

1. Please comment on the individual instructors with regard to effectiveness and attitude toward students:

Strengths

- The lectures were very thorough and detailed. Asking questions during class allowed us to be involved. Really interesting information.
- Dr. Lipsick was an effective lecturer who clearly knew a lot about the material. His jokes and passion sparked interest in the students.
- Dr. Lipsick was great. I was so much more interested in what he and other lecturers had to say than literally any of the material in section, the Thinking Matters format, essays, etc. I learned more comprehensive things about cancer in a few hours of lecture than anything else. Everything else about the course seemed like a relative waste of time.
- Very knowledgeable, knew the material very well.
- Friendly
- Was always available for consultation and interesting in lecture.
- Dr. Lipsick is very nice and engaging, and invested in getting to know his students.
- Joe is a great lecturer and did a good job of varying the course content (balance of science, economics, societal impacts, etc.)
- Professor Jamie Imam was fantastic. She was very nice and helpful.
- Professor Lipsick was incredibly knowledgeable; his lecture slides and his answers to students' questions demonstrate this.
- Very informative and qualified to teach.
- Really dedicated and fun instructor
- He is knowledgeable and is very kind to his students.
- Dr. Lipsick was very engaging in class and talked about a wide range of topics that really broadened my knowledge of cancer.
- Dr. Lipsick (and the teaching fellows and guest lecturers who would occasionally swap in) knew the course material extremely well and did a great job of answering questions to clarify understanding.
- The lectures were really interesting and engaging and Professor Lipsick was very approachable.
- I enjoyed my time in this class because the teaching was very clear and had a laid back feel to it. It made learning even difficult concepts less stressful and more enjoyable.
- The instructor is very knowledgeable in his field and would provide interesting examples from his own experience as a doctor. Very enthusiastic and pleasant to learn from. Presented material as very interesting.
- Good instructor. Kind to students.
- interesting topic
- very effective teacher, explained concepts clearly
- Professor Lipsick is really good at telling stories.
- Dr. Lipsick is wonderful. He really knows his stuff. I learned so much about cancer--both from a biology aspect and from a society aspect. We learned what cancer is and all the problems there are trying to find a cure--and the efforts to raise awareness and funds and change policy. Dr. Lipsick did a great job explaining all these aspects and how they all fit together.
- The instructor was very knowledgeable and showed concern for his students' understanding.
- Joe was a great lecturer, very engaging and knowledgeable, and presented information in a good way!
- Professor Lipsick was a great lecturer! He always had a positive attitude and did a good job connecting with the students, even in a large Thinking Matters class. He explained concepts well, and helped us understand what was most important from each lecture.
- Professor Lipsick was an engaging lecturer and really wanted students to learn about the basic scientific and cultural background of cancer.
- Joe was cool
- Dr. Lipsick was a very interesting lecturer and integrated storytelling and science. I felt that he held a very positive attitude with his students and was very helpful when his students reached out to him.
- Joe was very personable and knowledgeable about the course material.
- Good lecturer, great at being engaging while explaining scientific concepts.
- most of the lectures were very interesting and engaging
- Always in a good mood and attempted to engage students in discussion during class.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Sometimes the lectures were a bit dry, but that's what facts are; dry.
- Perhaps he could be more enthusiastic/less monotonous when speaking in order to keep the attention of some more easily bored students.

- Towards the end of the course, the class was less engaged. Lectures became too science-y and were filled with too many statistics and numbers. Fill classes with more hands on activities (like visiting the morgue) and change up the pace of lectures.
- N/A
- Should have spent more time talking about assignments and how materials in lecture linked to homework/final papers.
- None!
- Topics did jump around randomly at times.
- none on her part.
- Because this was my first class of the day, I found Professor Lipsick's voice to be somewhat droning.
- Needed a little bit more energy. Understandable because he was ill.
- Please stay in remission! No more cancer, please :D
- His lecture can be a bit dry and sometimes I get lost during lecture. I suggest that he changes his lecture style by making it more engaging and slower.
- I know the podium was stuck to one side of the class so that is where he always stood. Maybe walking to the other side of the class/ talking to that side more.
- Often the material was a bit too dense to comfortably follow in lecture.
- Some of the lectures had a lot of scientific information and slightly more explanation of this could have been helpful.
- Good.
- boring class notes
- none
- Dr. Lipsick was great. I think he covered a lot. I appreciated having the slides up online beforehand. Maybe have us break up and discuss with a partner a bit more, or have more of the group quizzes (like we had for one lecture where the teaching fellow had questions and we had to pick from a list of answers). That keeps the class engaged. Maybe also have a bit more review of lecture--sometimes I feel like people just sit there and don't feel like they need to retain what is being said. Having us go over what we discuss in section would help with this.
- Some of the guest lectures weren't at all valuable
- none
- A little more enthusiasm would have been nice
- But the biology lectures near the end of the quarter got kind of dry
- Maybe trying to be a bit more charismatic, but the overall method about presenting the class material is great!
- I can't tell whether this is a science or an English class, and I like to know what kind of a class I'm taking when I take it. I understand this is a requirement though, so I can't have ALL the science. There has to be some English.
- Lectures were very dry and boring.
- Great guy, boring teacher.

2. Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the textbook(s) and reading(s). What materials were most and least valuable? Why?

Strengths

- Emperor of all Maladies and The Immortal Life were incredible books to read. Definitely keep these books!
- I think all of the readings were well chosen and helped define what we were learning about in class.
- I liked the Henrietta book, it was a very personal story and really painted the picture of how cancer can affect a whole community.
- Easy to read
- Readings were diverse and interesting.
- Readings were engaging and definitely deepened understanding of course subject.
- The readings were very interesting and presented a variety of angles of examining cancer.
- The readings were very relevant to everything we did in class.
- The textbooks and reading were very informative. There was a lot I didn't know before reading these books.
- Very helpful for class.
- Fantastic materials
- The readings present a good overview of cancer from different aspects.
- Both books were very engaging and informative
- The readings were interesting and very relevant to the content we covered.
- I thoroughly enjoyed both of the primary readings, and found many of the extra materials interesting as well.
- The readings were very relevant to the course material and extremely interesting. Not only did I enjoy the reading a lot, but it also clarified a lot of topics and taught me numerous new things as well.
- Great readings!
- books are amazing!
- readings were interesting and always relevant to the topic we were learning that week
- I really liked the readings. There were two books and additional reading. Both of the books were interesting--one read like a novel and the other had so many stories about cancer. I liked the two different types and I enjoyed

reading books about cancer--I had never read any cancer books before. I think the assignments we had on them were also fair. They made sure we read them, but didn't make us do a comprehension test. We could write about parts of the books that were meaningful to us.

- The readings that were assigned were connected to the class's lectures and sections.
- The assigned readings were overall excellent, both informative and enjoyable to read
- I really enjoyed both of the books used in this course, as well as the all the other readings! These are both books that I would read on my own, and it was great to be able to discuss them in a classroom setting, supplemented by all the additional readings.
- the readings were interesting and not overly technical for those who did not have a strong biology and chemistry background.
- Readings were somewhat interesting
- Both readings were very engaging and interesting. I felt that both were necessary for discussion and provided several topics of debate. No suggestions for improvement.
- They were extremely interesting, especially Emperor.
- Really enjoyed the readings-- not too technical, but relevant and very interesting.
- The readings were all very helpful and very interesting
- The two books were a great way to develop the lesson plan since it makes the whole course very cohesive, which I really appreciated.
- HeLa and Emperor were great readings for the course!
- I think both main texts were extremely helpful and very interesting.
- Both of the books were really helpful throughout the course. Other assigned readings and videos were usually interesting and helpful as well.
- Readings (primarily Emperor of All Maladies and The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks) were both interesting and informative; very good as core texts
- The Emperor of All Maladies has become one of my favorite novels. Great read, and great choice of text for the class.
- Field trips were informative and very helpful, textbooks and readings are interesting

