



Individual Instructor Report Spring 2024 Version A for C S 371P - OBJECT-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING (51165) (Glenn Downing)

Project Title: **Course Evaluations Spring 2024**

Courses Audience: **67**

Responses Received: **63**

Response Ratio: **94.0%**

Report Comments

Guide to the Interpretation of Course Evaluations at UT Austin

The goal of course evaluation process at UT Austin is to drive teaching excellence and to support continuous improvement in teaching and learning experiences. The two sets of scales used for core evaluation questions and the associated weights are:

Strongly Agree (5)

Agree (4)

Neutral (3)

Disagree (2)

Strongly Disagree (1)

Excellent (5)

Very Good (4)

Satisfactory (3)

Unsatisfactory (2)

Very Unsatisfactory (1)

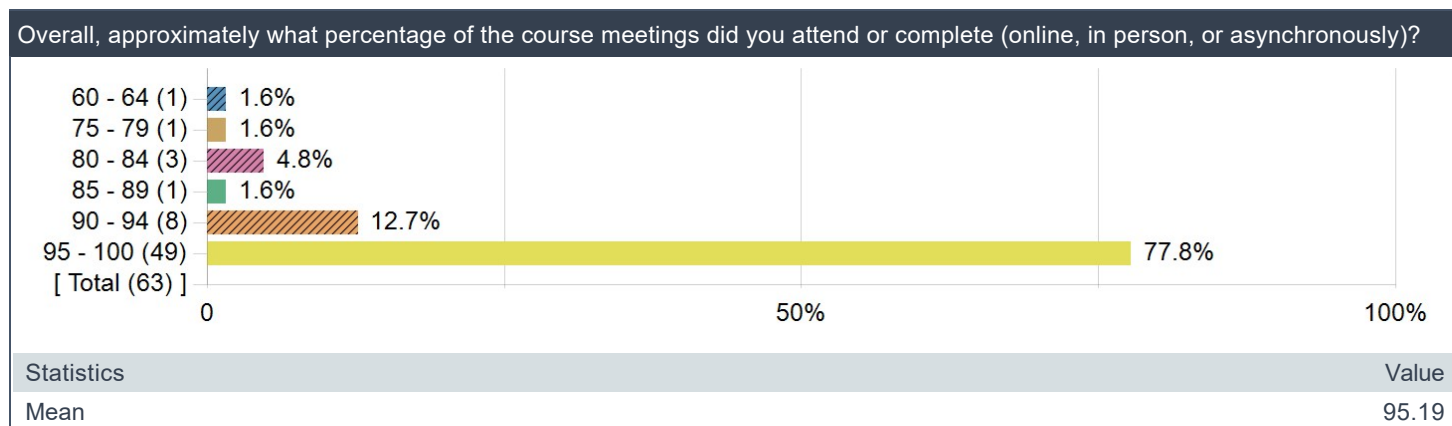
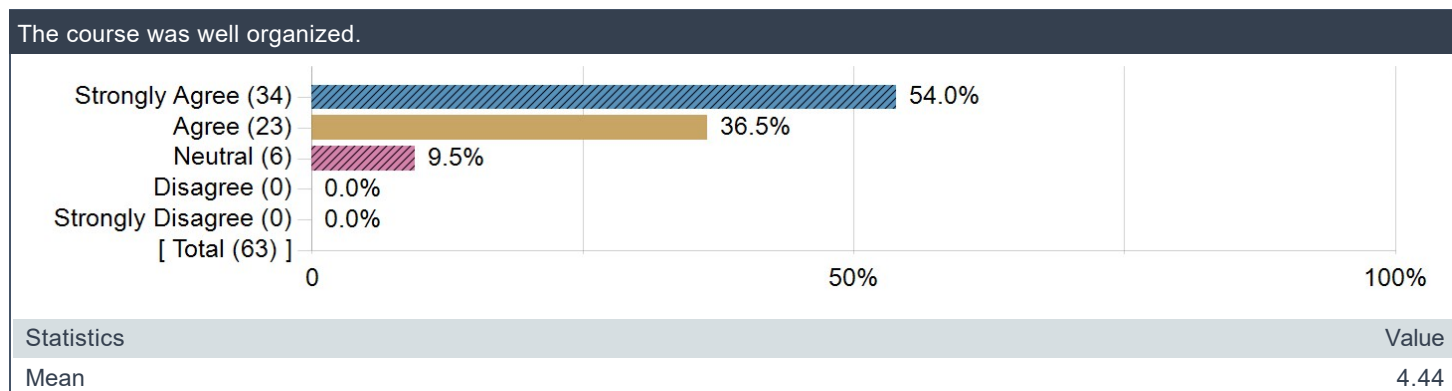
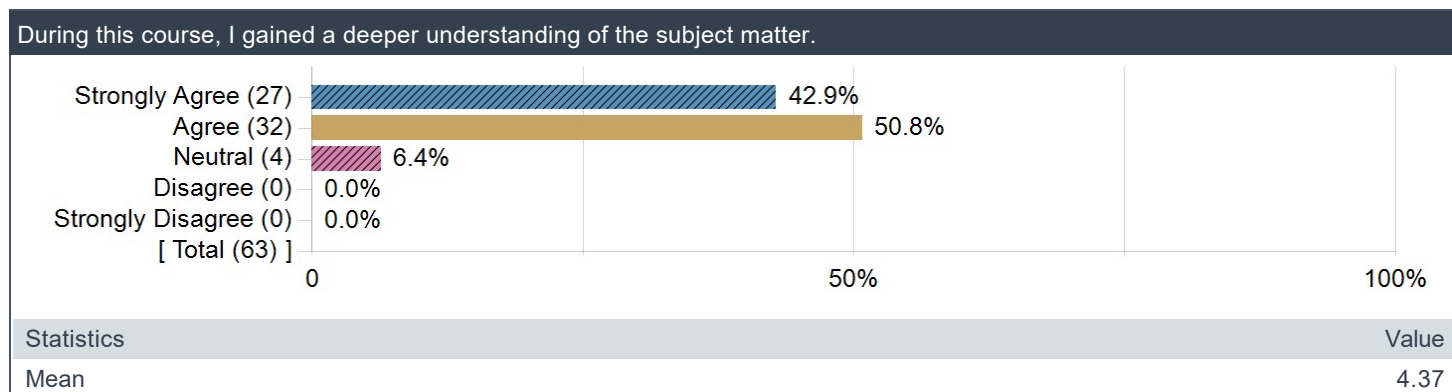
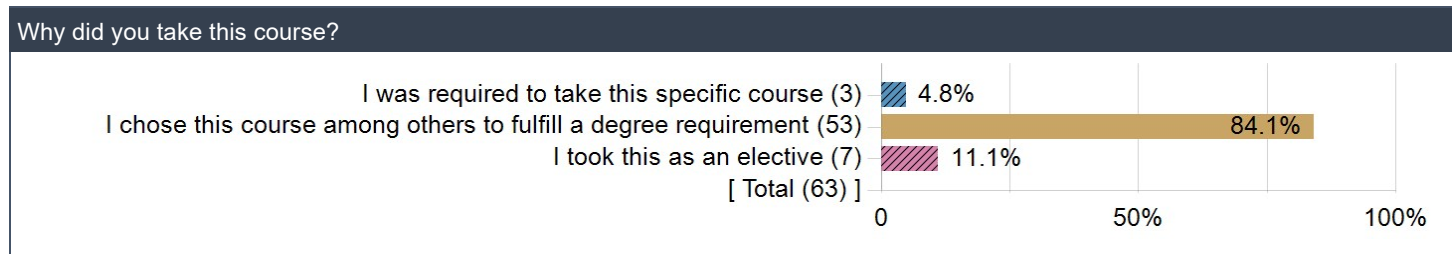
The Mean is calculated by adding all of the weights for a single question and dividing by the number of respondents. The course workload question is not averaged.

The number of students (e.g. respondents) marking each option is reported for each of the items. These frequency distributions provide information about the level of student ratings and the spread and shape of the class distribution of responses. The distributions thus provide a picture of student perception of a course.

