentiate the sociological study of religion from other ways of interacting with religion (e.g. theology, personal belief, psychology, etc.)
- 2) Explain the methods social scientists use to study religion
- 3) Identify and evaluate major theories of religion influential in sociology
- 4) Explain ways that “religion” is a socially constructed category
- 5) Compare varying explicit and implicit definitions of “religion”
- 6) Apply theories of religion influential in sociology to the analysis of contemporary issues in religion and society
- 7) Analyze how religion and religious identities interact with other aspects of social life, including gender, race, and politics

# How to decide what to ask?

- Don't HAVE to ask anything
- Return to your course learning objectives
- Consider areas your standard questions don't cover
- Focus on *student experience*, not rating instructor
- Ask questions where the answer may change how you do something



Open: Students type in text

“What was your favorite part of this course?”



Open:

Good at getting details and learning what you don't know to ask

BUT lower response rates, difficult to interpret, time consuming for larger classes



Closed: Students select a response from choices given

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “The two-stage exam helped me learn.”

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree



Closed:

Easier to analyze, more likely to get responses

BUT less depth than open questions, sometimes lacks context for making change



# QP Question Examples



## What additional feedback do you have for Professor Moore?

### Comments

I enjoyed reading the ethnography that we chose in class, but after our discussion class about it I heard a handful of students that were very upset we read that book. Although I think it was good to discuss the ethical issues associated with the book, but I would maybe choose a different book for next sem/year.

I liked the assignments but wish there were more 'off weeks' where we didn't have an assignment. maybe larger assignments instead?

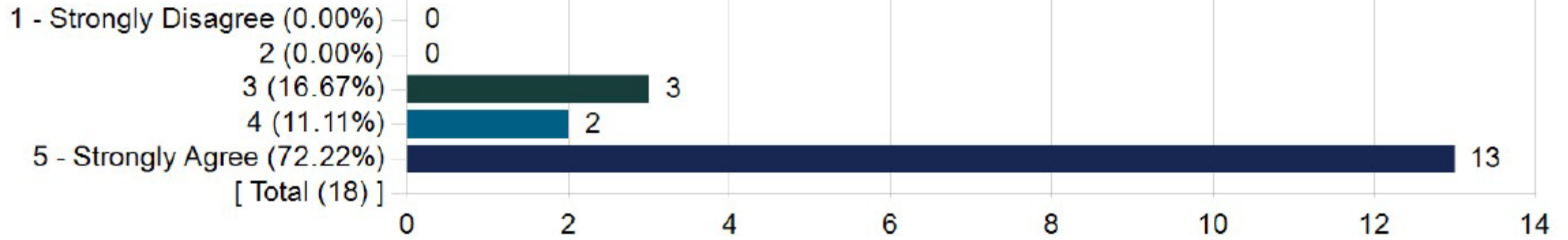
I like not having a final in this class, much rather prefer the research proposal for a class like this

liked working with groups in class, but tbh the majority of the time I did not come to class having done the reading and would just look up the answers as we were doing the work – both ways you get the 'important' info I suppose but might consider this when constructing this class again bc I feel like it was the majority of people in the class

Great semester! Thank you!

## The group work in the course helped me learn.

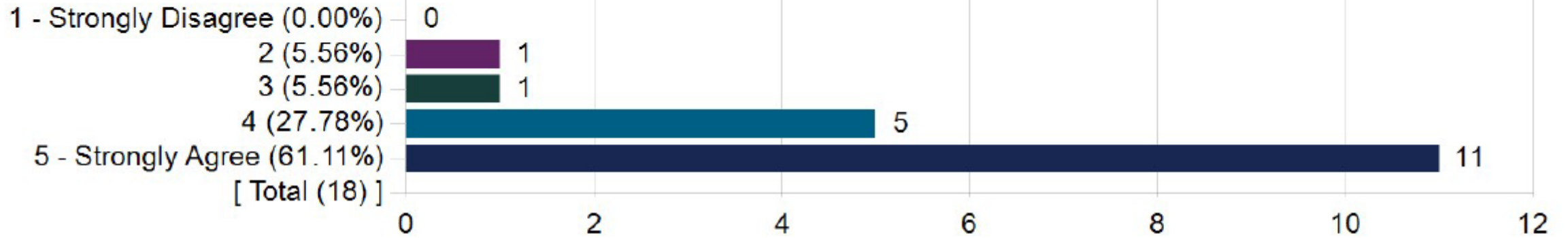
### The group work in the course helped me learn.



