

Project Title: **Instructor Course Evaluations Fall 2022**

Courses Audience: **51**
Responses Received: **44**
Response Ratio: **86.3%**

Report Comments

Results were produced during the Fall 2022 implementation of new course evaluation questions and systems. Courses with final exams conducted on December 8th, 2022, may have overlapped with the evaluation window.

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)

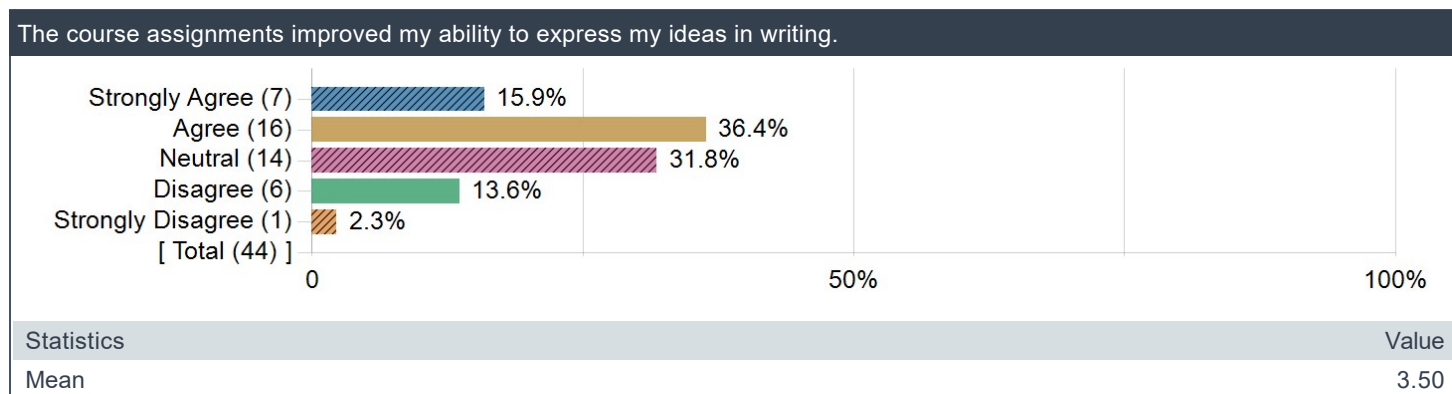
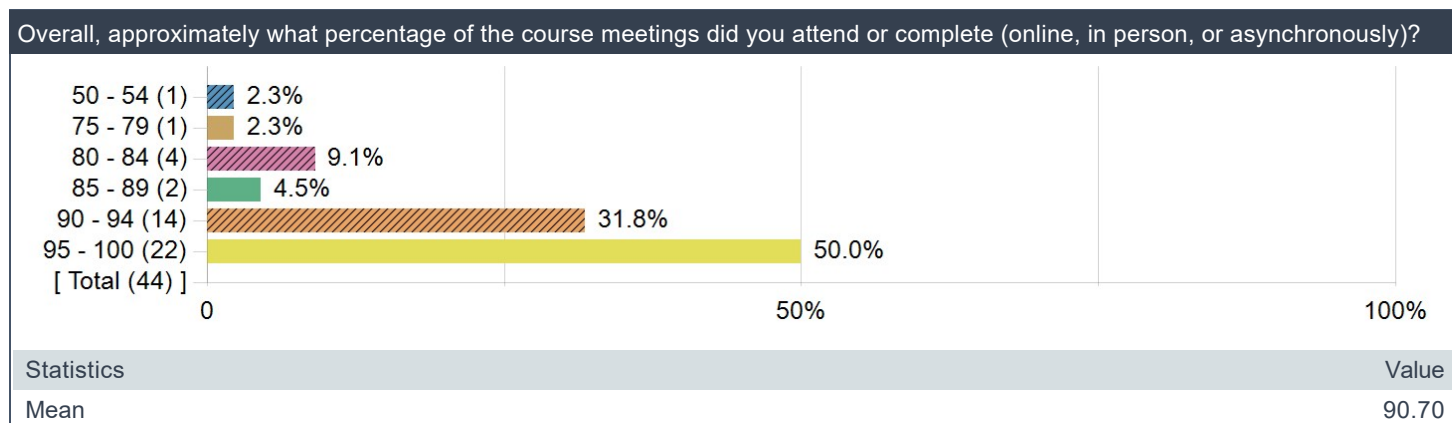
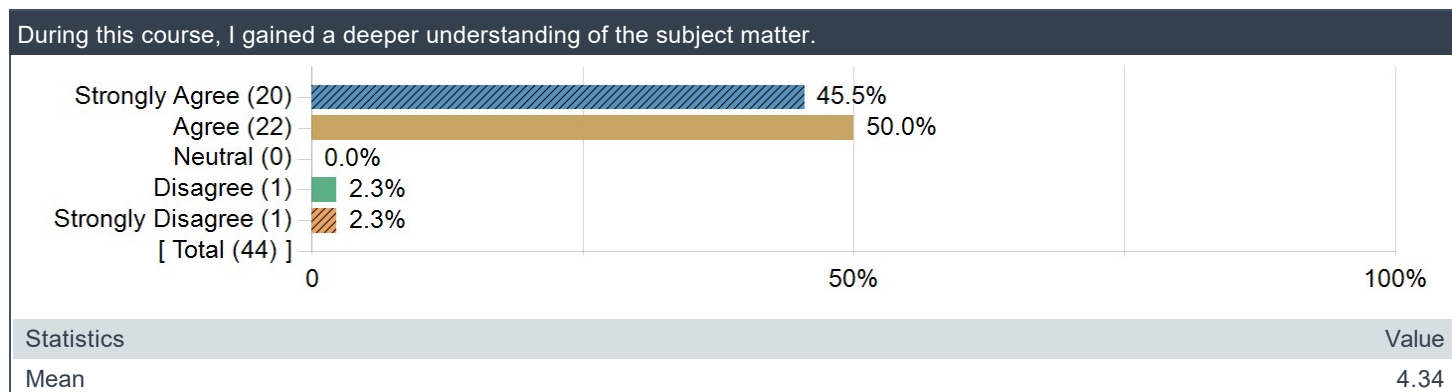
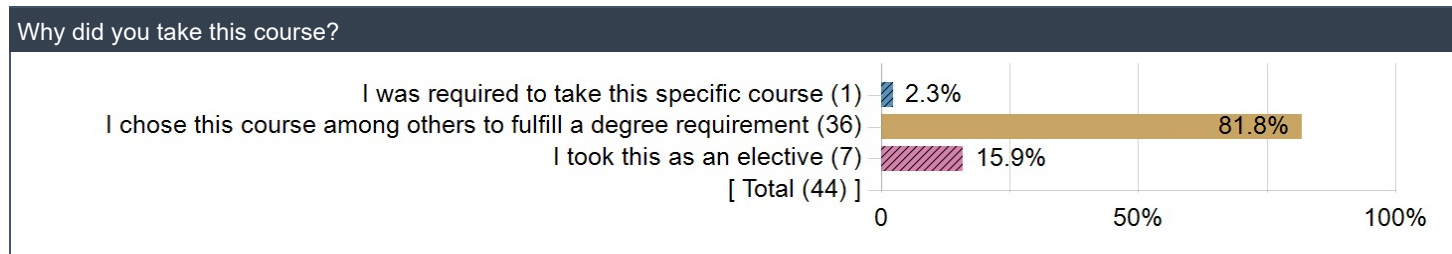
The Mean is calculated by adding all of the weights for a single question and dividing by the number of respondents. The course workload question is not averaged.