Suggestions for Improvement

- None.
- None.
- The emperor of all maladies book got really boring after the first few chapters and I feel like it stopped being very helpful as time went on.
- Too much unneeded info
- Readings were not always addressed in lecture
- Could be a bit dense and hard to get through at times.
- I am not crazy about the "Emperor" novel.
- Have less total reading, it definitely felt overwhelming at multiple times, so I ended up skimming a lot of it due to time constraints. I would've probably gotten more out of it if we had less, but more concentrated, readings.
- Some of the reading was, I felt, unnecessary and extraneous.
- N/A
- There are so much readings. I feel like I do not have the time to finish all the readings in time and had to skim through most of them. I wish that the readings would be cut down shorter so students could fully dedicate and understand the materials.
- Reading was assigned in huge chunks at a time, which was daunting (even though it was necessary). Maybe dividing the reading up into smaller portions for Tuesday and Thursday would be more encouraging.
- Sometimes the reading that was required for the next class was very long and dense, so it would be hard to finish it all (especially with reading both novels at the same time).
- Good.
- none
- There was a lot of reading. Trying to read two pretty long books in the course of a quarter wasn't super easy for me. I'm a pretty slow reader, and though I appreciated that the readings were paced out, I did feel like there was a lot to read. Maybe having us just reading one or the other would be better. Or we could read one and just read part of the other.
- I felt that the amount of reading that was assigned was at times excessive and very difficult to do as result.
- I think the idea of class movie nights was great--incorporating film into the class is a great way to see the issues from a different perspective. However, I really was not happy with the documentary about the BRCA mutation. It was poorly made, disjointed, and ended with no clear resolution. The entirety of the film was essentially the woman whining about having a mutation (not even cancer) and failing to do anything about it--lamenting how her mother passed the gene on to her yet still wanting to have children and pass it on to them. After watching the film, I really felt like I hadn't learned anything and had just wasted two hours of my time. I think watching a documentary about someone who actually has experienced cancer firsthand would be a far better use of time.
- Sometimes there would be a bit too much reading for one night, and it would be difficult to get through all of it. I would have preferred if we had read The Emperor of All Maladies, and then the Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks,

rather than both at the same time, which was a bit daunting.

- the readings seemed a little excessive. each week students were assigned nearly 200 pages of reading.
- Sometimes the readings were unnecessary
- The readings were too lengthy to take on readings in both books every week, and I often found myself falling behind and stressing about it.
- none
- There were times where the readings were a little heavy but it was still manageable most of the time.
- Some of the lectures/articles/videos for each weekly reading were not extremely helpful or even very relevant to the course material. In addition, sometimes many articles that basically said the same thing were assigned.
- The readings didn't always quite match up to the lectures (mostly because sections of the reading covered a bunch of different topics and the lectures chose to focus on only one, and then maybe another the next week)

3. Please comment on assignments and exams (difficulty, length, frequency, usefulness, and their success at testing conceptual understanding rather than recall):

Strengths

- Always made sure we were on top of what we were learning, so it was a good pace.
- The discussion guides helped solidify material read for the week
- N/A
- Final paper was a great way to allow students to research topics relevant to readings.
- Assignments were inspired to facilitate discussion, and helped us think about the topics in a different way.
- Assignments asked thought-provoking questions and helped me to write the final essay.
- Assignments were decent
- The weekly assignments were just the right length. I never felt as if there was a huge assignment that took up the majority of the time. They were spaced out very nicely.
- Tested our knowledge.
- Assignments were fine
- The assignments engage the students to explore different aspects of cancer.
- Assignments were well written to make us think.
- Discussion guides actually were a lot of fun. They were informal enough to not be stressful but challenging enough to be thought-provoking.
- The weekly written assignments were useful as they were based on the reading and aspects learned in lecture--definitely solidifying my understanding.
- Relatively thought provoking.
- only had one essay, had plenty of time to work on it
- I liked that we didn't have any tests--just an essay. I liked that I could enjoy the course and enjoy learning about cancer without worrying that I would be tested on it. It was a nice change. I think it was nice that we could take everything we learned from the course and incorporate it in a paper at the end. I thought it was a good way to encompass our new knowledge in all aspects of cancer. I think the discussion guides were good because we they made sure we were reading and able to take what we read and synthesize the information to answer the questions. I found the discussion guides really helpful in forming my paper--and they had page numbers and everything.
- The assignments were linked to the material that was being studied.
- Assignments were well done, integrated course material well
- The discussion guides each week were a really good way to make sure we did the reading and understood what was going on. They were of reasonable length and difficulty.
- weekly assignments were given each week to ensure that students kept up with the readings.
- N/A
- I very much liked the format of the essay.
- Discussion guides were helpful in terms of ensuring students read, and the questions asked in them were pertinent, but sometimes we discussed the exact same things in section, which was redundant.
- The final essay was interesting
- The final paper is set up in a very nice manner since you have the opportunity to really develop your paper but finish it efficiently, especially with having a first draft due. I liked having tutorial sessions.
- Good portions of reading- not too big or too small.
- The assignments helped solidify what was going on in the class.
- Essay encourages students to synthesize what they learned
- The discussion guides were well put together and really highlighted the important takeaways from the lecture and readings

Suggestions for Improvement

- Discussion guides were a little tiring to do every week, but I understand the need for them.
- Sometimes it seemed more like "busy-work" or a check of if we had read it more than an assignment to aid our understanding.

