

# **GSR984: Thinking Critically**

## **Professional Skills for Global Citizens**

(Foundations for Excellence in Professional Practice)

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## About the Course

GSR984 is a graduate course that was designed to assist graduate students in their development of the knowledge and skills they will need for the effective application of their disciplinary excellence within societal institutions. Starting in 2013-2014 the University of Saskatchewan will begin implementing a number of changes that will provide graduate students with more control over the depth and range of topics that they judge are appropriate for their particular career paths. GSR984 will be a required core component of the new program. The primary pedagogical features of GSR984 are now the focus of a course that takes place over six 3-hour evening sessions. The course will concentrate on the foundations required for excellence in all aspects of professional practice. Further depth and more specific topic sessions, such as teamwork, leadership, intellectual property, project management, entrepreneurship, etc., will be provided as modules in a second course, GSR974. In this course students will be able to select topics from a wide range of options in terms of the topic, theme, duration of the modules, and scheduling. In addition, plans are also being developed for a non-credit certificate program in graduate professional practice, which will consist of these two courses – GSR984 and GSR974 and some additional hours in other professional related courses/workshops offered on campus, off campus, and on-line. More information on this certificate program will be available later this fall.

This innovative course provides a supportive and challenging setting for graduate students to develop the creative and critical thinking skills required for professional practice. The use of a small group discussion format in a multicultural and multidisciplinary environment will help students develop new and unique understandings and skills for their professional and personal lives. Meeting weekly with peers from disciplines across campus in face-to-face small groups, students collectively engage in problem solving of case studies to explore a wide range of professional issues and challenging questions. GSR984 focuses on foundational frameworks of thinking (often invisible to us) that are used for almost everything we do in our personal and professional lives. The key theme, creative and critical thinking, involves a process of thinking about thinking in which identifying our assumptions and reflecting to enhance learning and thinking are integrated into each session.

Through multidisciplinary and multicultural discussions students uncover their own knowledge frameworks and assumptions. They discover ways in which personality, human thinking, social contexts, cultural beliefs, and fields of study subtly but deeply shape our ways of knowing and acting, often without our awareness. Students develop mutual appreciation of each other's vantage points that enrich their own academic fields, research, friendships, and future professional practice. Many of the discussions will challenge our conventional wisdom and thus may sometimes seem uncomfortable, even confusing. Consequently, each session will contain reflection activities (for both facilitators and students) to help ensure that the course content and activities remain grounded in the realities of work and life. For further information on the course and foundational skills, see the section below on "Why is Creative and Critical Thinking a Foundational Skill for Excellence in Professional Practice?"

This course is a major initiative toward meeting the concerns the Tri-Council Granting Agencies and the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies have recently expressed about the need to include a wide range of professional skills within Canadian graduate programs to enable graduate students to excel in responsibly engaging and leading our complex global communities into the future, to making a difference.

In past years, graduate students have found GSR 984 an exciting opportunity for exploring, challenging, and expanding their ways of knowing and communicating.

***The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.***

—Henri Bergson (185-1941), French Philosopher, Educator

***It is the theory that decides what we can observe. Or modified slightly, it is our theories and thinking that decides what we can observe.***

—Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955), German theoretical physicist

Watch the [short video](#) to learn what six of the more than 500 graduate students who have participated in GSR 984 say about their transformative experiences in the course.

## **Why is Creative and Critical Thinking a Foundational Skill for Excellence in Professional Practice?**

The terms 'critical' and 'creative' thinking are relatively common terms and sometimes invoke specific definitions and concepts. In GSR984 our use of these terms is more fundamental and broader than may be used elsewhere. Consequently for this discussion, and often in the course itself, we will use the phrase 'thinking about thinking'. While 'thinking about thinking' does include creative and critical thinking, it also implies the presence of several other important features and activities in GSR984, which are described below under the title, Four Key Pedagogical Themes in GSR984. But first, 'Why is Thinking about Thinking a foundational attribute for excellence in how we apply our disciplinary knowledge within societal structures?'

