

**Teaching evaluations  
Fall 2013-Fall 2017**

The following table provides a numeric summary of my teaching evaluations at Columbia University.

Term/Year	Course #	Course Name	Enrollment	Average Course Rating* (Scale 1-5)	Average Instructor Effectiveness* (Scale 1-5)
Fall 2013	SOC3980	Immigrant New York	20	4.77	4.88
Fall 2013	SOC3020	Social Statistics	25	4.42	4.69
Spring 2014	SOC3214	Immigration & American Society	36	4.82	4.82
Spring 2014	SOC4550	Neighborhoods & Urban Poverty	24	4.86	4.90
Fall 2014	SOC3980	Immigrant New York	18	4.79	4.93
Fall 2014	CSER9000	Critical Approaches to Race/Ethnicity	11	4.94	5.00
Spring 2015	SOC3010	Methods for Social Research	58	4.37	4.72
Spring 2015	SOC3214	Immigration & American Society	43	4.66	4.84
Spring 2015	CSER9000	Critical Approaches to Race/Ethnicity	10	4.94	4.94
Fall 2015	SOC3980	Immigrant New York	24	4.83	4.88
Spring 2015	SOC4090	Qualitative Social Analysis	12	4.95	4.95
Fall 2016	SOC3980	Immigrant New York	25	4.83	4.91
Fall 2017	SOC4090	Qualitative Social Analysis	20	4.95	4.95
Fall 2017	SOC3996	Senior Thesis Seminar	12	4.95	4.95

\*The average ratings are based on the interpolated medians for the course and the instructor effectiveness.

The following section contains the textual comments from the above evaluations.

### 1. Immigrant New York, Undergraduate Seminar, Fall 2013

I love Van, he is a very enthusiastic, friendly, and knowledgeable professor. His knowledge about the subject matter fascinated me all the more and I really learned a lot from him. He also really made an effort to get to know everyone in the class, which is rare at Columbia. He would say hello to every single student, by name as they entered class every week. He also really encouraged us to come to his office hours as well which made me feel more comfortable going.

Van Tran is AMAZING. I have never written such a glowing review. He is very knowledgeable on the topic and did a great job on engaging us in the discussions and relating all the aspects of the course to the subject. Again, not much to be said except that he's truly excellent at teaching. Most teachers, sadly, do not have that skill.

I don't think I've ever had a teacher who has been more effective at encouraging participation and discussion in the classroom. Professor Tran really went to great lengths to make everyone in the class feel that their contribution was valuable, and seamlessly incorporated our (sometimes inane) comments into the larger discussion. The structure of the class was effective with one hour of powerpoint lecture and open Q&A followed by one hour of conversation and discussion. Professor Tran was also very transparent about his grading policies and expectations. He did an excellent job of continually gauging the class's stress level, participation level, interest level, etc, and adjusting the class as a result. I appreciate that he asked us for feedback multiple times throughout the semester, particularly regarding the final exam format. He made himself available for office hours and responded very promptly to e-mail

correspondences. His easy classroom manner truly made this course exponentially more enjoyable and engaging, and on a personal level, his interest in our mental health and well-being was reassuring.

Professor Van is very knowledgeable in his subject matter. He is always willing to share all that he knows and help with whatever struggles us students are encountering. I really appreciate how he tries to address all the different types of learners in the classroom. Every week, he succeeds in getting the major points across and makes sure to emphasize the major take-aways for each class.

Van is an absolutely amazing instructor. The course was well structured and thought provoking. I am coming away from it with a lot of new knowledge and skills. He is also incredibly kind and personable.

Van Tran is maybe the kindest, most considerate, most engaging professor ever. He shows that he genuinely cares about each and every student from the moment he enters the classroom. He should chair Columbia's sociology department, for real.

Van Tran- he is, by far, the best professor that I have had at Columbia or Barnard in the past three years. He is so approachable, kind, knowledgeable, and passionate for the material. Most importantly, he is understanding and has realistic expectations for their students, but nurtures them so they WANT to go above and beyond. I never felt so supported by a professor. In turn, I produced excellent work and learned SO much.

## **2. Social Statistics, Undergraduate Lecture, Fall 2013**

Van was an amazing professor, and I felt like he helped us gain a very "real world" understanding of how statistics are used and abused in the social world. As someone with an interest in social justice, I really liked how many of the examples used were focused on real-life inequalities.

The lectures were so well organized. And Professor Tran was amazing in taking students' feedback and actually incorporating students' feedback into improving the class during the semester. Having more in-class assignments definitely helped me more in understanding the materials.

Extremely responsive to student questions and comments, very friendly and encouraging to everyone. Professor Tran was exceptional. He was amazingly supportive, accessible and respectful of us students. His course was certainly challenging, but that's why I would certainly recommend this class or any other with him.