Statistics	Value
Response Count	18
Mean	4.56
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	0.78

## The feedback given in Canvas on my assignments was helpful.

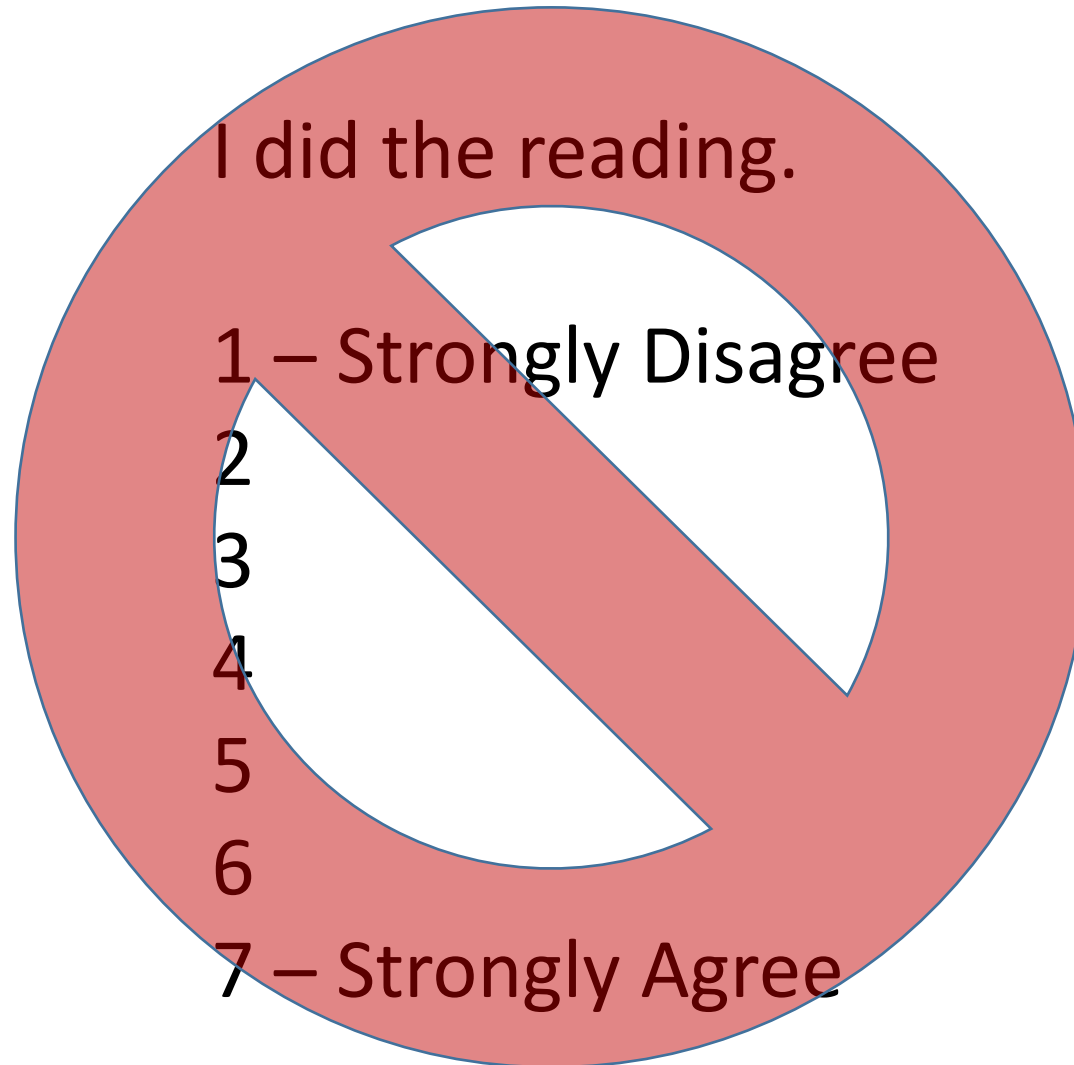
The feedback given in Canvas on my assignments was helpful.



Statistics	Value
Response Count	18
Mean	4.44
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	0.86

# Question Writing Tips

# Be clearer than you think you need to be



# Better

I always read the assigned reading completely.

1 – Strongly Disagree

2

3

4

5

6

7 – Strongly Agree

# Avoid leading questions

In the past, most students have usually enjoyed the library field trip. How would you rate the quality of this semester's trip?