While human thinking is not a single simple process, it is not inaccurate to say that our different thinking processes profoundly shape who we are in terms of:

- a. What we believe and how we make sense of the world.
- b. What we choose to pay attention to and do
- c. How we feel

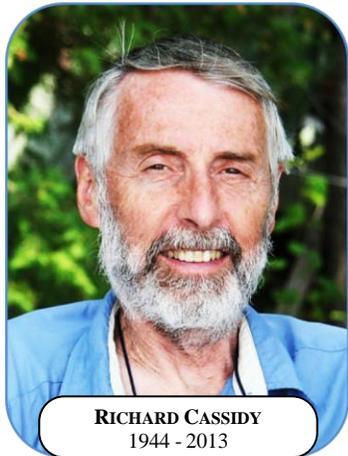
Our thinking processes are the foundation for everything we are and do within society, and they are especially important for our application of disciplinary knowledge. Unfortunately, the foundational role of our thinking itself is not generally recognized and accepted. Consequently educational programs rarely offer students the opportunity to explore this topic. If human

thinking does indeed shape who we are and how we respond 'in the world', then an understanding of how our minds actually work could be both the most important knowledge we can learn and the most practical ability that we can develop.

## Four Key Pedagogical Themes in GSR984

- A. Thinking about thinking implies that frequently human thinking is not well understood and that we need to consciously examine it by reflecting. We construct our understanding of what we think and how we think in our consciousness. However this 'knowledge' is usually not in close alignment with how we actually think, as shown by recent research in a wide range of disciplines. Much of what goes into human thinking occurs beyond our conscious awareness and is subject to significant distortion.
- B. Thinking about thinking implies that reflection is an important component of 'good' thinking. Reflection helps us become more aware of the knowledge systems we have constructed to make sense of the world. Indeed reflection is the central component built into the organization and exercises used in GSR984. Thus we use multidisciplinary group to discuss challenging ideas, as well as other specific reflective exercises such as writing and listening. Reflection is central to deep learning. Thus in many aspects, this course is also about *learning about learning*.
- C. Thinking about thinking implies that we need to examine the premises and presuppositions of our thinking. Whenever we consciously think about something, we base our reasoning on a large number of other ideas, concepts, and conclusions that make up our own personal knowledge. Normally these ideas and concepts are unexamined assumptions that we accept as true without even recognizing that we are doing so. Our assumptions are a significant source of distortion in our thinking. Consequently a common focus in GSR984 is the development of habits that enable us to more easily recognize our hidden assumptions.
- D. Thinking about thinking implies a process that involves active practice as well as reflective practice. Traditional approaches to reducing errors in human thinking typically use the term, Critical Thinking (CT). Frequently CT involves an attempt to solve 'errors' in human thinking with technical fixes, an approach commonly used for solving problems in western society. Most CT approaches assume that if one follows a carefully constructed set of procedures and rules, then accurate human reasoning will result. However, history and neuroscience show us that the ingenuity of human reasoning can easily outsmart our 'technical fixes' so that we can have what we want. While CT is a valuable and important tool, more reasonable – that is trustworthy – results can only be obtained if we continually practice thinking about our thinking. That is the goal of GSR984 and the foundational attribute we will develop together.

## In Memoriam



**Dr. Richard Cassidy**, Professor Emeritus, Department of Chemistry, initiated the forerunner of GSR984 in 1997.

Richard's inspiration and passion, insightful design, hard work, and humour guided GSR984 for 16 years. His collaborative leadership engaged many like-minded colleagues. Faculty and community leaders joined Richard as facilitators for various sessions with students to probe together our "thinking about thinking." His initiative, pedagogy, and humanity touched more than 500 graduate students.

Although Richard had been living with cancer since 2006, he continued as GSR984 coordinator until his death at home, Wednesday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Remarkable educator. Good friend.

## Eligibility

This course is open to graduate students registered at the University of Saskatchewan. Post-doctoral fellows or other interested persons at the University of Saskatchewan may also apply to register through contacting the Gwenna Moss Centre.

There is no fee associated with GSR 984. The course appears on your transcript as a 0-credit unit course with a grade of "credit" or "fail".