Professor Tran is one of the most amiable professors I have ever met. He made a genuine effort in getting to know the students despite the class size. He knew all our names by the end of class, which has never happened in a lecture class for me before.

Van was awesome!! He made what I expected to be an incredibly dry and tedious course (at 8:40 in the morning no less) engaging, interesting, and even fun. I have also NEVER had a professor who has made it more clear that he cares about each of us as individuals, and that our well-being matters to him outside of the classroom. Even seemingly small things like knowing every student's name within a week of the course starting made Van truly stand out amongst other Columbia and Barnard professors I've had, and I would absolutely recommend Van as a professor to anybody.

Professor Tran was very effective in relaying the information in a way that was easy to understand and follow. Professor Tran was always so helpful with any questions I had about the materials I didn't fully grasp initially. And he was always very encouraging for his students to come to his office hours, which I

found to be enormously helpful. And I really liked how Professor Tran used the sign-up by time slot system for office hours. Otherwise, students will have had to wait for their turns infinitely.

Professor Tran was helpful, friendly, supportive, and extremely receptive to student feedback. It was a pleasure to have him as an instructor.

Van not only has been an excellent instructor (he is very clear with all of the material), but he makes time to help students individually. It's clear that he honestly cares that the class is understanding the material.

### **3. Immigration & Transformation of American Society, Undergraduate Lecture, Spring 2014**

Van is an incredibly warm, caring, and engaging professor. I appreciated how clearly passionate and knowledgeable he was about every topic presented and thought he was an extremely effective instructor.

Professor Tran made the classroom setting as intimate as possible, which encouraged active participation and engagement with the material. I appreciated that he also brought in his personal feelings and opinions without forcing them onto the class.

Professor Tran not only was a marvelous lecturer, but also a caring and kind professor. I really appreciated his class, as it made me reexamine my view of immigration. His class also illuminated many trends of immigration that I was not aware of.

I was deciding between a couple of courses, but once I met Prof Tran I knew I wanted to take his class over others. His enthusiasm is infectious and his knowledge on the subject allows him to present clear material and answer all our questions

Professor Tran is one of the best prepared and he is the only professor I have seen lately who knows everyone's name.

Professor Tran is the best professor I have had so far at Columbia

### **4. Neighborhoods and Urban Poverty, Graduate Seminar, Spring 2014**

Van is an outstanding professor. His knowledge of and passion for the subject matter, in conjunction with his desire to stimulate student engagement and deep learning, make this class a real treat and an important contribution to my graduate school experience.

Professor Tran is incredibly passionate about his work and made his selection of texts (and guest speakers) with a lot of dedication to ensuring optimal stimulation for the students. The workload was manageable as well. What I particularly appreciated was Professor Tran's enthusiasm and ongoing support whenever we had questions or issues. I am, therefore, incredibly positive about both the course and the instructor

Van brims with enthusiasm and energy for the subject. He is cheerful and is able to draw out and respectfully manage student participation on the topics being discussed.

I really appreciated how he moderated class discussions; he always left students with something concrete so we didn't leave class reeling with doubts and ambiguity.

Van is an excellent instructor. He has put in a lot of effort into designing and delivering this course and it shows. He is enthusiastic, engaging and is able to manage issues that can raise sensitivities. The students were engaged in all classes throughout the semester.

Overall the professor was very clear and showed a deep concern for the well-being of the students who also were doing the Amsterdam Avenue project as well as during midterms week by having students work within suggested deadlines but not stress out or overwhelm themselves. I really appreciated that because mental health is important and many professors do not address students concerns at times which made this a very stress free and great learning experience. Having 2 guest speaker's was also very nice for us to have, some graduate classes at times are lucky to have 1 so that was a very good treat. Thank you for that Professor Tran

This class opened my eyes to the importance of neighborhood effects and their consideration in regards to a wide variety of other sociological questions. I hope to include a neighborhood component in my dissertation as a result!

Professor Tran is clearly well versed in the Neighborhoods and Urban Poverty literature. He assigned essential readings, both foundational studies and studies that push the boundaries of the field. Professor Tran was gracious in responding to our questions and concerns, and working with us to make sure we got the most out the course based on our individual interests and needs. Overall, this was one of the best (and most useful) classes I've taken in my graduate career thus far. Additionally, it is evident that Professor Tran cares about the wellbeing of his students both inside and outside of the classroom.

#### **5. Immigrant New York, Undergraduate Seminar, Fall 2014**

Professor Tran's teaching style is refreshing. His lessons are well thought out and planned ahead of time. He asks many questions, and does not discourage students if giving wrong answers. He also answers all questions, and gives everyone a chance to speak. He is easily accessible and a pleasure to learn from. I would definitely take another class with him!