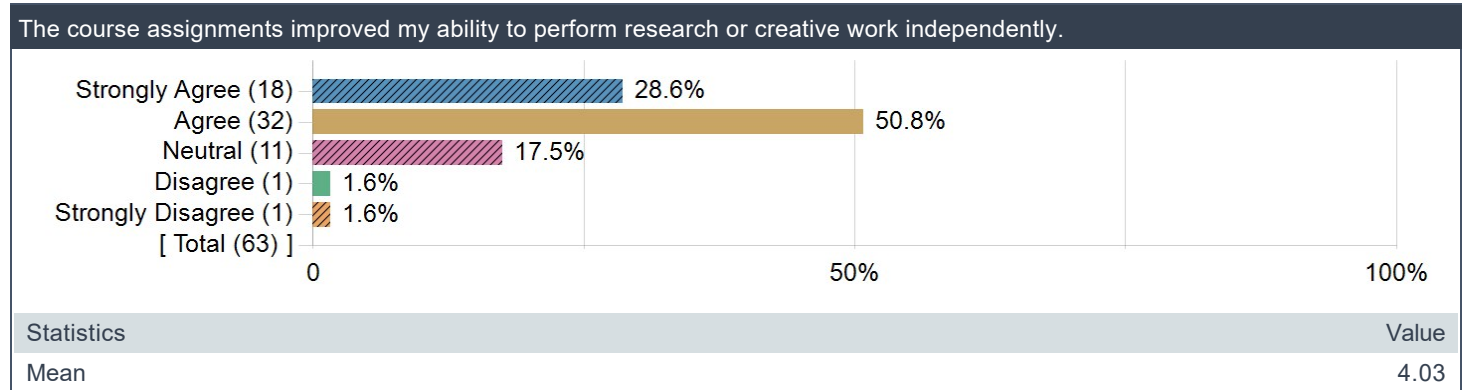
Course evaluations provide snapshots of student perspectives on their course-level learning experiences. Most experts on teaching evaluation advise that no individual method gives the complete picture of an instructor's teaching effectiveness; multiple and diverse measures, on multiple occasions, are advised to give a full picture of the teaching effectiveness of a particular instructor. Moreover, other factors, such as size of class, level of the class, and content of the course, can cause small variations in the ratings. Therefore, student perspectives for a particular instructor or course should be interpreted as a snapshot, and not as providing complete information on the teaching effectiveness of that instructor.

