

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my candid opinion of Ignacio Ojea Quintana as a professor of philosophy. To give a bit of background, I am a junior in SEAS, the engineering portion of Columbia University. I am majoring in chemical engineering and minoring in earth and environmental engineering. I wanted to participate in the Columbia Core and had never previously taken a philosophy class. I decided to enroll in Contemporary Civilizations. I stayed in Prof. Quintana's class through the spring semester not for ease of scheduling, but because I found Prof. Quintana to be an incredibly efficient and knowledgeable lecturer.

The class is challenging in scope and in comprehension. Meant to introduce students to issues ranging from political to moral, the professor must be able to accommodate for differences in educational background. My peers majored in everything from history to computer science. Prof. Quintana did an exceptionally good job ensuring that our interests were reflected within our discussions. Every major concept was explained in depth, with brilliant clarity and personal insights from the professor. Reading Plato, Aristotle, and Hobbes in the fall made me see certain aspects of daily life a bit differently. It was incredibly interesting to learn of these entire schools of thoughts. At first, it was difficult for me to get through the readings as I found them dense in depth and unlike anything I had read before. Prof. Quintana noticed my initial reluctance to speak up in class and talked to me personally to assure my fears of sounding uninformed. With his support, I began to gain confidence in my ideas, as well as my questions.

In the second semester, we read authors like Smith, Nietzsche, and Foucault. To strengthen our understanding of the works we had read in the past, Prof. Quintana regularly questioned how the authors of the fall would respond to those of the spring. He seamlessly integrated old works into discussions of seemingly unrelated topics. It prompted the students to understand the previously covered material in a new context. This ensured that the knowledge was not lost. Through written assignments, students were pushed to come up with their own ideas alongside analysis of the text. Prof. Quintana wanted us to create original arguments, as well as understand subtle nuances of the text. The most commendable quality of Prof. Quintana was that he made an effort to understand the class not only as students, but as individuals with separate challenges, interests, and schedules. He often asked for feedback and allowed students to express which areas they wanted to concentrate on. He was prompt with communication and made himself readily available to students for feedback. I met with him at least five times a term to discuss my work and authors I had trouble with. Prof. Quintana is not only a captivating lecturer, but a kind individual that is understanding of the troubles that arise in this period of our lives.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Chia