- I didn't like the discussion guides that occurred every week. The class felt more like a pwr class than a thinking matters. In comparison to other thinking matters classes, it seemed like a lot more work, reading and preparation over all.
- Busy work was a waste of time
- Final paper prompts should have been released earlier in order to allow students to make links between course material and the paper.
- Sometimes they were graded quite harshly, even though I had worked quite hard on them.
- Some section assignments seemed a bit tedious (ex. how to write a discussion question worksheet).
- I think the emphasis on "discussion questions" was too overstated.
- The reading, on the other hand, was incredibly lengthy to the point where I was unable to dedicate my attention solely to reading because of other coursework.
- Graded difficulty.
- N/A
- I wish the instructor would be more specific when explaining the grading of the final essay, especially the outlines. More examples of final essays from the past year should be provided.
- The grading was harsh and somewhat arbitrary sometimes. I wish there were better guidelines.
- Thinking of good discussion questions was surprisingly difficult at times.
- The in section assignments seemed like busywork a lot of times, but I'm not sure what role Professor Lipsick had in their design.
- N/A
- Assignments are a lot and not really helpful.
- none
- The essay seemed kind of abrupt for me. The course was pretty much constant and then at the end we have all this work and have to write an outline, first draft, and final draft in a few weeks. I think it might have been better to start the outline earlier and do the first draft earlier so that we weren't stressed and pressed for time at the end. Maybe we could brainstorm ideas for the paper earlier on--because I remember being pretty unsure about what I was going to write about. The paper was pretty intimidating. The discussion guides were good and bad. The word limit was hard for me--and I spent a long time cutting it down. I think the word limit was meant for us to spend not a lot of time on them, but it had the opposite effect on me. I spent a long time--hours--cutting my words to fit within the limit. Maybe we could do the discussion guides every other week and another assignment the other weeks--because sometimes the discussion guides were really tiring and I would appreciate a different assignment to incorporate different skills we have.
- The writing assignments, particularly the weekly discussion guides, were ambiguously graded. The ambiguity behind the grading of the discussion guides made it very difficult to perform well on them. Sometimes points were deducted for lack of detail. The detail, however, was hard to include when there were word limits that prevented elaboration on the themes addressed in the discussion guides' questions.
- A lot of the time section worksheets felt more like busywork than anything else.
- none
- I thought the essay at the end was kind of random and had little to do with the course overall
- A little more formal instruction regarding the paper would be helpful, although my TF was very helpful when I asked her questions outside of class.
- The essay topics didn't allow for a lot of creativity/independent research.
- But the topics were a bit limited and I think it would have been better if we were able to choose our own topics
- The discussion guides were great at providing some structure to the readings and discussion sessions. However, during discussion, we only focused on only one aspect of the readings, which makes the rest of the readings seem not as valuable.
- The word limits on the weekly written assignments were often limiting.
- Outline is useless and detrimental to writing process (limits creativity later on), more due drafts and more edits would be better, assignments were tedious at times, relied heavily on summarization instead practical synthesis or argument building

4. Do you have any additional comments on the course over-all?

Strengths

- Cool class. I definitely learned a lot from the guest speakers and I loved having Proctor and Rhoades. Those were the coolest lectures; especially Proctor's. It really opened up my perspective of the tobacco industry. I loved the field trip to the hospital, and seeing the products of cancer. That was really cool. Informative, too. Definitely made things more real.
- I learned a lot, enjoyed the class, and I think the overall experience of the class was very valuable.
- I learned a lot about cancer from this course, but the teaching got a little repetitive and dry at the end.
- Very unhelpful and easy
- Interesting course and great content.
- Well-taught, and definitely changed and broadened my perspective on cancer in a good way. Loved going to discussion section, and was able to open up during that section, when I am usually not able to
- Lots of fun sections--visiting pathology lab, looking at art, student-led discussions.