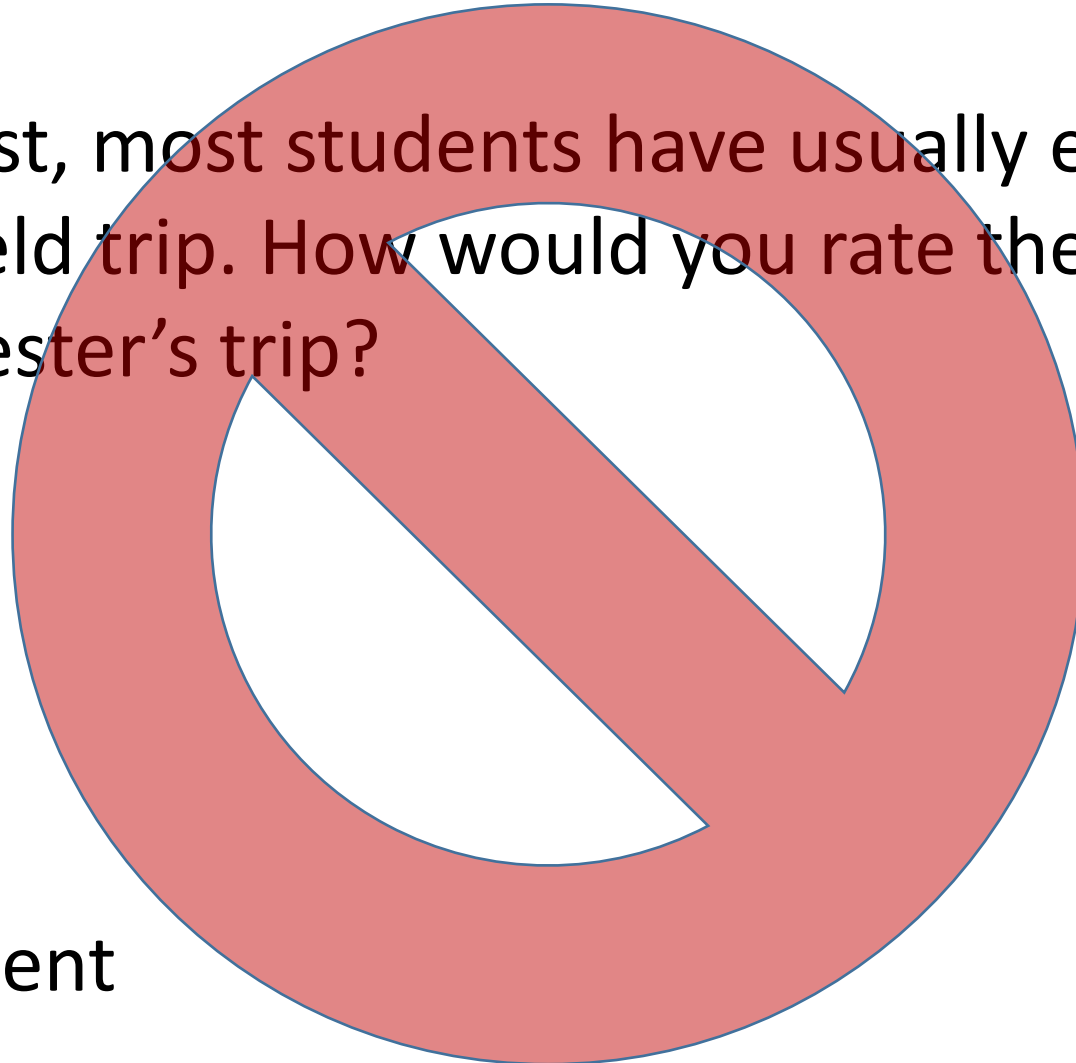
1 – Poor

2

3

4

5 – Excellent



# Better

How would you rate the quality of the library field trip?

1 – Poor

2

3

4

5 – Excellent



# Avoid asking 2 questions in 1

(aka “double-barreled” questions)

“The lectures and readings helped me learn.”