Professor Tran's teaching style was about learning and understanding the topics and material collectively. I think he was effective in drawing out strengths and weaknesses in the assignments and discussions.

Professor Tran has been a joy to have as a professor which I find is very rare here at Columbia. Had I had a professor like Professor Tran before, I would have taken more Sociology courses.

I am very grateful for this course because it provided me with concrete and tangible knowledge about the place in which I live. I thought the approach to the readings and sociological conditions of these neighborhoods and immigrant groups were very nuanced and I very much enjoyed the class discussion. I also liked the course's focus on post-1965 immigration as I was not familiar with the magnitude and diversity of this group and feel more confident in being able to discuss this now. Professor Tran is a very kind and organized professor, and is always ready to listen and provide helpful feedback.

Professor Tran is by far one of the greatest professors I have had in all my time in college. He is a truly genuine person, and his interests and knowledge in sociology were certainly shown.

#### **6. Dissertation Development Seminar: Critical Approaches to Race and Ethnicity, Fall 2014**

Professor Tran's dedication to professional development among graduate students is unparalleled. It has been wonderful to be part of the Workshop, both to engage the research being presented and the ideas related to academic life.

Professor Tran was very generous with his feedback for student presenters and discussants. He was also candid in his conversations with us about the dissertation development, research, and writing process.

Professor Van Tran is one of those really inspiring professors that makes us feel excited with our research projects and gives important professional suggestions that helps us situate better in academia.

I hope CSER and the sociology department as well as other departments can continue to have workshops like these.

This course fills a much-needed role for Sociology students, in particular. I am grateful to Professor Tran for investing his time and energy into it.

### **7. Methods for Social Research, Undergraduate Lecture, Spring 2015**

Loved Professor Tran in this class. I was not really looking forward to taking Social Methods, but he made the material interesting and engaging.

The class was a requirement for my major. With no background in sociology, I wasn't sure what to expect and was anxious about the first class. Prof. Tran was AMAZING. Not only is he an extremely engaging lecturer, he is able to communicate his passion to the subject matter to his students, which, unfortunately, not all teachers are able to do. I would love to take a class with this professor again.

Van Tran is absolutely amazing!!! I was really nervous about taking a methods course but he really makes the material easy to understand and makes it interesting.

A wonderfully enthusiastic professor when it came to trying to encourage student participation, especially in such a large lecture-style class. His power point presentation were incredibly clear and he always paused in between sections to make sure that everyone was clear on the material and to leave room for questions. He also frequently used various methods (i.e. hands on activities, drawing to outside readings, etc.) to get us to think critically about the material being covered in lecture.

Professor Tran is a remarkably engaging instructor. He provoked my curiosity on many levels. This was a fairly large lecture, and he went to great lengths to learn each of his students' names and engage us individually in the material.

Professor Tran was extremely nurturing, supportive, helpful, informative, and created a perfect balance of lecture and discussion making the classroom setting exciting and interesting.

Van Tran is clearly passionate about his work. He's very engaging, quick, funny, and attention-gabbing. He keeps the class on topic and flows through the material while providing specific examples to clarify new terms and concepts.

Professor Tran is one of the most passionate, wonderful professors I've had. Even though the subject matter was a bit dry (as it seems to be for a methods class), it's clear that Professor Tran is incredibly passionate not only about his research, but his love of teaching and conveying his immense knowledge to students. He is incredibly personable and accessible, and truly wants his students to get to know him, and he makes it very clear that he wants his students to succeed in his class and enjoy the subject matter.

Van is very strategic in planning each class. He answers every question that is asked, and he is also thoughtful to all student questions and responses. This makes it easy to listen to his lectures and

participate. The assigned readings are also very interesting reads and that are applicable to each lesson. Overall Van is a great professor, and has a great way of teaching methods!

Love love love Van Tran!

### **8. Immigration & Transformation of American Society, Undergraduate Lecture, Spring 2015**

I learned SO SO SO much in this course. Not only about immigration but also so much about America, society, my own race and ethnicity. I had no idea about. Honestly this is a great course.

As a first-generation student, I honestly just learned so much about myself. I was able to put academic words to the emotions I've felt my whole life and that has been so valuable to me. Being able to better understand myself in context of what I've learned has been interesting and tough, but incredibly rewarding.

Prof. Tran's teaching was very engaging and interesting. I was never bored and learned sooooo much. I do not regret taking the class at all.

Professor Van Tran is honestly the best ever! He is so enthusiastic about the material and is always ready to answer questions.

Professor Tran is a very interesting lecturer. His personal experience brings a personal aspect to his teaching.

