Comments from Course Evaluations.

Q28: Please provide additional comments as they relate to your overall evaluation of the course and how it was taught.

Placemaking has easily been my favorite course at Georgetown. Not only did it allow for me to explore my creative side and help realize my identity, but I was also given the time to work and foster creative projects that I never would have had time to complete without taking this course. I highly recommend to any student at Georgetown, no matter what year or major, to take this course. Every student at Georgetown should take Placemaking!

I genuinely loved that class so much. I loved the professors and I will continue recommending it to everyone I know. It was a very much needed course. It was good for our mental health. I still learned a great deal, I also got to know my classmates more.

Excellent course. Allows students to take ownership of their education. I learned many practical skills and I was able to dwell deep into topics of my interest.

I hope placemaking is taught again because the flexibility and freedom is something that is very valuable in these times and moving forward, they make learning more meaningful to students.

I am simply obsessed with this class and the instructors. I learned so much about myself and the things around me. I loved how we were always encouraged to think outside of the box when doing our weekly assignments and I think that let everyone's dying creative side shine. I just want to say thank you so much to Coach Betsi and Jan for being absolutely amazing and for being so understanding and caring.

The feedback was genuinely encouraging and helpful. The professor and professor's assistant engagement was encouraging and it reminded me that I have people watching over me and encouraging me to stay focused. The learning environment was also really nice and it was an overall enriching journey throughout the course.

An amazing course that helped me reflect on my place. I absolutely think that the course should be offered in the future. Thank you for the best class ever.

This course was excellent and engaging and especially in terms of the material and teaching methods were very appropriate and helpful while learning in class. The teaching style of asynchronous while still managing to do your work really shows the Professor's success in teaching. [note from Betsi: I have no idea what that last sentence means]

Best class I've taken at Georgetown.

COMMENTS from the following prompt(s): [responses in **BOLD** are from the highlighted Placemakers in the Showcase]

2) Several of you have said, "I wish there were more classes at GU like PLACEMAKING." What aspect(s) of PLACEMAKING do you wish were replicated in other classes? How would you design your ideal class?
3) Say you were talking to a family member or a friend and they asked you what this class PLACEMAKING was all about. What would you tell them? What were the highlights? What were the low moments?
6) If you were to be a Teaching Assistant for PLACEMAKING next spring, what changes would you make to the class and what could you add to the course as a TA?

What I like about Placemaking was how I could fit my academic goals into my personal passion projects! I loved the fact that I could learn how to work with WordPress and obtain some practical technical skills while producing an ethnographic work.
I think a lot of our classes at Georgetown seem to have the same model: read, post reflections on discussion boards, and write papers. This definitely has helped me for the first two years in my college, and I witnessed great improvements in my reading, writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills. But it gets a bit redundant by the third year.
I also value the autonomy and trust that Coach Betsi and Jan gave us to navigate our own projects. It doesn't give me any anxiety about finishing an assignment! At the same time, I felt that I cultivated self-discipline skills to work around my own deadlines.
I also loved that I could design my own reading list, which really made me feel like I am reading to both learn and have fun. It's been a while since I read for the sake of reading ever since I graduated high school!
I am so grateful to be part of this class this semester. Placemaking has definitely made this semester extra memorable.

Placemaking is a class which has pushed me out of my comfort zone and has allowed me to take ownership of my education. From the beginning, through designing my own reading list, assignments, and projects, Placemaking gave me the freedom to pursue subjects and topics I wished to learn more about. This sense of agency, freedom, and the constant guidance by Coach and Jan, has meaningfully supported my intellectual inquiry.
Moreover, I loved how agile the course was, and how understanding both Coach and Jan were. My projects changed several times during the semester, due to situations outside my control (such as lockdown measures, or other logistical issues). However, these small obstacles did not stop my learning. At all times, Coach and I were able to figure out a new way to re-design my projects and figure out a way in which I could attain the goals I set for myself at the start of the semester. Though my goals change, I was able to meet my learning outcomes and familiarize myself with the literature on cities in the Global South. This is what

makes Placemaking unique: it is agile, focuses on educating the whole person (from Hoya values), and it supports the student's intellectual inquiry.
If I were to TA the course next spring, I would add more activities which are community-focused or require small, in-person meetings. If COVID-19 situations permit, I would organize Thursday evening 'sharing circles' wherein students can come together in small groups and share what they learned in the week through their readings or other projects. I would also encourage them to create a video or use art to express their learning which could then be shared with other groups in the class. Basically, this would mean having the discussion boards come 'alive.' Ideally, it would be nice to have these meetings at different locations in the city such as in parks, museums, or cafes - as it would help discovering our place, i.e., the city of Doha more, collectively as a class.