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 one 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 as providing complete information on the teaching effectiveness of that instructor.

Creation Date: **Thursday, January 5, 2023**

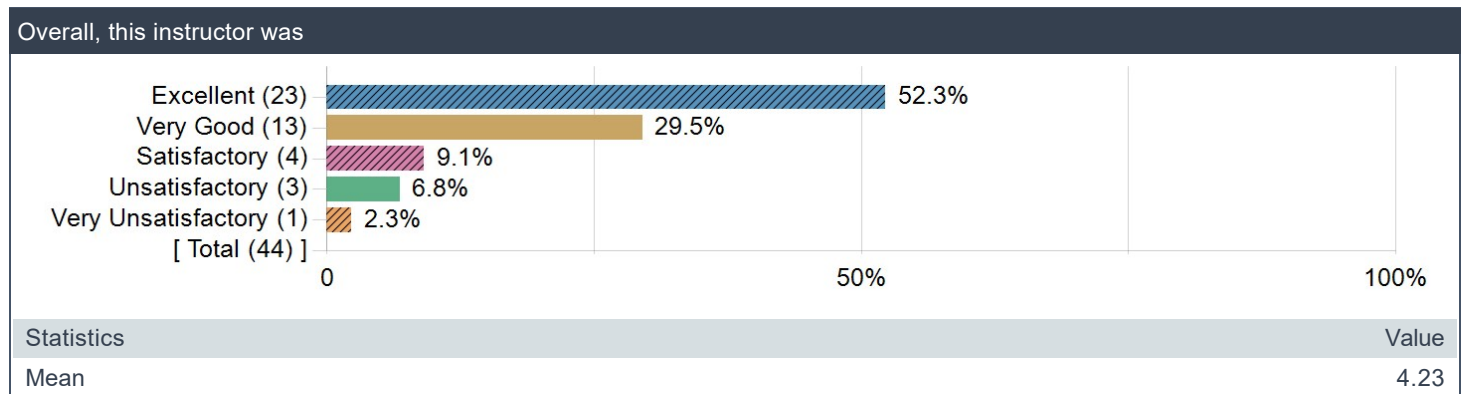
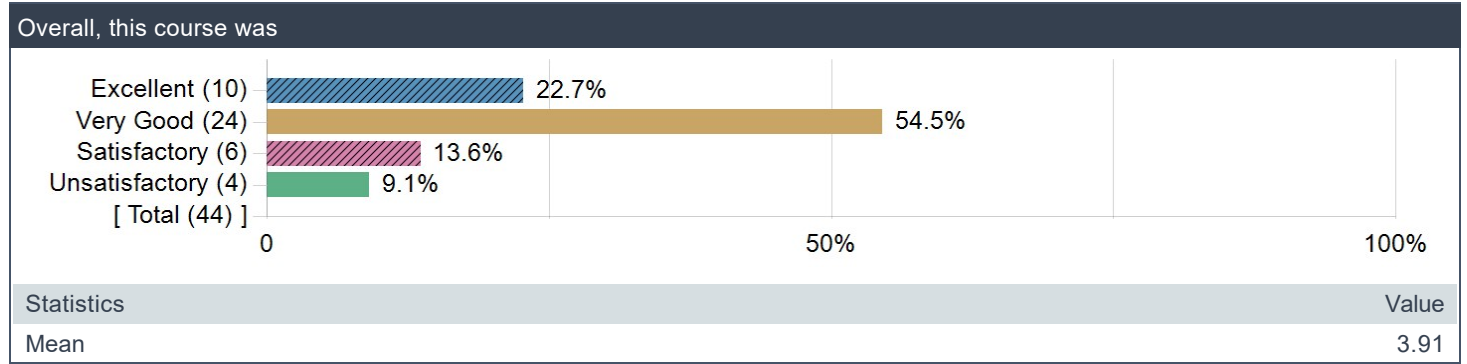
Course Questions



Instructor Questions

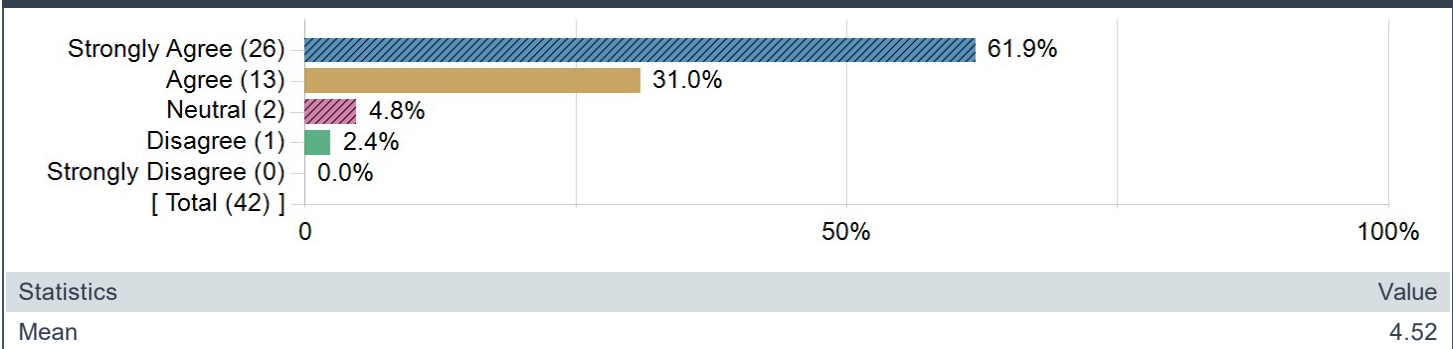
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Responded	Mean
The instructor clearly explained the course objectives and expectations.	63.6%	31.8%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	44	4.55
The instructor fostered an inclusive learning environment.	56.8%	38.6%	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	44	4.50
The instructor effectively explained the concepts and subject matter in this course.	45.5%	36.4%	11.4%	4.5%	2.3%	44	4.18
The instructional techniques kept me engaged in learning.	38.6%	43.2%	11.4%	4.5%	2.3%	44	4.11
The instructor checked for student understanding of the concepts presented in the course.	54.5%	38.6%	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%	44	4.41

Overall Questions



College, School, or Unit Questions

The instructor fostered a classroom environment in which all students could feel free to participate fully.