Creation Date: **Sunday, May 19, 2024**

Course Questions



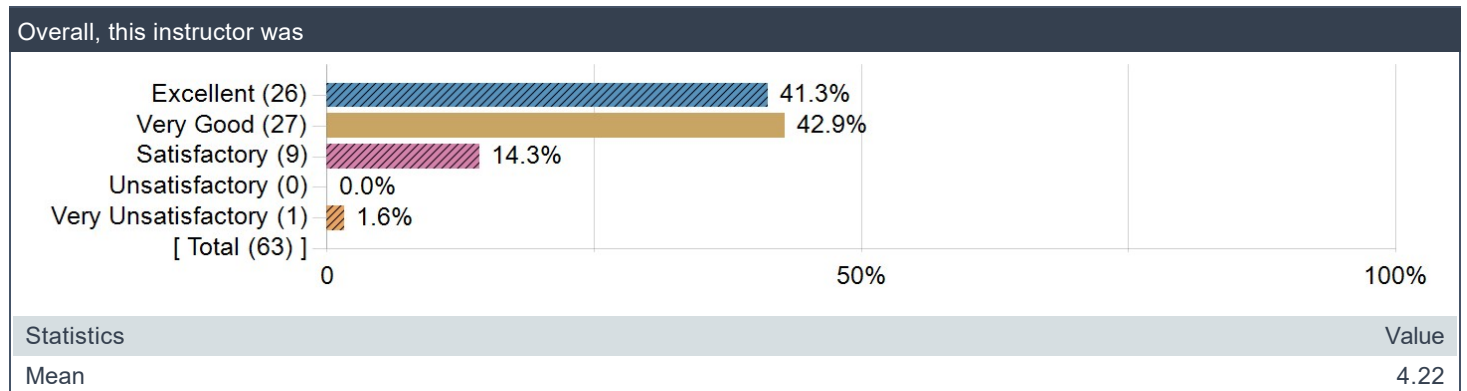
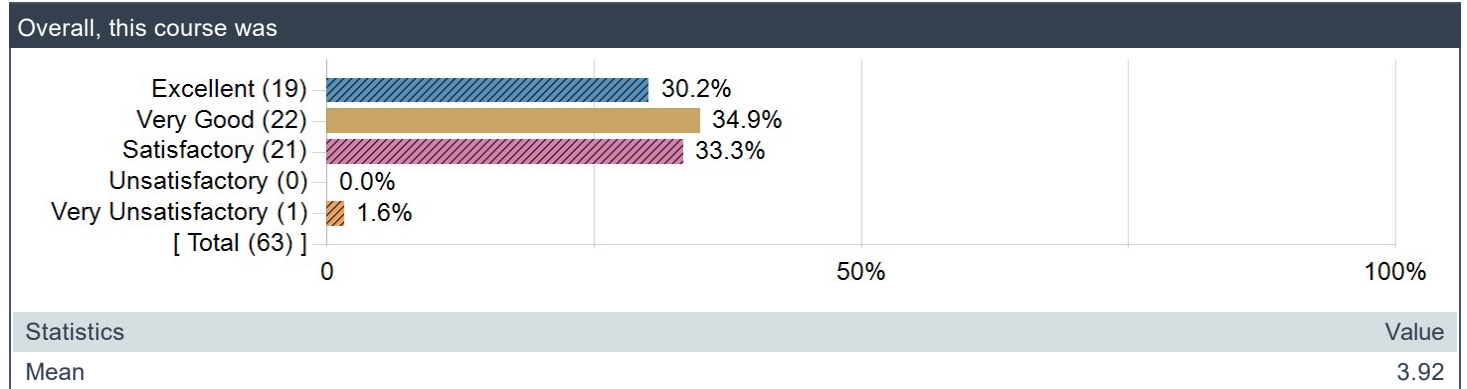
The course assignments improved my ability to perform research or creative work independently. (Flag Question)



Instructor Questions

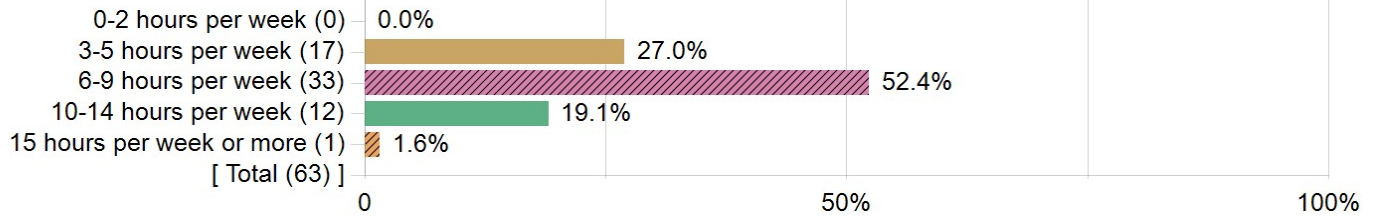
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Responded	Mean
The instructor clearly explained the course objectives and expectations.	60.3%	31.7%	7.9%	0.0%	0.0%	63	4.52
The instructor fostered an inclusive learning environment.	57.1%	28.6%	12.7%	0.0%	1.6%	63	4.40
The instructor effectively explained the concepts and subject matter in this course.	52.4%	39.7%	6.3%	1.6%	0.0%	63	4.43
The instructional techniques kept me engaged in learning.	42.9%	41.3%	14.3%	0.0%	1.6%	63	4.24
The instructor checked for student understanding of the concepts presented in the course.	49.2%	42.9%	7.9%	0.0%	0.0%	63	4.41