I was struggling to find courses that were interesting enough to take that also fit my schedule last semester. As I was falling asleep around 11-something PM, I suddenly remembered that we had been notified of a new course titled 'Placemaking' that Dr Stephen offered. I bolted out of bed and began emailing her with an extremely abstract idea of what I wanted to do and why I wanted to qualify for the 6-credit course. Although I could have just slept and ignored the hassle of doing extra work, I have never been more thankful for these random thoughts that appeared right before I sleep. I was intimidated by the concept of creating my own reading list, and I was, in fact stressing out so much during the first two weeks because of it.
My favourite thing about Placemaking is how both Coaches offer us the opportunities to be as creative as possible. I genuinely despite the standard testing or assignment requirements that restrict students to one or a few questions to address in the same format, in the same citation style that the professor prefers, and the exact sources the professor expects to use (it genuinely feels like the equivalent of working a 9-5 office job in a depressing cubicle with an intimidating yet weird boss like in all these American TV shows!). Encouraging students to provide their input using their own preferred medium is fantastic; often, it is the perception that if students chose to do things their way, they would take the easier route. However, a prime example of how this is not the case is how my peers go above and beyond with in-depth explanations and much more information provided than what they were actually expected to provide. I genuinely enjoy this course not because the coaches are amazing but also because we can express ourselves beyond the standardised methods of tests and assignments in Georgetown.
On another note, I genuinely think that this course is the only thing keeping me sane this semester. I have recently received my second dose of the vaccine, and I have been bedridden since. But at least I am still meeting my deadlines. I remember Coach Betsi told me that she experienced a 'COVID arm'. I never imagined I'd experience the same thing, but mine is absolutely painful. How long did it take for yours to recover, Coach?

COMMENT: I totally agree! This course has allowed me to be more in touch with my surroundings. I can honestly say that this is the best decision I have ever taken! I'm so grateful for getting the opportunity to take this course.

There are a lot of things that other classes should take from placemaking.
Getting the creative freedom to express ourselves and the things we love is definitely my favorite part of this class. As much as I believe that writing essays and reading to write reflections is imperative in the learning process, I do think that it can kill the creative side of us and it is extremely boring (redundant).
In most classes, if not all, we are mostly focused on writing and just simply learning things from books and articles and I think that kind of limits the scope of our knowledge. I think we can learn more from engaging with people outside of the classroom and having conversations with people that experience the things we learn about. In addition, sometimes even people that are not considered experts in the field (ordinary people) we are studying have some really interesting perspectives that we won't be able to get from books. I am sure the theories and history books we have read will be helpful but nothing can replace real-time engagement and really understanding of how these things work in real life. I think that the learning style that is used now makes us so detached from real life to a point of ignorance. For example, we read and talk about migrants, refugees, and things they go through, but we will never be able to understand their pain because we are sat in classrooms discussing their struggles and pretending like we really understand them. We can sometimes forget that their lives and struggles are beyond discussion points and policies but are actually happening in real life. I think the way this class is structured can enable students to explore beyond their books and actually witness the reality of what they have learned in their classes.
Another aspect of this class that I absolutely LOVE is the fact that we are encouraged to explore our surroundings and to look deep within ourselves. This is such an important thing to have as most of us are still trying to discover ourselves and our passions. We really do not get the chance to understand ourselves as we are constantly bombarded by assignments, exams, readings that really do not contribute to our personal growth. Also, it's extremely comforting that the people teaching us also want to understand how and why we are the way we are.
*If I ever get the chance to design a course, fieldwork and creativity would be integral parts of the course.

are many things that I like about placemaking but if I had to pick two it would be the ability to connect on a deeper level with our instructors and being able to design our reading lists. I understand that in "regular" courses it would be difficult to connect with our professors but as someone who values these connections I believe that we can learn so much and grow from them. In addition to that, I really like the fact that we got to design our reading lists. After three years in Georgetown I stopped enjoying reading the same way that I used to before. This does not mean that I want to design all my reading lists of course! it would just be nice to be more involved somehow in creating it. When I take classes that I am interested in I usually feel like there is a movie or a book that I want to suggest to the class but I usually end up keeping it to myself because I am so used to this passive way of learning.