Van Tran is a great professor, he is always available, extremely understanding, he makes class feel less daunting which easily happens at this institution. His lectures are exciting and they are at 8:40!

Professor Tran is engaging and passionate! I loved class and never felt sleepy even though it was 8:40 Professor Tran can go on tangents about life sometimes but they're very inspirational. He is very passionate about the material and he is professional in the way that he is able to separate his beliefs and the facts.

Professor Tran is very genuine, honest, has a passion for teaching that really helps the student to be engaged in his class.

Professor Tran is an amazing professor as he is very engaging and never once bored me with any of the subjects he covered (which was great since this class was at 840 and that would have caused me to fall asleep). He was critical in a nurturing way to those students who had oppositional views to the subjects being discussed. No complaints about Van Tran as a professor.

Prof. Tran is hands down the best professor I've ever had at Columbia. He is so engaging and invested in his students. His passion for teaching was evident even before the first class. He came to class every day ready for us and was always so understanding of personal situations. Aside from being a phenomenal professor, he addressed many of us directly to let us know that we matter and our health is important. I've not experienced this much investment from a professor in my time here and it was truly a great honor to learn from this professor. He needs to be promoted and given a raise. He's simply incredible.

Professor Tran is one of the most engaging, informative, supportive professor's I've ever had. He really cares about the material and about the students. It was a pleasure to be in class with him twice a week (even though it was early!!).

### **9. Dissertation Development Seminar: Critical Approaches to Race/Ethnicity, Spring 2015**

I am so appreciative for this workshop! The scholarship that we engage on race, ethnicity, and migration is improving my ability to interrogate these issues as a scholar, despite a relative absence of graduate classes in my discipline (sociology). The workshop has also been my most useful training in analyzing work at the graduate level. The circulation of papers, lecture, and Q&A with the scholar mimic much of visiting scholar engagement, but this lower-stake environment has provided me with the chance to develop my skills. I feel more confident participating in departmental lectures because of my involvement in the REM workshop. Lastly, I value the professionalization component to the workshop. In no other context would I discuss writing, networking, and the job market, among other topics, with a group of students at different PhD stages, but this diversity of placement facilitates rich conversation and provides me with useful tips.

Professor Tran created a great environment for discussion about both the substance of the presentations as well as professional development in the field as a whole. He answered questions effectively and honestly.

The workshop created an invaluable environment to develop academic work in progress. It was useful for both presenters to get feedback, and for others to see the process in action. It was very effective in pairing substantive material with professional development.

The workshop was very helpful -- as it was mostly focused on individual workshop presentations and feedback, I think it was organized appropriately with discussant and then others giving comments and questions. I learned a lot from the wide variety of talks/presentations/papers. Also, the professional development aspect was extremely useful to my understanding of the field with Van's leadership.

### **10. Immigrant New York, Undergraduate Seminar, Fall 2015**

This class has been one of my favorites at Columbia. I learned so much and explored meaningful questions related to gentrification, labor unions, and immigration status that I never had the opportunity to think about before taking it. The guest speakers were also fantastic. Having us write reading memos two days before class was an effective way to make sure we do the readings and have enough time to process them. My only criticism would be that I wish I had a clearer idea of what I can do with the information I learned, in particular with regards to gentrification and undocumented immigrants. It also would be enriching to have readings that focus on South Asian and Arab immigrants after 9/11.

I greatly enjoyed this course. The strength is Professor Tran and the manner in which he presents the material. His teaching methods are extremely effective, and he positively contributes to a stimulating learning environment.

The course's main strength is its professor, Van Tran, who is charismatic and clearly enthusiastic about the subject. His energy is contagious and makes the different lessons very interesting, especially when guest writers and professors are invited. Prof. Tran was constantly encouraging the students to participate and expressed support and feedback for almost every answer. I also think the neighborhood memo assignments are useful for understanding the different immigrant communities outside the classroom walls. I think the course could be improved with at least one class taking place outside in the city - whether through a tour in an immigrant area, or a visit to the tenements museum.

I really enjoyed taking this course and felt that all the readings were interesting and relevant. Though the reading load was quite heavy, I found myself willing to read them all because they were so enjoyable.

Professor Tran is by far the best professor I have had at Columbia. I took his lecture in the spring 2014, and when I saw he was having a seminar in the fall, I signed up instantly. He creates a learning environment that is comfortable and welcoming, and fosters even the quietest kids to speak up.

I thought the course was great and I will recommend it to my friends in the future. The readings, like all assignments at Columbia, can be a little intimidating. We moved through about a book a week, reading most if not all of it. Sometimes the material was a little dry, repetitive, or jargon-heavy. This was only really an issue due to the sheer amount of reading. But, the writing, class discussions, guest lecturers, and fieldwork components were able to balance the dry, clinical reading and help me put concepts into practice or see tangible evidence of them in the real world.