Overall Questions



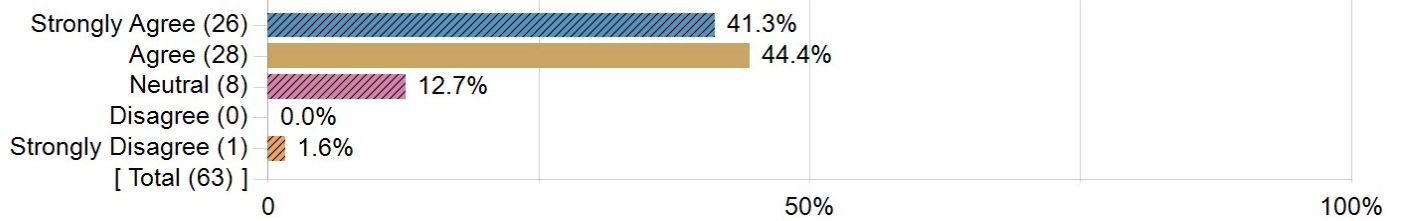
College, School, or Unit Questions

On average, approximately how many hours per week did you spend working outside of the course? Include time on homework, reading, reviewing, papers, projects, etc.



Statistics	Value
Mean	2.95

The course format (online, hybrid, face-to-face) helped me to learn.



Statistics	Value
Mean	4.24

Comment Questions

Identify aspects of the course that were the most effective in helping your learning.

Comments
The projects were most helpful as they introduced us to a codebase that utilized a new language (C++), new tools like checktestdata, makefiles, etc. and forced us to deal with the concepts and algorithms on our own. I was able to apply what I learned in class most effectively in the projects. Additionally, the in-class partner exercises were useful because I was able to confirm my understanding and bounce ideas off my teammate. We were always able to aid each other in our learning.
I actually really enjoyed the seminar style lecture. He was very engaging and I learned a lot from it. This class made me appreciate C++ and makes me want to learn more about it!
I think the daily quizzes were effective
Professor Downing required us to put away all devices during class, which greatly helped with increasing the level of focus all around.
I liked the cold calling, I know a lot of people do not enjoy it but I do not think Prof. Downing is too rude when asking questions and it forces you to focus on the material in class which I sometimes find myself zoning out so that helps prevent it.
I enjoyed his lectures and how Downing walked through concepts. If you listened and paid attention solely to lectures, it'd be enough to understand the material and what was going on during class.
I think that the quizzes were helpful in learning because I had to really rewatch the lecture in order to get a good understanding to do well on the quizzes.
I think the projects were overall pretty well structured and helped me learn C++ and some object oriented design.
Professor Glenn Downing possesses an exceptional talent for explaining the complexities and intricacies of C++ language as if he were talking to a middle schooler. His ability to distill complex concepts into understandable terms ensures that every student can grasp the material effortlessly. Every time any student asks a question, Downing provides a precise, accurate, and comprehensive answer. I can attest that he is an amazing professor and I am glad that I had him for the second time in my college career.
I liked the cold-calling since it forced us to keep up to date with the material.
Engaging lecturer
The cold calling was effective
I liked cold calling. It made class go faster, and it was fun to hear people's random little tidbits. The grading (replacing 1s with 2s) for me turned out to be surprisingly forgiving, though I understand that might not be the case for some people.
The daily quizzes
I think the lectures and the projects were the most beneficial. I liked how the lectures coincided with what we were doing in the projects.
I liked the exercises in class
Lectures
I liked not having to take notes and just being able to listen and digest the lecture info.
Daily quizzes meant I had to pay attention in class, especially since there was little leeway to mess up.
I think lectures as they went pretty in depth and covered specific details.
The in class exercises were very helpful in teaching me to apply the topics we learned in class into actual code.
Daily quizzes, collaborative exercises, cold-calling all forced me to engage with material.
The papers were great at showing the true potential of Object Oriented Programming. The simple structure of the lectures made it easy to learn during the lectures and the notes made it easy to review.
Moved through material slowly and always answered student questions.
Exercises
The lectures were great and engaging. The assignments helped me learn too.
I found the lectures to be very effective because of how interactive it is.
Many of the papers we read were valuable.
I liked how each lecture is followed by a quiz, which helped me check my learning and understanding of the subject matter. I also liked the lecture content in general: a lot of new concepts were introduced to me that I had previously not known about.
Lectures, projects, and in-class exercises
Even though I didn't like them, the daily quizzes made me review the previous material to ensure that I had a good understanding.
Cold calling and daily quizzes kept me accountable for keeping up with the material.