The first thing I'd like to see replicated in other classes at gu that I have personally experienced through placemaking is how it engaged my senses. Most classes at GU, as any other academic institution focusses primarily on engaging the intellect through critical thinking and analysis. While I feel like this is valuable to the (academic) world, it does not work to broaden my scope of reality beyond the theoretical phenomena we were limited to engage in throughout the semester or the specific skill the class meant to cultivate. This allows our gains to be endless and personal; we get what we put in. Another thing I'd take from placemaking is the sense of mutual trust that was fostered between the student and the Coach in this instance. This was very refreshing and allowed us to feel like we are in control for once. Feeling trusted too allows us to fully delve into our passions and projects unapologetically and without the meeting of the frequent visitor: imposter syndrome (at least for me). Most classes make you feel like the professor is not working with you but working only to examine and critique you; never aiming to see the way we approach things because the syllabus is so rigid and so many rules are in place. Whereas with placemaking, we make our own rules and we are trusted to follow them. Which brings me to the next aspect I would love to see in other classes for future batches: freedom. Let's be honest, most classes expect an essay that proves that the class has taught us what it taught us, but with placemaking we have the freedom to choose the form that exhibits what we have learnt. The assignments are so free-form and that really lets you feel excited about education, which is rare for me personally. I wouldn't know how to design an ideal class because I do not think one class will be able to give me all that I desire from education, but the values I would like to see in an ideal education system would be mutual trust, freedom, creative expression and responsibility.

If I had to use one word to describe Placemaking to a family member or friend, it would be 'multidimensional.' Placemaking is a course that seeks to help students find a sense of belonging in and a connection to the place in which they find themselves during the semester—wherever in the world that may be. Our weekly assignments have involved elements of both personal introspection and academic analyses, all expressed in a broad range of mediums/formats. Over the past few months, Placemaking has called upon us to draw, write, film, photograph, discuss, imagine, and reflect—the course is not conventional by any means and pushes boundaries, but that is exactly what has made it so engaging.

One of the highlights of the course was the opportunity to tailor my learning to suit my interests—I loved having the opportunity to put together a reading list and make my way through it over the past few months. Another highlight of Placemaking was the chance to engage in creative activities that I have not encountered in any of my other classes at Georgetown. I've enjoyed reflecting upon and making connections between my weekly postings—the Week 12 'reimagining a post' assignment really pushed me outside of my comfort zone, as I am most comfortable writing impersonal analytical pieces, and I have typically steered clear of art, poetry, and creative writing. However, Placemaking has forced me to overcome that hesitation, and I've realized that engaging in creative activities is actually quite cathartic!

Most of my low moments involved reflecting upon the concept of home at the beginning of the semester. I found it challenging, as 'home' often seemed so elusive and out of reach. However,

throughout the semester, I've realized that there are ways to find a sense of belonging anywhere. In other words, Placemaking has taught me that if you can make connections to the people, environment, music, art, and structures in the place that you are in, something is bound to resonate with and ground you.
I wouldn't change the course structure much at all—it was an enjoyable and incredibly valuable experience. When the course is taught next, however, it might be interesting to have students engage in a more active and ongoing dialogue with one another (either through Zoom or Canvas discussion boards) on their chosen research topics. I'd have loved to hear more about how my peers' perspectives on their respective topics have evolved over the past few months.

If I was asked to explain PLACEMAKING, I would explain it as a class used to change your perception of the place you are currently in through different mediums whether it is drawing places or writing stories about past events. It is a course that makes you more observant of the world around you as well as highlights the uniqueness of each place but also how similar cultures bring us together. It was a course used to step out of the online world and reenter the physical one in a pandemic or global crisis. Although the course is specified and customized to the place you are in, it makes it very personal and also challenging to share with others. The highlights of this course were the different teaching methods, so discussion board, video-making, storytelling, and the list goes on. Also, the unique reading list and the course being more independent learning making it more flexible than other courses as well as interesting and engaging. The low moments were very few but probably when I sometimes had to share personal experiences because I am very introverted and reserved. Also, zoom meetings being at night because of time differences would be difficult for me because of my university schedule, and also being the few sophomores in the class, I didn't know anyone else. But I am glad I made new friends along the way.

I really do wish other courses in GU were like placemaking, I think that this class is one of the main reasons why I see this semester as my best so far. It is important to highlight that the main distinction between it and other courses is that I feel like I have control over what I am learning and when I am doing it, I despise the fact that I am bounded sometimes by a specific attendance timing. Being given the autonomy here feels empowering, it really is so enjoyable in terms of content plus the assignments don't over exhaust me as some other ones do, I tend to find myself sometimes needing a couple of days to recover from how hard I work in some classes and I like that this is not the case with this class, I almost always am enjoying reading and doing my blogposts.