## Learning Goals

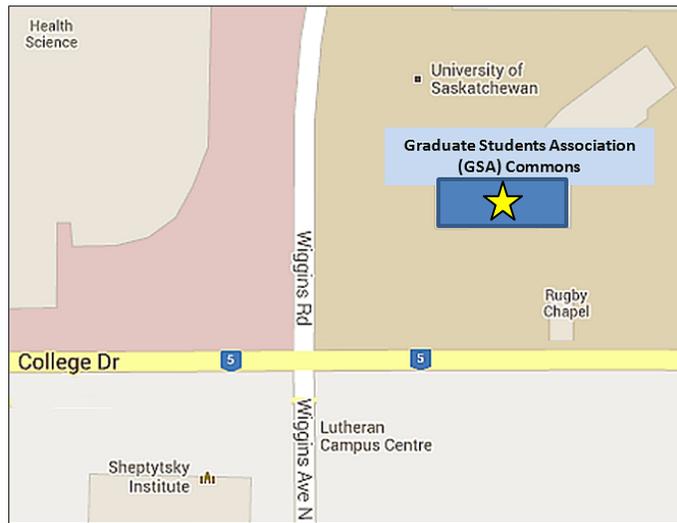
The Learning Goals associated with GSR 984 will help you:

- Identify a number of professional skills you need to focus on as you develop your professional and personal goals.
- Become aware of your conceptual frameworks and develop thinking skills, to identify assumptions and biases in your and others' thinking.
- Develop an appreciation of differences in the thinking in diverse disciplines and how to interact within multidisciplinary groups.
- Learn to appreciate the importance of group dynamics for problem solving and learning.
- Develop a personal understanding of how disciplinary excellence requires reflection on how you think, what you believe, and how you act.

## Course Requirements

GSR 984 classes will be held Wednesday evenings in Term 2, 2014 from 7:00 pm to 10:00 p.m. in **The Graduate Students Association (GSA) Commons**.

**The Graduate Students Commons** is located in the former Emmanuel and St. Chad Chapel on the corner of Wiggins Road and College Drive.



Total time expectations for all activities are not more than 30 hours for the course. There will be no marked assignments. There will be a requirement for a weekly reflection activity that will be short and focused, and a requirement for a final reflection paper at the conclusion of the course. Each week we will provide facilitator feedback to review the material and discussion, to connect previous and upcoming sessions, and to provide additional resources. Recognition of completion of this non-credit course will appear on students' transcripts.

To receive credit, students are required to do the following:

- attend all six sessions (exceptions discussed below),
- read and interact with the on-line pre-session material,
- participate in the group discussions,
- write a short, focused reflection exercise after each session (~20 to 30 min maximum), and
- write a reflective essay at the conclusion of the course.

The discussions will be facilitated by a number of persons with expertise in different disciplines, thus exposing students to a wide range of disciplines, ideas, and experience. If special circumstances prevent a student from attending a session, the student must inform one of the facilitators (prior to the session if possible). Under these circumstances the student will still be expected to read the on-line pre-session material, briefly discuss the session with someone who attended, write a one page summary of the session content, and complete the reflective exercise. Only under very unusual circumstances will students be allowed to miss more than one session. If circumstances do arise that prevent you from attending several sessions, please discuss your situation with a facilitator and we can arrange to take your name off the class list to ensure that you will not receive an "Incomplete" or some other grade for the course on your transcript.

## Course Coordinators and Facilitators

The format, content, goals, facilitation, and administration of GSR984 are discussed and developed via a Community of Practice (CoP). A Community of Practice is a flexible, informal organization made up of a wide range of persons interested in a common area of inquiry and share purpose. The GSR984 CoP benefits from the input of a wide variety of expertise from communities within and outside of the University of Saskatchewan. The routine administration and facilitation of the 2014 program is coordinated by a core group within this CoP, made up of the following persons:

- Trisha Dowling, Professor Veterinary Medicine, Faculty Coordinator
- Gerald Seniuk, Retired Chief Judge of Saskatchewan
- Dr. Jayne Hudson, Retired School Principal with Expertise in Consensus Decision Making
- John Thompson, Professor Emeritus Sociology
- Dr. Kim West Educational Developer, GMC, Professional Affiliate Geography and Planning

Other guest facilitators may also lead and participate in some of the discussions.

## Timetable

Tentative topics and a brief description of the activities for each session for 2014 are posted below. These will be updated if changes occur. Each session will end with a reflection exercise that will examine how the evening's topics relate to our research and profession and to other sessions in the course. Since these reflection exercises are held for each session they are not included in the descriptions given below. The sessions will be held Wednesday evenings from 7:00 p.m. till 10:00 p.m. in the Graduate Students Association (GSA) Commons.