Comments
The random extra quizzes/credits were useful (like 2 3's replace a 1, the ethics feedback quiz, etc.) are useful when the requirements for the quizzes are so stringent.
The professor made the teaching environment relatable so it was more personal learning. He also kept notes online and we could see an organized schedule online as well.
I felt that the exercises in particular helped me to gain a better understanding of the material.
Coldcalling was good to be on my toes.
The projects went over a variety of topics
I think the projects were most useful.
Cold calling kept me alert during class, and the daily quizzes helped me retain information.
Daily quizzes, cold calling, and exercises all kept me on my toes and made sure that I was on top of the material daily.
I thought the projects and quizzes were good tools to constantly test my knowledge and skills in C++ and Object Oriented Programming.
– Quizzes + Projects
The projects were good for understanding and applying the concepts.
The cold calling helped keep everyone focused, and making the lectures so intertwined with the projects helped a lot.
I think Professor Downing's lectures were well structured and the daily quizzes ensured I filled gaps in my knowledge as we progressed through course content.
I loved that there were no tests, and I still feel like I stayed on track with learning due to the daily quizzes. The threshold for an A was so intimidating for quizzes, but I have been relieved with the several extra quizzes we are getting. I really appreciated that some quizzes were repeated if the class did poorly and that two 3's could replace a 1. Overall there was a lot of room in this class to continue to incentivize you to work hard which I liked.
I found that the lecture notes were helpful to read over again because sometimes it was hard to follow in class so I was able to refer to the notes before the quizzes to refresh what was covered. While the exercises were sometimes difficult, I found that they also helped me apply what I was learning and I liked how we could work with a partner.
I like how the professor was relatively welcoming of questions and created an environment on Ed Discussion that could be taken advantage of to benefit my learning.
I liked the assignments and in class exercises.
I enjoyed the multiple examples Downing gave in class. His note-taking style was a bit to get used to. The projects were also manageable and reinforced things we covered in class. Cold calling also held me accountable and made me pay more attention the daily notes and the lectures spent on explaining the project expectations

Identify the aspect of the course that you found most challenging, why you found it was challenging, and suggest one thing that could be done to help future students meet that challenge more effectively.

Comments
The most challenging aspect of the course were the in-class quizzes. They were often tricky and we had very little time to complete them. They weren't just simple understanding checks, they were a competitive form of quick thinking and pragmatism. This was good, but they were a bit stressful and I got a good amount of 1/3 on those grades.
I think a couple of times he did interrupt students (I also understand that we're limited in time), and the exercises did kind of assume we knew the syntax for a lot of the stuff but now we know I guess.
I also found the daily quizzes to be challenging as it is already challenging for me to attend class, but I had a legitimate medical excuse for absence for the first two months.
I found specs grading to be unnecessarily stressful. In particular, I found that exercises were not particularly well explained, and oftentimes my partner and I felt lost with regards to the syntax required to pass the HackerRank. I wish Professor Downing more thoroughly explained how to approach each exercise.
The number of quizzes you could miss. When I took the class before it was more lenient but now only being able to get a 0 on 3 quizzes to get an A in the class seems a bit extreme. I didn't do as well on quizzes as other students even tho I went to class everyday so it was unfortunate that my grade took a hit due to the quizzes but then again if you just really study the lecture before you should usually be fine.
I think the most challenging part of this course was the every class quizzes. It's easy to mess up, misinterpret, or make a mistake since it's only 3 questions.
I found the exercises and quizzes to be the most challenging part of the class. I think in the future maybe allow for bigger teams so more people can work together because with the time constraint it can be difficult.