The things I loved most about Placemaking was that the postings were done at the end of the week which helped to de-stress after 4 days of zoom classes. I also think the postings were very accessible no matter where I was or what device I am using, which means I don't have to sit on my 'zoom desk' to finish the assignments for this class. The postings were fun and allowed us to be creative in our own way. If i were to add something to Placemaking for next semester, I would add a field trip to a place that is relevant to a specific week's posting (that is if the pandemic ends). If you watched the movie 'Letters to Juliet', it is pretty much the same idea,

and Coach Jan and Betsi would be Juliet's secretaries. [Note from Betsi: funniest comment of all]

I feel that Placemaking has many great characteristics that make it such an amazing class. For instance, in most classes, we never really get the chance to have a conversation about our lives and how we are generally doing. In Placemaking, you feel like you are sharing about yourself, while also learning and getting to know other people who you might have not had the chance to interact with in the past. Therefore, I feel like that is a very important aspect because I feel, a significant part of university is forming relations and getting to know more people, since a social life is just as important as work life. In my opinion, I feel that more classes should add this personal aspect to make them more interesting.
Regarding my ideal class, I would have a topic that is interesting, but also allow the students to read on their own pace, as life can sometimes be somewhat challenging with all the deadlines. Moreover, it would be great to allow students to read something they are generally interested about in order to keep them engaged. Finally, I will definitely add the comment I mentioned earlier which was about the social aspect.

With this post I wanted to take the opportunity and reflect on the role that this class has had on me both mentally and directly. As my fellow classmate mentioned, the class offered the perfect platform for us as students going through a first time experience, a pandemic, to discuss and essentially think out loud regarding each and every one of our own independent experiences and journeys. What this did for me was offered the best outlet in which I was able to express to my peers the extent in which the pandemic and life in general has changed and developed over the course of the class. The truly special aspect of all this and something I hope will continue is how this class essentially seeks to connect our own independent characteristics and implant those in the world around us in the hopes of applying a relationship between us and the outside world. As the class is unfortunately now coming to an end, I'm happy that is has pushed me to implement this same aspect of self reflection in my own life outside of anything related to education and begin to write down the events of my week in an attempt to ground myself and grow mentally as with the now continuing pandemic, such a practice is extremely essential and had I not been apart of this class I may have never reached this mentality and for that, I'm grateful.

What made Placemaking a special class for me this semester was its very on-the-ground, "get your hands dirty in the data" approach. The fact that this class was almost entirely offline made it a refreshing respite from the Zoom-heavy courseload during much of the week. Given the ongoing pandemic, I think an emphasis on the offline world in coursework and fieldwork really encourages students to become actively engaged learners, even as they recover from the ever-common fatigue that comes with excessive digital exposure. Just going on long walks listening to a podcast or observing the world around me proved to so immensely insightful in ways that staring at a screen or reading pdf documents were not. In many ways, Placemaking has come closest to what an ideal class could look like, given the current circumstances.

If I were a TA, however, and I had to change/improve anything, it'd be to focus more closely on the readings and projects that students have taken on for themselves. I'd get students to engage with each other (preferable in a large, outdoor setting) on topics of mutual interest that pertain to the course, and exchange ideas about what they're learning about their "place". I'd love to know more about what my peers have been up to this past semester in terms of their individual projects and goals. I think a collaborative element would also help us counter the social isolation that comes with studying and learning through a pandemic, without resorting entirely to online video/chat groups. But of course, the pandemic complicates the online/offline ratio in terms of student engagement and learning – what's optimal or desired is not necessarily what is feasible or prudent. Hopefully, with the pandemic gone in a few years (or not!), Placemaking can take a new life of its own and really set learning ablaze in innovative ways among students at GU and beyond. I couldn't have enjoyed the course more!
Many thanks to Betsi and Jan for their incredible work this semester!

If asked, I would explain that Placemaking is a course in which you can explore yourself, your passions, and your surroundings in a supportive, challenging, and warm environment. The highlights were learning new things in an enjoyable way, connecting with peers, exercising vulnerability, and immersing myself in a positive relationship with education. The low moments were when I felt overwhelmed with life and sick of everything, Placemaking included. If I could change anything about the course, I'd make only 7-10 posts mandatory, and give more wordless prompts/options. Also, I'd make note of the horrendous current events and reach out to my students during those times, such as the police killings of more than 30 Black and Latine people in the last month alone. These events are not normal just because they happen often. We should not normalize them or ignore them. We should afford students breaks and opportunities to rest and heal.