- Good course, would take again
- Coming into the course and not knowing anything about cancer, I found this class incredibly informative. There were parts of this class that I found thoroughly engaging and interesting. This course focuses on all aspects of cancer and less so on the science.
- Informative and practical. Learned a lot.
- I loved this class
- Very interesting and informative.
- The content is very interesting and the sections and assignments are engaging.
- Very interesting course, learned a lot of new aspects about cancer and it opened my eyes a lot too! Glad I was able to take it!
- Good class.
- fun people to work with
- great course
- I really enjoyed this course. It was interesting and everyone teaching was super nice and informative. I learned more about cancer than I thought was possible. There is so much to it and I appreciate this class for trying to teach us as much about this complex disease as possible in ten weeks. And I really enjoyed the teaching fellows giving lectures sometimes. I think it was great to hear from them and about their different perspectives-- otherwise I would never hear from the section leaders that weren't my section leader. I would definitely suggest that they continue giving lectures in the future. Great job!
- Excellent course!
- Great course, really enjoyed it!
- This was a great class! I particularly enjoyed the guest lecturers, and the visit to the pathology lab.
- Interesting course overall and would recommend to others
- I am very pleased with the outcome with this course. The material was very interesting, and I felt that this course gave me the opportunity to purely listen and learn, rather than worrying about busy paperwork.
- All of the TFs seemed amazing- I especially liked my TF, Stacey, who was extremely nice and helpful. She did a great job leading section, making sure that it was a comfortable environment that encouraged total class participation.
- Great Thinking Matters course, my favorite class this quarter. I especially appreciated how interdisciplinary it was and the guest speakers and lab visits.
- I really liked this course and learned a lot about cancer and its effects on a wide range of topics
- Visiting the pathology lab was an awesome experience. I always enjoy looking at anatomical structures. While it would have been great to visit the lab earlier, with the knowledge we had developed, it proved to be more beneficial. The lecturers provided a nice viewpoint on different aspects of cancer. However, I was a little disappointed with the ethical lecture. I was expecting more interaction amongst the two speakers.
- Really interesting topic to learn about. I liked how we looked at all aspects of cancer, not just the biology of it.
- Of the guest lectures, Kim Rhoads' was the most interesting/helpful/important to me. The ethics of genetic testing guest lecture was probably my least favorite (it seemed like a reiteration of issues already discussed in some detail in the readings), but it was still interesting. The pathology lab session was very cool.
- Although this course did not fulfill any WAYs requirements for me that had not been already fulfilled, I chose to take The Cancer Problem out of interest for the biological and social side of cancer. I am so glad that I did. It has been one of my favorite courses at Stanford and will impact the way that I approach a career in the medical field. I was already interested in oncology, and believed to be quite knowledgeable on the social aspects of cancer, but this course has taught me more (as well as showed me how much there still is unknown) about cancer. Thank you for the dedication to the course, and the breadth and depth of material presented. The entire teaching staff was amazing, and I honestly would not change anything about the course!
- Probably the best THINK class there is here!
- Boring professors
- Very interesting course content. Great instructors and guest lecturers.
- Great lecturer

Suggestions for Improvement

- Lectures could be a little...dry, sometimes. But that's the only issue. Everything else is great.
- Don't teach it
- Lecture topics should join into readings more frequently.
- None!
- Lots of not-so-fun sections
- N/A
- N/A
- Lectures and readings were very dense, often discouragingly so, and sometimes it was hard to follow along.
- More trips to the pathology lab would be awesome!!
- Wish it was graded by professor. TAs' grading vary a lot. Your grade highly depend on which TA you have.
- more lively lectures
- none

- It was a great course. Like I mentioned, maybe try different types of assignments and different tasks to do in section. I liked the worksheets in section but didn't always see the point. Maybe discussing lecture more in section and solidifying what we just heard would be nice.
- I did not feel that the visit to the Haas Center was that helpful. It would have been better if we had been told about specific projects at Stanford that we could get involved in, rather than general stuff about public service.
- Even out the science and humanities aspects of the course
- some of the assignments, such as the discussion guides, seemed a bit unnecessary
- N/A
- It's just boring. I hate that we had to take this class in that it's 4 of my units and I honestly didn't really take anything out of it besides the fact that I read those two books that I probably wouldn't have read otherwise. This class has SOOO much potential but is seemingly not up to par, and far from it. Unfortunately, I feel that this isn't because of the teaching staff but more so because of the class' structure itself. I feel that TM courses are meant to prepare us for the rigor of college but I mean, I took this in spring quarter...I had already persevered thorough 2 quarters and felt babied by this course. please improve this course for the sake of Stanford's reputation.
- The course was all over the place and the material was confusing because it was too deep about bio when non of us have a good bio background.
- Make it less science-y; too much technical information.