Comments
I think the quizzes were challenging because they did not create a positive system for actually learning the material. They were always based on trying to trick the student into picking the wrong answer, and often we were asked questions that were not gone over in class (or barely for a minute). This would be OK, but with specifications grading, every mistake can be the difference of a letter grade, so the result of this system were stressful, unhelpful quizzes.
The exercises were hard to do under a time limit. It helped when there was a better explanation of what we were supposed to do preceding it.
N/A
I still don't really understand a lot of the weird syntax of C++
Nothing was too challenging.
No recorded meetings, but notes were good enough. Wanted to learn more about interfaces, most of the OOP stuff came at the end of the semester. First 75% was just C++, which I didn't mind to be honest.
The daily quizzes were pretty difficult, I wish there were opportunities to redo quizzes, because they are so unforgiving.
I think the class isn't focused enough on object oriented design. The only pieces of ood we got were from the articles, and while the articles were good, I don't think just reading them is enough. I would have preferred less time on C++ minutiae and more time on how to design object oriented programs, because that's what sounds really hard. While the projects weren't super difficult which I appreciate, they were mostly just toy projects.
The exercises could be given a little bit more time.
I found the quizzes to be the most challenging. I think the specs grading made me really lose hope of a better grade when I wasn't particularly strong in the quizzes despite studying for them. I understand the need for them but maybe some way to get points back by doing corrections.
The quizzes were a bit too specific and required a lot of studying. The grading system was pretty strict and I felt like it was a lot of work to keep track of all the categories.
Projects
I think the specifications grading is interesting, but wish it was a bit more lenient for absences, since those can and do happen unplanned.
The quizzes were tricky due to the time constraints. But I wouldn't change it tbh.
I probably found the excursions the most challenging just simply due to the time constraints as well as my minimal experience with C++
I found some of the in class quizzes pretty challenging and potentially getting a zero could be very detrimental to your grade considering there isn't too much room for error with the quizzes.
Cold-calling was nerve-wrecking, gave me some anxiety (which is more of a personal problem) and hindered me from coming to class some days. However, I can see the benefits and why it is enforced as it made me stay engaged and gave me more exposure to thinking through problems.
This wasn't a challenge per say. But I would have preferred more chances to apply the knowledge from the Papers.
Project instructions were sometimes vague; HackerRank makes it hard to know what's going wrong.
quizzes because of attendance, not have quizzes in a specific amount of time
The exercises could be challenging at times. I feel like both the TAs should be there for exercise days.
The quizzes were the most challenging for me. I felt as though some quizzes focused on smaller details and how each question was sort of the same. This meant that if I got one question wrong, I got all questions of that type wrong as well. With the grading scheme, I felt the most anxiety with these quizzes. I suggest that either the difficulty of the quiz drop a bit or allow more 0s on quizzes before a letter drop.
Cold Calling, Professionalism, and Respect for Students:
At the time of writing, I have been called on twice and known the answers to most questions asked of me. Credit where it is due, when being asked questions directly, I was actively engaged with the material, and that's valuable. However, when talking to other students (and particularly those who were not familiar with the material), I had a different experience.
During one class, you asked a student about a topic we covered in the previous class. They didn't know the answer. You then asked, very loudly, that student if they had come to class yesterday, as you were questioning him about what we learned that day. He didn't answer. If I were him, I wouldn't have come back to the next class. Raising your voice at him made me uncomfortable. It made me worry that, if I were to miss class – even for legitimate reasons – that I would receive the same treatment. You never raised your voice at me, but this only gave me the impression that students would only be treated with respect if they were capable of answering questions correctly. This in turn made it significantly more stressful when I was called on to answer questions, as I worried my treatment with dignity was contingent on my answers. For the same reason, I did not want to ask questions in class.