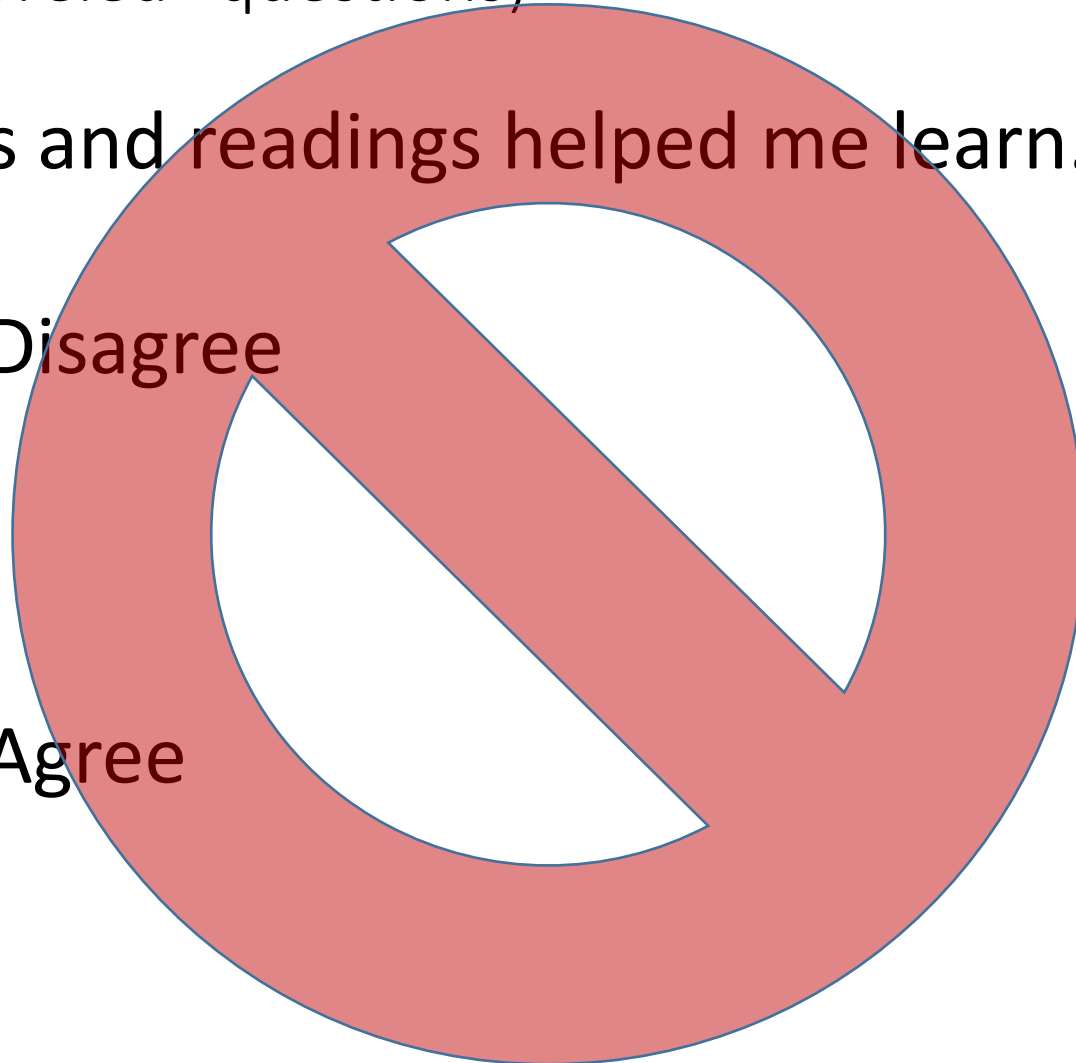
1 – Strongly Disagree

2

3

4

5 – Strongly Agree



# Better: Make it 2 questions

“The lectures helped me learn.”

1 – Strongly Disagree

2

3

4

5 – Strongly Agree

“The readings helped me learn.”