Professor Van is a passionate about our learning and the course. He is very understanding and encourages us to talk to him or TAs if we have any concerns and he is very genuine with the offer, along with everything else. The readings are insightful and always surprising. The neighborhood visit requirement is low-pressure and extremely fulfilling.

Quite possibly the best course I've taken at Columbia - should be a requirement, it's essential to know more about this fascinating city that we live in!

Prof. Tran is, without doubt, the best instructor I have had in my time at Columbia. He is deeply thoughtful and caring, both about the subjects he teaches and the students in his classroom. He facilitates an open dialogue among and between students that felt, to me at least, as if all were invited and encouraged to join the conversation. His knowledge about the subject of immigrant cultures and history in New York is remarkable. I would recommend him to anyone who may be interested in taking any class, lecture or seminar, that he teaches.

Professor Tran. No more needs to be said, he's a great teacher that is not only enthusiastic but also takes time to take interest in his students lives.

Van is an amazing instructor. He is very inspiring and is also very aware of the abilities of his students. He is a very empathetic professor. He is good at facilitating discussion, though I wish he hadn't made the decision to allow computers in class.

I greatly enjoyed my experience with Professor Tran. He encourages class participation and created a safe setting for people to express their ideas. Furthermore, he brought in guest lecturers who were the authors of the readings, which added to the learning experience. He is understanding as well as demanding, eliciting what I felt were my best efforts as a student.

Dr. Tran is, by far, one of the most engaging, intelligent, and warm professors I have had here. His passion for the material and teaching is so plainly evident from even one class session. I truly wish all of my professors were so passionate about and committed to class instruction in addition to their research responsibilities.

Professor Tran has been the most refreshing professor I have had at Columbia. He is very straightforward and does not tip toe through the topic of race as so many people have begun doing. In that, he sparks discussion because he's not afraid to express his opinion no matter how controversial it may be. I think this is the first class I have ever taken where I looked forward to the teacher lecturing and facilitating discussion rather than the students.

As mentioned, Prof. Tran is what makes this class so great. He has endless knowledge of the immigrant

communities in the cities, and is happy to share from his own personal experience - which is often enlightening and eye opening. Prof. Tran not only encourages students to participate in an analytical discussion, but keeps reminding the class how well-fortunate and intelligent they are, encouraging everyone to become leaders of change.

Van is very thorough in his explanations. he is very passionate about his work and that is evident in his teaching, making the class very enjoyable. Being that the class was discussion based, I think I would have enjoyed the class a little bit more if the structure was changed. Repeated student presentations are not always interesting, though Van was effective in turning each student presentation into an interesting lecture. Maybe show videos as a way to highlight the historical perspective of the class. Or, have students present their memos with pictures etc. (can be a volunteer project). That would be great!

By far my best professor in my 4 years at Columbia. Understanding, ability to facilitate discussion, as well as able to understand that we have tons of priorities at school and that his class is just one of them. He cares about his students and about their well-being, which is hard to come by sometimes from professors.

Van is fantastic. He is truly in tune with his students and aware of the stress and anxiety they may be experiencing. His expectations are high, but he is also very accommodating and not intimidating. He makes me want to produce good work but not in a way that is daunting. He is very knowledgeable about immigrant communities and the forces impacting them. He is an excellent facilitator of class discussion. At first, his provocative questions about race made me uncomfortable, but I learned to appreciate the meaningful direction they take the class to.

He is a great instructor that promotes class discussion. I appreciate Professor Tran's teaching method, encouraging students to lead class discussions and then taking over by providing feedback for the presentation and asking students, "What did you like/not like about this week's reading?" This question encouraged an open discussion that eventually become more focused on the reading. Professor Tran was clear in expecting us to read and participate in discussion. He always generated discussion by asking clarity questions we could answer from the readings. You could see Professor Tran really care about his students and this course. he shared his personal experiences working in the hardware store and often asked for our own to see how the immigrant experience in new York's reality. Professor Tran provided timely feedback on our presentations.

### **11. Qualitative Social Analysis, Graduate Seminar, Fall 2015**

This is a wonderful course! I thought the readings and mini assignments were structured very well in leading us through the research process. I might suggest some time built into class to check in with our project partners, rather than just providing written feedback. I loved having final presentations at the end and getting to see how much everyone's project had developed.

Great course and much needed in the sociology department. Great balance between practical assignments and readings and reasonable amount of memos required. I finally feel like I know what to do when collecting and analyzing data. No longer feel ignorant about how to be rigorous moving forward with my project.