The aspect that I think is critical is allowing student-centered learning design that allows the course to contribute to individual goals. Too many classes, even if they are otherwise good, suffer from one of two challenges a) the instructor's vision shapes the class in w away that's relevant to their academic expertise but not the students' or b) the class may have a clear topic, but not necessarily a clear goal about where to go with that topic. It's been discussed on end that the jobs and the education of the future will only be more diverse and unpredictable than ever. Not every class needs to take this radical of a form. But ideas such as self or partially self designed reading lists, assignments with multiple options, and the like can be incorporated into other courses. I think the ideal class is one that has a goal or can have a goal that aligns with my own learning goals, and one that strikes a pragmatic balance between not being overly academic/theoretical but not purely vocational/pre-professional either.

Coming into it, I was super excited to learn more about my hometown and important issues that affect the area. I was also excited to have a class including students of all different years, in all different locations, including students from GU-Qatar. I think that was one of the coolest parts of the course for me; meeting students I likely wouldn't have otherwise, hearing about interests and projects that I may not have otherwise, and meeting students from GU-Qatar. Going forward, if this class continues in future semesters, I think those are definitely some aspects

that should remain (and as a freshman in a virtual environment, it made this course one of my favorites)! For me, things got really interesting when I was moving around towards the end (basically moving in with a friend in the Bay Area, California). I've realized that while hear, somehow unconsciously I've really be taking in the differences "place-wise" and it's almost like I have a list in my head prepared to write a book comparing my hometown and the Bay Area. This wasn't reflected so much in my recent posts since coming here but I'm sure if this course went on longer, it would've been interesting to see those changes come into play as I'm in a new place.

I'm writing this discussion post as a writing break from my section of the final report of University Design Problem, where I'm working on applying Gert Biesta's theory of subjectification to education designs at Georgetown.
The principle of subjectification essentially argues that education needs to treat the student as not only an object in a hierarchy of knowledge transfers, but rather, a subject that autonomously engages with what's 'being taught.' Biesta observes that in comparison with the two other foundational processes of education, *qualification* (making the student qualified for tasks) and *socialization* (integrating the student into statuses and communities), *subjectification* is often overlooked.
Intuitively, there are two reasons for this: 1) Subjectification requires a relinquishing of power from the teacher to the student, which is perceived as risky and costly. And 2) Subjectification is difficult – the only acceptable outcome is a delicate balance somewhere between *giving* the student their identity (too colonial) and *leaving* the student to find their identity themselves (too passive).
This is what I think many elements of Placemaking catalyzes. By bringing out and synthesizing the character of the student before, during, and after Georgetown, Placemaking pushes for the self-examination and self-awareness that are the first step towards giving the student ownership over their intellectual experience.
The second step, I think, is well captured by the project-based model of the 6-credit version of the class. Specifically, the level of genuine engagement between the student and their project is as close to maximum as possible, because 1) Placemaking doesn't fulfill any attribute requirements, 2) Signing up for a project isn't required, and 3) The student has complete control over the size of their project and their extent of commitment/involvement.
These two combined puts the student in a very unique position compared to the conventional academic hierarchy – in Biesta terms, from the *objects* of education to its *subjects.*

Placemaking is very different from the other courses that I've taken in my Georgetown career. It's a completely individual-centered course where we, the students, pick and choose how we want to proceed; we get what we put into the course. If we decide to put minimal effort into our discussion posts or if we fail to keep up with our reading list, we really are the only ones missing out. The course offers a degree of individuality that I haven't experienced before; we're given plenty of opportunities to pick which topics we want to talk about and how we want to talk about them. The reading list that I created played a role in some of my discussion posts, and it was interesting to see what my classmates chose to read in their free time. I found myself

heavily engaged in some of the discussion post topics, and I thought the creativity of some weeks was impressive. We had more serious posts, like the analysis of *The Truman Show* or the letter to our future selves, but we also had more creative posts, such as the *Comedian in Cars* skits. It was an interesting combination of serious and fun, and I think it played well for my interest in the course. I think, given the stress of this semester, this class is what I needed to center myself. Taking a moment to think about myself rather than my workload was refreshing, and I appreciated seeing my classmates doing the same.