Date	Description
Jan 8	Introduction and discussions of primary processes in human thinking. Elephant and rider metaphor. Pizza social at end of the session. Individual pictures taken during social.
Jan 15	How unexamined societal and cultural structures influence our thinking and behaviour.
Jan 22	How personal assumptions about talent, intelligence, and failure shape our learning and creativity.
Jan 29	How 'innate' personal preferences (personality) shape how we think about questions/problems.
Feb 5	How culturally and societally constructed concepts, such as leadership, influence how we approach our profession and other aspects of our lives.
Feb 12	Challenges and barriers to the application of objective reasoning. Assessment of course. Summary reflection exercise for whole course.

## Expectations of Participation and Commitment

GSR 984 is designed around student-centred practices that encourage students to take greater control of their learning. In GSR 984, graduate students meet in interdisciplinary groups to discuss and explore their thinking on topics related to the application of their disciplinary skills. The primary goal is to cultivate deeper thinking about fundamental frameworks rather than the accumulation of more technical knowledge. Free and wide-ranging discussions are critical for achieving the goals of this course. To ensure effective and open discussion in class, all grading has been eliminated. There are no marked assignments or tests, and no final marks. GSR 984 participants attend voluntarily. The discussion leaders are also volunteers. Commitments must be made by both participants and discussion leaders to facilitate the exchange of ideas, to challenge thinking and to stimulate effective learning. The GSR 984 leaders welcome suggestions that may enhance the achievement of these goals.

The expectations for participants in GSR 984 include timely attendance and participation in each 3-hour session, and prior reading of any assigned material to ensure that discussion time is used effectively and your ideas become part of the discussion. Discussion is a key component in effective learning, and learning is enhanced through the thoughtful input of as many interdisciplinary voices as possible. Faithful attending sessions or being prepared for discussions means that other participants will also learn effectively from your responses to their ideas and from your ideas in response to theirs. GSR984 creates a safe, collaborative learning environment where all persons, their ideas, and their cultures are respected and valued.

Because the goals and structure of this course are quite different from typical university courses we want to ensure that all participants understand these features, and recognize their responsibilities towards other participants by participating in all of the course activities. Once you have attended the introduction session and decide to continue with the course, we are asking that you commit yourself, within reasonable limits, to attending and participating in all of the remaining five classes.

## Accolades from Former Students

In 2006 a number of former GSR 984 students were asked to offer their perspectives on the proposed *Beyond Disciplinary Excellence* program, based on their experiences with GSR 984. These students took GSR 984 from two to ten years, before 2006, and had different disciplinary and work experiences, as indicated below. Quotations from their statements have been organized below into four areas: Interdisciplinary Impact, Class Format, Effect on Thinking, and Impact on Studies and Work. These four areas represent key aspects and intended outcomes of the *Beyond Disciplinary Excellence* program. Many outcomes identified by the students were transformative. These included such aspects as: (i) the course exposed and challenged previous assumptions; (ii) developed recognition of the importance of multidisciplinary discussions of ideas; (iii) learned about the limitation of human thinking; (iv) developed new perspectives and skills that continue to influence research, work, and everyday living.

## Disciplinary Background of Former Students Providing Statements:

- Sociology, writing PhD dissertation, U of S
- Exploration Geology, PhD, Perth, Australia
- Commerce, PhD, new faculty at Wilfred Laurier University
- Chemistry, PhD, Weyeth Pharmaceutical, Virginia, USA
- Education and Accountant, PhD student, U of S
- Philosophy, writing PhD, Laval University, Quebec
- Engineering, Environmental Activist, MSc student, U of S
- Private Business and Education, MEd, U of S
- Geography, PhD student, Waterloo University, Ontario
- Geochemistry, PhD, Technology Transfer Consultant, Universität Potsdam, Germany