The course was great. Really thought all the information was useful. I learned a lot. It was treated as a graduate class should be with mostly discussion focused with great moderation by Van as the instructor. It was constructed around doing independent work, so it was immediately relevant to our work.

This was an excellent course. It was really well organized. The materials we read and used in class were so useful and will definitely become sources I will draw from again and again in my career. The option to be able to skip some the memos was really helpful. Class discussions were well structured and skillfully facilitated by both Van and the student presenters, and I always felt like I got a lot out of them. Van does a really wonderful job of managing the classroom, so discussions always flowed really well, with everyone getting a chance to speak and no single person or group of people dominating. I think this class probably felt less overwhelming to people who already had a project and had already collected some data, so that is something to consider (I think I may not have handled the class as well if I didn't already have a project and some data). I think it was helpful that some people were able to use this class to write and pilot a project proposal. Another option might be to organize the class around small scale mini-projects. Finally, one thing that threw me off at first was that although the class is called Qualitative Social Analysis, we ultimately really only spoke about how to analyze interview data (and maybe a bit of ethnographic data, though less attention was paid to how to collect ethnographic data). In retrospect this was fine, and made sense, especially because so many qualitative researchers use interviews, and because interview data is probably the most manageable and realistic to work with in a semester's worth of time. However, I did originally expect more attention, or even just mention of other techniques like participant observation, content analysis, etc. -- although I appreciate that they share many of the same strategies and so in effect this class did help with that in that respect.

The seminar structure of the course was refreshing. Rather than being lectured on the basic elements of qualitative research and on how to conduct such research activities, the student-led discussions were able to incorporate the experiences of different students and help us learn to problem solve as we embark on our own research projects. I really liked that the syllabus was broken down to follow the flow of how a qualitative research project would be conceived, designed, and conducted. It naturally flowed and helped to move along the final project for the course.

The course addresses qualitative research holistically. It addresses elements both at the beginning (access and data collection) and the end (data analysis) of qualitative work. However, the majority of the work is interviews and ethnographies but much of the focus has been on conducting interviews. The ethnographic elements, while helpful, seemed lacking

Van is truly an exceptional teacher. He creates a really wonderful classroom environment, that felt so conducive to learning. I really appreciated my classmates and what they contributed to the class, and I think Van played an instrumental role in creating an environment where that could happen. It was one of the best classroom experiences I've ever had. Thank you Van for your continued thoughtfulness and dedication, and for a wonderful semester!

Professor Tran is the best teacher I've had during my Columbia career! He does a wonderful job of conveying the course material, making the readings accessible, and sharing his own experiences as a professor/researcher. He also adds a professionalization element to this class, which was much appreciated. It's clear that he wants the best for and from his students, and more importantly, he's willing to help us get there by providing useful and timely feedback on our work.

Van was a great instructor. He is skilled in qualitative methods so had a wealth of experiences to draw on for examples. the structure of the class was clear and let students take the lead without us feeling like he was slacking in any way as an instructor. I also appreciated how flexible he was with memo and assignment due dates.

Van is a phenomenal teacher! He designed the syllabus, assignments, and class structure very thoughtfully; he provided astute and constructive feedback; and he always made time for students, despite the fact that he has many commitments and responsibilities. I was blown away by the final presentations

and thought they were very strong across the board-- this is absolutely a testament to Van's teaching. I don't think I've ever been in another class where there was clear growth for all participants.

Van was great as an instructor! His main focus was always on his students, making sure we get the most we could out of the course. While the course was mostly a seminar with student-led discussions, Van was great at helping to guide us and to ask very critical questions. Truly my favorite class this semester.

Van is one of the most tremendous instructors that I have ever had the pleasure of learning from. Very smart, and makes the material easily understandable. He not only knows the theory but also has great skills, tips and strategies for implementing this in practice. Van also takes a very keen interest in our projects and this type of dedication is remarkable and greatly appreciated.

Professor Tran was the highlight of the course. In addition to expressing the material in a clear and succinct way, he is extremely knowledgeable not only in the theoretical aspects, but also the methodological rigor needed. The workload was a bit heavy (as expected of a 4-credit course) but always fair. Most importantly, he expressed genuine interest and tried to incorporate the work of the students, communicating with them as a graduate class should.

## **12. Immigrant New York, Undergraduate Seminar, Fall 2016**

I learned a great amount of information about the various immigrant groups in New York City, covering historical background, the major issues affecting these groups, and how they've fared in American society. The readings were quite packed with information, and were mostly typical sociological texts, though the readings in the beginning of the course were more historical, and some of the later ones more anecdotal. I appreciated that I was able to learn so much about this topic, and also that Professor Tran helped orient us as to how to study and compare immigrant groups to each other. One of the most important facts I learned is that immigration, contrary to popular opinion, has not been statistically shown to have negatively affected native American groups' employment. I also loved that some of the students in the class were open about sharing their own immigrant experiences, which I think is honestly one of the best aspects of the class. As immigration policies are up in the air due to the impending presidential transition, I'm grateful to have been able to learn what I did in Professor Tran's class, and hope that others may also recognize the salience of these issues and consider taking this seminar in the future.