1 – Strongly Disagree

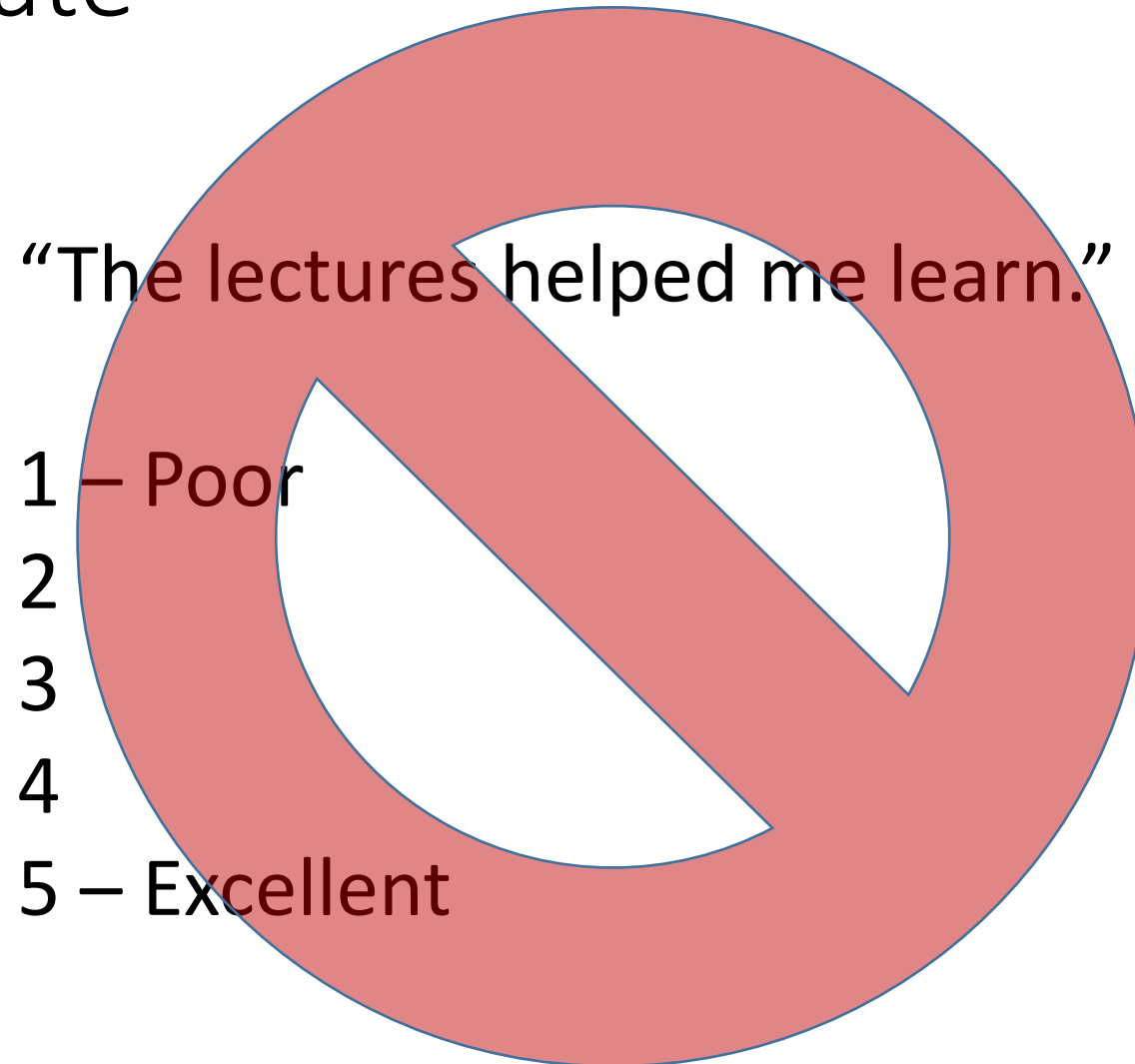
2

3

4

5 – Strongly Agree

Make sure answers to closed questions are appropriate



# Better

“The lectures helped me learn.”

1 – Strongly Disagree

2

3

4

5 – Strongly Agree

If making your own scale, make sure answers to closed questions are balanced

“The lectures helped me learn.”

- 1 - Completely satisfied
- 2 - Mostly satisfied
- 3 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 - Dissatisfied

# Better

“The lectures helped me learn.”

1 - Strongly agree

2 - Agree

3 - Neither agree nor disagree

4 - Disagree

5 - Strongly disagree

# Question tip summary

- Be clearer than you think you need to be
- Avoid leading questions
- Avoid “double-barreled” questions
- Make sure answers for closed questions are appropriate, balanced

# Encouraging Response: What to Tell Instructors



# Why bother encouraging response?



# Why bother encouraging response?

- Response rates are generally very low
  - Survey fatigue; Online lower than paper evals
- But the more students respond, the more likely you're going to capture the full variety of student experiences
- This makes evals more useful to you for feedback & decision making

# Talk about evals in your class

## Explain why evals are meaningful to you



# Talk about evals in your class

## Tell students what you plan to do with the results

## Describe how low response rates hurt this goal



# Talk about evals in your class

## Remind students repeatedly to complete the evals

### Once is not enough



# Give time to complete in class

- Try saving five minutes of a class for people to complete evals on their devices
  - Beginning of class better than end (Standish et al 2018)
- Provide the link to the eval portal



# Incentivize Response

- You can see the response rate as the evals are still open
- This information can be used to create incentives:
  - If XX% of students complete the evals than everyone gets an extra credit point / class let out early / later due date on final paper / etc.



# Show you care what your students think

- Demonstrate that you take it seriously
- Ask for feedback throughout the semester – create culture of feedback
- Evidence suggests instructors who ask for mid-semester feedback may get higher responses on end-of-semester evals (Stanny and Arruda 2017)





# Works Cited

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