## Summary of Responses of Students

### Interdisciplinary Impact

- GSR 984 stood out as highlight -collectively learning had broader implications than what my sub-discipline was focused on and produced unexpected and enlightening results
- bringing together people from many disciplines to discuss an issue forces one to re-examine one's assumptions
- provides an experience that is not otherwise available
- innovative approaches that start with a novel multidisciplinary interpretation of the framework
- emphasis on discussion certainly helped me to learn and also to unlearn a lot of things
- faced with a room full of peers from wide-ranging disparate disciplines, different cultures and dissimilar life paths and tasked with discussing issues with the eye of a critical thinker, permanently altered my conscious world
- communication and understanding and thinking across disciplinary and cultural borders are keys and warrants for success, progress and conflict prevention

### Class Format

- chances to get to know people one would generally not have the chance to come into contact, let alone learn from and with, were invaluable
- case study and discussion format used for the classes facilitated learning
- the format of the class was a very effective vehicle for getting us to think about thing
- course material valuable, memorable, and worthy of sharing with my peers
- provocative and stimulating in their approach of not lecturing, but presenting ideas, questions and setting up open discussions
- one of the most interesting things is that the discussions did not end in the classroom
- develops a community of critical thinkers who feel safe and empowered to share their experiences and knowledge

## Effect on Thinking

- learned decisions are based on our beliefs and personalities
- refreshing to learn something new about the way we think
- challenged my thinking on complex issues
- an eye opener - how knowledge is created
- immensely invaluable to me in terms of thinking "outside the ethnocentric box"
- enabled me to be far more critical, objective and yet considerate of other disciplines
- even with my background in philosophy, I found it very rich and stimulating
- challenged my accepted beliefs
- permanently altered my conscious world
- all students should be encouraged to assess how their historical, cultural and personal worldviews have been shaped by powerful forces
- learned to question what we may not have even considered ethical issues in the past
- I gained valuable understanding and significantly broadened my horizon
- recognition of parallelism between scientific and societal or ideological developments was an eye-opener

## Impact on Studies and Work

- learning can be fun at the same time
- I have constantly thought about how it applies in my research
- In my research, I have applied concepts I have learned about critical thinking and to complex issues especially in ethics and standard setting in the accounting domain
- learned that you needed to make these different assumptions explicit when writing up your research
- expanded my range of thinking and removed an ethnocentric (i.e. interest or field of research group) lens, which I believe has benefited my research
- an invaluable addition to any education - "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."
- the new ideas and approaches to problem solving that were presented have stuck with me and guided many of my decisions and personal research interests
- made an early impact in my career
- good to foster team work and leadership abilities
- think critically during my studies but also in my research with the Aboriginal Education Research Centre (AERC) and my self-employment within the film industry
- as an educator I will affect thousands of other people over time and will continue to seed attention to critical thinking or "thinking about our thinking"
- taken my new knowledge of historical worldviews, personality, the effect of language, leadership, racialization, ethics and all the other topics into my work
- "Critical thinking" has helped me realizing that a university degree is not about recording and reproducing data but it is more about learning how to solve problems by means of communication as leader, team member or colleague
- an indispensable asset for a successful career with a responsible approach
- benefited from it both in life and at work

## Registration Instructions

You must register for this course in PAWS.

It is under Graduate Studies (GSR) courses in 20132014 Term 2. The CRN is [27290](#), Thinking Critically: Professional Skills for Global Citizens. The course meets face to face on Wednesday evenings, 7:00 - 10:00 p.m., from January 8 to February 12, 2014.

## Pilot Proposal and Assessment

GSR984 was first offered to graduate students in 1997. In 2008-2009 GSR984 was used as the basis for a three year pilot program to augment graduate education, entitled, 'Beyond Disciplinary Excellence: Enhanced Disciplinary Skills for Global Citizens'. The original pilot proposal and summaries of assessment for GSR984 can be opened as PDFs by clicking the links below:

[provide links here]

Starting last year, GSR984 developed further, becoming the required core course for a proposed non-credit certificate program in graduate professional practice. We hope that more information on this new program will be available later this year. We will keep you informed of developments.

The complete report – Summary of Student Assessments, GSR984, Thinking Critically: Professional Skills for Global Citizens, Winter Term, 2013 – is available below, pp 12-16, with assessment form, pp. 17-18.