I think that this is a course that everyone should have to take. We learn about every group of people, not just immigrants. We go to a school that touts New York City as its backyard, meanwhile a majority of the students are scared to go outside and have no idea where they are when they do. This class forced us to get outside of our comfort zones, enter someone else's territory, and learn from them. It reinforced my love for sociology every step of the way.

Any course with Van is a course worth taking! He manages to be incredibly kind and knowledgeable at the same time, and really cares about ensuring that you learn the material in a productive (rather than insanely stressful) way. The material touches on a variety of different topics--race, ethnicity, education, language, mobility, the city--and offers something for pretty much anyone with a vague interest in immigration. This course is also great for anyone looking to get off campus a little more--even having grown up in the city, it took me to neighborhoods I'd never been in.

Van is easily one of the best professors I have had at Columbia. He is clearly an expert on the topic of the immigration and manages to convey this expertise so well in class, with clear and illuminating lectures at the beginning of each discussion and comments in the middle of class. Even if a student is wrong, he manages to make them feel respected--saying "Your point is well taken"--while also making sure the

class has the right information. Most all, however, I really appreciate that Van made a huge effort to act as a supportive figure and took the time to get to know us as individuals. He is really cognizant of the many other pressures that students may face and is willing to be flexible so that mental health doesn't come second to schoolwork. He's also very willing to meet and make himself available: I once talked with him (over break, no less!) for two hours in an amazing conversation on our class and the politics of Columbia in general. Combined with his easygoing personality and sense of humor, this managed to make for an incredible time in his class this semester.

Van Tran is an excellent and passionate professor. The main thing I like about his teaching style is that he relates the material to each of our lives without us even noticing. In this way we are able to stay engaged and involved. Since there were a lot of immigrants and children of immigrants in the classroom, he encouraged us to include our own experiences during the discussion. Van Tran also brought a lot of insight into his lectures, and made current events like the presidential election to help us think through immigration policy. His feedback on our assignments were also very constructive.

Prof. Van Tran was nothing short of amazing. I need to applaud his candor. Many people on this campus are really PC - he says it as it is. This is important in this class as we cover touchy topics that people tend to shy away from. Prof Tran is also very thorough. While students give presentations at the start of class, he makes sure to drive the point home by reiterating important ideas in the second half of the class. Professor Tran is a great professor who is very open about his views and ideas. At first, I was a bit taken aback by his bluntness, but as the semester went on I realized that I really appreciated his honesty and willingness to respond to every student's comment. He was able to keep momentum going during our discussions, and even though sometimes he would go on a monologue, I felt like we were all very interested in hearing what he had to say. Nevertheless, he never let himself get carried away or take up too much class time. I think Professor Tran has a memorable and lively teaching style that I honestly wish more Columbia professors had. Overall, I think Professor Tran is a really great professor, and I'm so glad that I was able to take a class with him during my time at Columbia.

Van is an incredible professor. He is proud of all of his students, aware of their differences and needs, and pushes each of us to do our best. He gives precise and constructive feedback on work done in the class, and every aspect of the course felt carefully considered and valuable. He guides discussion well, and everyone in the class felt comfortable participating. He is here to teach and work with his students, and it never feels like a professor vs. the students dynamic.

Professor Tran is one of the best professors that I've had so far. He is not only entertaining, but also very knowledgeable about the subject matter. His assignments allowed us to immerse fully into the topic we were discussing, and he gave valuable feedback to all students.

### **13. Qualitative Social Analysis, Graduate Seminar, Fall 2017**

The course is incredibly helpful in identifying open debates within the field, new trends in methods, exposing to essential literature that could help with qualitative field work, and more. I loved that Professor Tran was enthusiastic about informing the class about current trends and debates within the field, making me feel more invited into a dynamic body of work, instead of what can sometimes seem static. To this end, I felt really "caught up" in the field of qualitative sociological analysis by the end. This class was among the best that I have taken and I highly recommend it to anyone interested in (carrying out or learning from) qualitative research. Of all of the classes I've taken, the readings in this class were consistently among my favorite. I was excited to complete the readings and reflect on them every week. They provided me with a wealth of information and were consistently engaging. The structure of the class was great too. Over the course of the semester, we proposed our own research

projects and conducted a preliminary analysis. At the end of the class, we presented our findings to our peers. Van was a fantastic instructor for the course!