Comments
Needless to say, this made it considerably more difficult to learn in your classroom.
I highlight this one experience in class, and while it was exceptional, it was not abnormal – that is to say, while it stands out in my mind as particularly egregious, you raising your voice at students was a regular enough occurrence to make me regularly feel uncomfortable in the classroom.
While we are not your employees, it is important to remember that for us, Student is a job, and we are entitled to professional respect.
Ultimately, the value I received when being questioned did not make up for the discomfort I felt and the difficulty I had learning due to the way you interacted with students. While the Socratic method is a legitimate and valuable tool for teaching, the way it was implemented actively made it more difficult for me to learn and be a participant in the classroom.
Specifications Grading and the Grading system:
For starters, I have no issues with specifications grading – I've had it in other courses and done very well there. However, it is very demotivating in certain cases. Due to outside factors, I wasn't able to complete the Life assignment. I got about 90% of the way done and spent a significant amount of time on it, at times to the detriment of my performance in other classes. Because I did not complete it, I will receive a one. Because the grading scale only counts twos, this is equivalent to me receiving a zero, and my grade will be the same as if I did not submit it at all. In other words, it would have been better for me to have not attempted the project at all and focus on my other classes.
I found the specification grading the most challenging, since it requires you to excel in every area to get a good grade. For me, the most challenging areas were projects and exercises, so I would recommend future students to seek out good partners for both of these areas.
The grading system It was challenging because it meant there was not much wiggle room for some categories that could bring down your grade massively, like projects. I would suggest that that category have a little more wiggle room added to reduce that stress.
The HackerRank exercises are stressful, and I think that students should be encouraged to help other students once they finish the exercise.
I found daily quizzes to be incredibly challenging because I felt like we did not have enough to read and think through the questions. It was especially frustrating when the questions were trick questions, because due to the time constraints, I had to make assumptions about the code syntax. I also think for some exercises, it was unfair for concepts or correct syntax to be clarified during the exercise rather than before.
The projects are useful and taught me a lot, but there is a lack of guidance when completing them should we need any help or anything.
I found the exercises were the most challenging because they were stressful with the time limits. Maybe removing the time limit from the exercises would be a good idea as to reduce stress.
There wasn't any part of the course that seemed too difficult for me.
It was unfortunate that exercises couldn't be made up. I had multiple fellowships and conferences I needed to attend which inevitably made me get zeros on the exercises and tanked my grade down. I'm expecting to miss classes for similar reasons and frequencies next semester, so I decided not to take SWE since the grades will come out similar regardless of how hard I try.
Definitely the exercises and quizzes.
The in class lectures seemingly had very little to do with OOP, but later tied in.
the quizzes were sometimes challenging!
The most challenging aspect was the in-class exercises. The specifications grading makes it demotivating to complete assignments in other categories once the grade category drops for one category, and the exercises were notably the most challenging part of the course compared to the others.
I thought that spec grading made the class much tougher since its possible to miss only two classes the whole semester and if they land on days that an exercise was conducted, then you can no longer get an A in the class even if you do the projects perfectly.
Quizzes –
The exercises were sometimes stressful mainly because of the compile-time errors due to some mistypes. Syntax checker should be turned on for the Hackerranks.
What I found challenging was the set up for some of the projects. Some of the projects had everything set up so we just forked, some we had to set everything up. It's important to know how to set it up, but there wasn't much instruction. It was mostly copy pasting from past assignments, and was hard to follow through since not much instruction was given.

Comments
<p>The first three projects I felt were quite challenging as some of the expectations were not clear. Many of the issues we had to fix were not discussed in class and had to be conducted in a very specific manner to get credit.</p>
<p>Honestly I'm just not that good with C++, although I feel that I have improved greatly this semester. I also feel like more help hours offered would be beneficial.</p>
<p>Some of the exercises were not well-explained before we did them so I found that we didn't have a fair understanding of what was expected of us. I think it would be helpful if we had more notes or guidance to help us in the exercises, since there was not much to reference. I am not a big fan of the grading scheme because I don't think it helps me learn and instead it penalizes learning to an extreme extent with the lack of quiz drops.</p>
<p>I was not a fan that I was not able to receive credit for an exercise when I was sick and could not make it to class. It made the rest of the semester stressful as I was required to attend so I would not fall behind the exercise cutoff.</p>
<p>I found the quizzes to be challenging especially because of the fact that we couldn't make up the zeros. I also think that the criteria for a A in the quiz category was a bit more strict this semester which also made it difficult. I think something that could be done to make this a little less challenging would be to give 1 point for attendance for the quizzes. That way we wouldn't be as stressed out about getting a 0 and falling a letter grade.</p>
<p>I found the strict grading scheme for quizzes and exercises most challenging. I appreciated being able to replace 1s but sometimes it felt like that wouldn't even be enough to cover our bases, especially for the exercises. I wish we had more than 20 minutes on the exercises.</p>
<p>The grading system. It was frustrating knowing that since I missed one exercise, I had to score really well on all the rest for a chance at an A in the class especially because the exercises were relatively difficult and the time sometimes wasn't enough. I wish we got more time or the standard for an A wasn't 11/12</p>