## Summary of Student Assessments

### GSR984, Thinking Critically: Professional Skills for Global Citizens

### Winter Term, 2013

Prepared by Core GSR984 Community of practice:

- Gerry Seniuk, Retired Chief Judge
- Jayne Hudson, Retired school principal
- John Thompson, Professor Emeritus Sociology
- Richard Cassidy, Professor Emeritus Chemistry

1. **Summary.** This year GSR984 was changed from a 10-week course on professional practice to a 6-week core course for a proposed graduate certificate program in professional skills. Consequently this year GSR984 was more focused in time, content, and processes. During the fall of 2012 considerable planning and reorganization focused on desired goals, outcomes, content and process. By process, we refer to the environment and structure of every session, which included reflective writing, listening skills, and discussion of challenging ideas in multicultural and multidisciplinary discussion groups selected randomly each week. Thus the class environment assured that these key professional attributes were learned via a process of deliberate practice in each of the six sessions. Student assessment, which was a requirement for completion of GSR984, showed that our key goals and outcomes were achieved, even to an extent that surprised our core Community of Practice. Students assessed the course in two ways. First, students rated (rating scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most helpful) eighteen questions that explored the value of each session, the course goals, the practices built into the class process, and the overall value of the course. Secondly each student submitted a personal reflective paper on the course. The average student rating for all aspects of the course was 4.5 and the responses for all questions were in the range of 4 to 5. Such responses represent an increase of 0.5 to 1.0 over the previous positive GSR984 ratings. The questions, tables, and graphs for this part of the assessment are given below in section 3.1.

This positive assessment was confirmed by the students' observations in their reflective writing assessments. Although many of these students had no previous experience with reflective writing, the submitted essays consistently showed a depth of thought and clarity that was truly remarkable. Many of the comments spoke to transformative changes during the course. Here are a few examples of such student comments:

- a) Profound connection between professional practice and reflection on thinking, bias, and actions. It moved me.
- b) Thinking about our thinking, biases and assumptions has been a revolution for me.
- c) Almost like I have a new set of eyes to see the world.
- d) The course content was challenging in different ways but remained grounded in the realities of work and life, and will continue to influence my learning.

- e) I initially thought this would be a relatively easy and even useless class but it surprised me and will be one of the most unforgettable courses I took at the U of S.
- f) Overall one of the best experiences in my graduate training.
- g) Challenged my thinking in effective and fundamental ways, and group discussions helpful and challenging for my thinking.

Additional selected comments are given below in section 3.2.

The student evaluations of GSR984 clearly show that for most students GSR984 was a transformative experience that helped them understand and appreciate the broader set of attributes that one needs to foster for successful professional careers. However the sustainability of GSR984 is a serious concern. This concern and recommendations are discussed in section 5.0.

2. **Overview.** This year GSR984 was changed significantly. It is now a 6-week course instead of 8-10 weeks. GSR984 now focuses entirely on aspects of human thinking and knowledge construction as foundational for developing effective professional practice. Past features of GSR984 that dealt with more focused and practical aspects of professional practice are expected to be part of professional skills certificate program currently under development at the U of S.

Table 1. Topic sessions in GSR984 2013.

Date	Description
Jan 9	Introduction and discussions of primary processes in human thinking.
Jan 16	Influence of unexamined societal and cultural structures on our thinking and behaviour.
Jan 23	How personal assumptions about ourselves influence how we approach life, learning, and failure.
Jan 30	Influence of 'innate' personal preferences (personality) on how we think about questions/problems.
Feb 6	How culturally and societally created concepts, such as leadership, influence how we approach our profession and other aspects of our lives.
Feb 13	Negotiation: challenges and barriers to the application of objective reasoning.

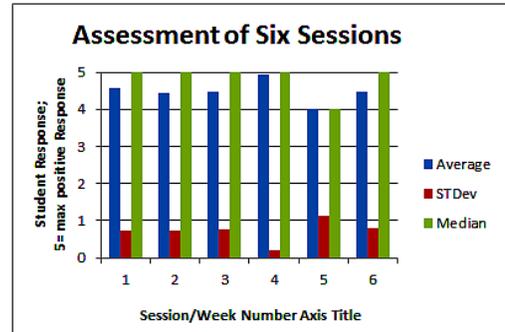
This year having a central, unifying theme and a smaller number of sessions allowed us to be more consistent in terms of both session content and the design of the class process/practices. The topics were designed to evoke surprise, challenge thinking, and to show direct application to professional practice. The pedagogical process/practice was designed to provide a safe space for exploring new ideas, evoke individual thinking, engage students in reflective writing (several times in each session), involve students in multicultural and multidisciplinary discussions of ideas, and to encourage and evoke the importance of listening skills (use of talking chips). Each session was followed up with an email that showed how the different sessions were linked to each other and to the actual practice of professional skills. Our previous concerns and efforts to develop continuity between sessions and across session worked considerable better this year.