The major strength of the course is its instructor, Van Tran. He is tremendously generous with his time and advice. His office hours are always booked as a result of this. He also structured the course in a way that aligns with the interests and needs of students. The assignments were also well crafted and do-able within the time span of a semester.

This was an excellent class overall. The readings were almost all extremely useful, and I enjoyed the class discussions immensely. Professor Tran was an excellent facilitator of discussion, and also imparted a wealth of knowledge onto the students. The assignments were thoughtfully designed to push us along in our projects. I learned so much in this class and would recommend it to anyone in an instant.

It's excellent and so important for our department. There were too many people in the class, but that speaks to its quality. It really needs to be taught every year. It would be great if everybody in the department took this course as a requirement, the same way we're required to take quantitative analysis. It speaks volumes that qualitative methods are neither required nor offered every year.

Van is a fantastic professor and the syllabus was great. There was perhaps too great an emphasis on interviewing, but that's natural given the restricted form of the course. Ideally, this would be a two-semester series and we could go a bit more slowly! I didn't love the structure of having two people "lead" class discussion each week only because they rarely really led, they just summarized weekly memos. The materials were also often dense so a verbal recitation was difficult for me to keep up with because I need to follow on paper.

This course teaches methods and theory behind the methods of qualitative analysis, with a special emphasis on interview-based field work. The course is designed to help students navigate a qualitative sociological research project from conception to write-up. Professor Tran is also incredibly helpful at highlighting current debates within the field of qualitative sociology and others at large. To this end, you get a great sense of where the field is at methodologically and intellectually, helping you navigate contemporary questions and how your interests can contribute to knowledge. Absolutely necessary course! I wouldn't take in your first year unless you are really sure about the site of your research. Van is thoughtful in his preparation for the class. He is very skilled in managing in class discussion, allowing each student a chance to speak, but also guides us back to the major takeaways and themes that he hopes for us to understand for that week. I left class always knowing much more about the readings than before.

Excellent instructor: Dr. Tran's ability to make each class session remarkably well structured, fruitful in debates and collective analysis is wonderful. In addition to this, he was very generous to advise me and guide me every step of the way as I was working on my semester project.

This course was excellent. Van was a phenomenal instructor. I don't think he could have done a better job. Fantastic, and one of the best. He is quick to correct course when people get bogged down in things that are not important or relevant. He was also great in articulating what was simply outdated and what were the perennial problems in the field. He could have occasionally cut down the reading to allow a more intense/in-depth class discussion.

Great preparation and design of the course. Very available outside of class time, and always willing to work to meet students' needs. Appreciated the flexibility of deadlines. I liked that Van gave his opinion to

debates we had in class, rather than just letting them stand unanswered. High quality discussion, although reducing the number of readings would ensure that we could go in-depth in all of them.

There are some people who are great scholars and horrible teachers. There are some people who are great teachers but unsophisticated scholars. Professor Tran is an INCREDIBLE teacher AND scholar. His care for students, his awareness and sensitivity to their needs, workload, and priorities while still holding everyone to a high standard, makes Prof. Tran really one of a kind. He encouraged me to pursue an interesting but challenging project, telling me I should listen to and acknowledge the lilt in my voice when I spoke about subjects that interested me. His invitation to join and thrive in an intellectual and scholarly community, by understanding how to engage in current debates was so welcome. I never felt like he made us feel dumb for not knowing something... which I can't say for 90% of this university. Van C Tran is a great instructor in that he is very supportive of students. I felt valued. He was available beyond class. He always lets us discuss and present our points of view but also respond and clear out our questions/doubts.

#### **14. Senior Thesis Seminar, Undergraduate Seminar, Fall 2017**

Van is amazing. He's brilliant and calm. His style of teaching for the Senior Seminar was easy to follow and encouraging. He's realistic but encouraging.

Professor Van Tran was a great instructor. He answered our questions and made us feel comfortable, even when we were slacking or not producing the greatest work. Sometimes, I feel like he expects us to know the technical parts of research with which a lot of us have not had much experience, but when he explains things, it is done thoroughly. I preferred when the class was more structured over the times in which we just went around and answered questions, but I learned a lot from those times as well. He was always very quick to respond to my emails and allowed me to meet external deadlines because of it.

Professor Van Tran is an incredible instructor. He is both honest with and supportive of his students. He is a very busy person and his time is much sought-after, but he will always make time for his students, especially his senior seminar students. He leads great discussions that are engaging. He is willing to share his own experiences so that we can learn from them. He makes everyone feel like their opinion is valuable and worth contributing. When a student asks a question that is unclear, Van is able to clarify the question that the student is asking and bring it into the discussion in a meaningful way.