3. **Assessment.** Students assessed GSR984 in two ways. First, students rated (using rating scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being ‘most helpful’) eighteen questions that explored the value of each session, the course goals, the class practices, and the overall value of the course. Second, each student submitted a reflective essay of not more than a page and a half that explored the student’s experience during the course. These two assessment methods are summarized below in sections 3.1 and 3.2 respectively.

3.1 **Individual ratings.** The questions asked and the associated student ratings are shown in the Tables and Figures below.

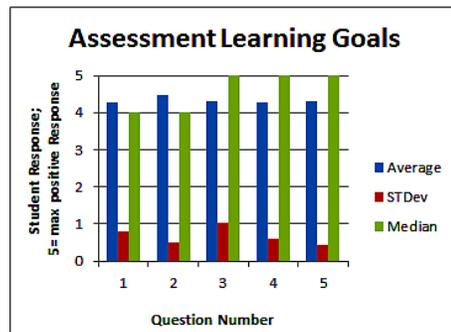
**3.11 Assessment of the six evening sessions**

Mean	STDev	Median	
4.6	0.7	5	1. Introduction session and use of Elephant and Rider metaphor
4.4	0.7	5	2. Influence of unexamined societal structures on our thinking and behaviour; Talent, Milgram, and Emotion/reason/language
4.5	0.7	5	3. Personal assumptions; Mindsets, learning and reframing failure.
5.0	0.2	5	4. Personality and how we think about questions/problems.
4.0	1.1	4	5. Dialogue, leadership, and teamwork
4.5	0.8	5	6. Challenges to negotiation and Elephant and Rider Revisited



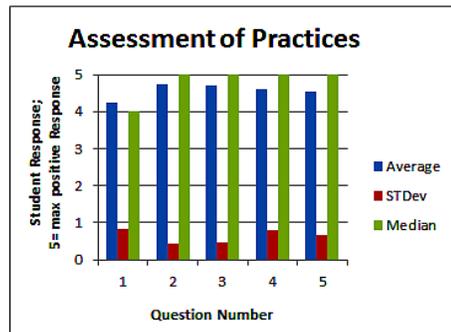
**3.12 Assessment learning goals**

Mean	STDev	Median	
4.3	0.8	4	1. Helped you identify professional practices to focus on in future.
4.5	0.5	4	2. Helped you become aware of your conceptual frameworks, develop thinking skills, identify assumptions and biases.
4.3	1.0	5	3. Helped you develop an appreciation of the thinking in diverse disciplines and to interact in multidisciplinary groups.
4.3	0.6	5	4. Helped you learn to appreciate the importance of group dynamics for problem solving and learning.
4.3	0.4	5	5. Helped you understand how disciplinary and professional excellence requires reflection on thinking, beliefs, and actions.



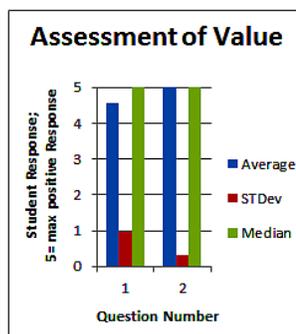
**3.13 Assessment of class practices**

Mean	STDev	Median	
4.2	0.8	4	1. Reflective journals
4.8	0.4	5	2. Listening skills and practices (videos and talking chip)
4.7	0.5	5	3. Small group discussions
4.6	0.8	5	4. Metaphor of Elephant and Rider
4.5	0.7	5	5. Facilitators email reflections/feedback after sessions



**3.14 Assessment of value**

Mean	STDev	Median	
4.6	1.0	5	1. Materials presented in this course challenged my thinking in fundamental ways
5.0	0.3	5	2. I would recommend GSR984 to other graduate students.



**3.2 Reflective Essay Assessments.** The students' statements in their reflective essays essentially mirrored the positive ratings shown above in the Tables and Figures of section 3.1. In addition, a considerable number of the students expressed a clear message about the course as a transformative experience. Below is summary of some of the students' observations expressed in their essays.

1. Profound, connection between professional practice and reflection on thinking, bias, and actions.  
It moved me
2. Materials shook my foundations
3. Metaphor of Elephant and Rider was eye opening
4. Fundamentally challenged my thinking
5. Thinking about our thinking, biases and assumptions has been a revolution for me
6. Eye opening and answered so many questions about myself.
7. Almost like I have a new set of eyes to see the world
8. Almost all the learning in this class will continue to influence me in the future
9. Challenged my thinking in effective and fundamental ways, and group discussions helpful and challenging for my thinking
10. The course content was challenging in different ways but remained grounded in the realities of work and life, and will continue to influence my learning
11. The process aspects (reflective writing, group discussion, talking chips, etc.) of the course provide an enormous learning atmosphere.
12. I initially thought this would be a relatively easy and even useless class but it surprised me and will be one of the most unforgettable courses I took at the U of S
13. A full life journey packaged in only six weeks and results are showing in my daily activities
14. I learned to listen to other people and other opinions and this enabled me to examine my bias
15. Overall one of the best experiences in my graduate training
16. The value for the time spent was superb
17. Most powerful message was why I think what I think – the harmony and relationship of the elephant and rider thinking
18. I had a basic understanding of what would be presented in this class but I had no idea of how much this class would affect me
19. At first I found the talking chips annoying but ended up enjoying them and in the latter part of course found it easier to keep quiet and listen
20. What impressed me was the application of the content in everyday life
21. I didn't expect to enjoy this class but I did
22. The talking chip was fascinating for me
23. I have taken more out of GSR984 that I can apply to my personal and professional life than any other class I have taken
24. I have used concepts learned in GSR984 and applied them to a group project in one of my classes984
25. Gaining deeper insight into truly listening was one of the most valuable aspects of GSR984
26. Given my maturity and professional and life experiences I was surprised at how much I got out of the course
27. I expected the class to be challenging but it was even better than I thought
28. GSR984 is by far the most interactive, most informative, and most interesting course I have ever taken
29. The mind blowing elephant/rider metaphor is one of the many things I learned that will continue to influence my life

**4. Issues to be considered.** Some of the students also raised certain question/concerns about GSR984 and these will be addressed prior to the next offering of GSR984. These concerns are:

1. Good to explore ideas but students need methods to achieve/shape mindsets etc.
2. More details and methods
3. Some students did not experience a wide range of new students in the groups.
4. Still have some problems with Elephant/Rider metaphor and felt the disadvantage of subconscious thinking was overstated
5. Earlier starting time?
6. Many students in the in-class assessment were interested in learning how to apply the knowledge they gained in GSR984
7. I am still not convinced that schools kill creativity.
8. During last session I heard some people say that detail was not provided on some topics
9. I thought I was going to learn some methods of finding solutions for difficult situations

**5.0 Recommendations.** The primary concern of the GSR984 Core Community of Practice is the sustainability of GSR984, especially in terms of its successful process and focus, and its role as the core feature of any proposed professional skills program at the U of S. GSR984 is unique when compared to any other professional skills programs and is clearly a transformative experience for the students taking the course. Surely the highest goal of educational institutions should be the provision of a student experience that is 'transformative' with carry over to lifelong learning.

GSR984 is organized and presented by a group of retired volunteers. Some administrative assistance is provided by the GMC, primarily via a GTF funded by Graduate Studies. There is no permanent administrative structure within the U of S that will support GSR984 if the present voluntary work group were to disappear. Irrespective of the future of the proposed graduate certificate program, steps should be taken to ensure that GSR984 is coordinated by a full-time U of S faculty member and thus is an officially recognized part of the learning opportunities offered to our graduate students. Costs associated with this are not likely to be significant (a GTF and a funded release from teaching for the faculty member appointed coordinator). The GSR984 Core Community of Practice strongly recommends that the CGSR initiate discussions to consider and address this concern about the sustainability of GSR984.