Comment Questions

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

Comments
I think the most effective part is that he had quizzes every class so that we can really remember what he talked about in the last lecture
I felt the lectures were very interesting in learning about unique Python concepts.
Building a website is a good way to get familiar with web development tools.
Lectures were motivated very well to solve specific problems
Dr. Downing was extremely knowledgeable on the subjects discussed in class and I am glad I took his course on Software Engineering. I think I received an excellent crash course on Python and have a fairly deep understanding of the language now, though I probably still have a lot more to learn to master it.
I liked the way the lectures were set up. I learned a lot from the format and the exercise that followed.
I think the projects were the most effective in helping my learning.
I like the recording. It enables me to review the materials. I also like the new grading frame.
The exercises were really helpful in applying the concepts taught in lecture
We were essentially forced to learn the bulk of the material in this class on our own. Because of the "intentional disconnect" between the course lectures and assignments, I felt that there was nothing in this course that was effective in helping me learn what I had to. There was no time spent on effective learning strategies, resources for web development, or even helping us get started in certain topics. It may as well have been us doing an online assignment the entire course.
I think the fact that we had weekly meetings with the TAs was helpful and the fact that all the previous years' repos were public and the deadlines for the phases.
The lectures highlighted very useful tools and methods that we can use in Python, and while irrelevant regarding the project, the principles relating to what we learned could definitely be translated into our projects. The project itself was tremendously educational, and I loved every part of it (despite being quite hard).
The project was very helpful in learning
The group project was really well designed and it especially helped to have an outline of what tools we needed. It was good to be able to see prior years projects as well for reference. Overall I thought I learned a good deal from completing the project.
The professor's clear enjoyment of the course concepts helped me pay attention better and learn more.
Having to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps and learning the materials needed to design the website.
Cold calling, discord, google
The lectures and exercises in class were great tools for me to effectively learn the material.
Professor Downing was very clear during lectures which made it easy to digest content and remember it for years to come.
The assignments were super helpful
It was helpful to have mentor TAs to keep us on the right track.
I enjoyed the web development project and the use of issues to help track our own progress.
Having access to TA's and other students alike on discord made getting quick and insightful answers easy.
I think that the technology we used in this class and the content were very valuable. Many of the tools we used in this class will most likely apply in the real world.
projects
The lecture notes being prewritten / written during the class so I didnt have to take notes. The cold calling was helpful
The lectures were very informative
Cold calling was a good way to make sure students were engaged. The project was incredible. I feel so much more confident in my ability to build a web app from scratch. I am very glad I took this course overall.
TA meetings and working on the assignments
The project. We were able to explore a tool that is frequently used in practice.
The group projects and everything around them, including the linking of our projects with the other groups. Also, I really enjoyed the lectures—they were thought-provoking without holding your hand through the work you did outside of class.

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
I think the most challenging part is still the exercises. I think we had very limited time to work on that. It would be highly appreciated if the professor can reopen the exercise again and we can work on that again
I think the projects were the most challenging as they covered material not covered in class. I think it would be helpful or future students if some technologies were discussed during lectures.
The quizzes and exercises were sometimes challenging since I had to balance learning about the class content while working with my group on a project that was mostly unrelated. I think the grading scheme for the course could be a bit more forgiving and instead be out of total points instead of the lowest category.
More specific guidance with using AWS, as many groups seemed to struggle with managing the free tier limitations that AWS provides. I don't have experience with GCP, but I have heard that the free usage limits and billing for Google Cloud are simpler to navigate, so could be something to explore for future classes?
Some of the IDB project phases were much more challenging than the others, making it harder for my group to plan the amount of time that we would have to dedicate to them.
I wish the quizzes didn't exist, I came in with a strong understanding of Python and was forced to attend redundant lectures.
Learning outside of class to complete the assignments and working with random class mates made the projects extremely challenging
The quizzes were the most challenging aspect because it required attendance and it had a very short time limit. Although there are benefits of the current grading system, I think it wasn't the best estimate of how much effort was put into the class or how much understanding we have since most of the time spent for this class was for projects, yet most of the students' grade was based on how many quizzes they missed. I think it might actually be better to weigh projects more or provide a system or make the quizzes more flexible.
I found quizzes before each lecture a little challenging but affordable.
teach web development in class instead of python syntax
My experience with the projects were unfortunately very stressful and overwhelmingly negative. This is largely due to the incompatible work styles of my group members (and some moderate sexism). This, however, is no fault of Professor Downing's. I know that the group assignment quiz was meant to create balanced groups, but I would have preferred to have created or joined a group with likeminded people of my own accord.
As mentioned previously, we had to teach ourselves quite literally everything for the main course project, so it was challenging. I get that the gimmick is to simulate the real world where we have to figure everything out ourselves, but at least in the industry we will have dozens of peers and senior colleagues we can use as a resource when we are stuck. Here we did not have that, and our best friend was simply Google.
I think learning the tools was the most difficult part and sometimes the tools were covered in class but weeks after we had to use them so it could have been more helpful to have some instruction on the tools first.
Probably the most challenging thing about the course was something not intended to be challenging. QUIZZES. I feel that they are grossly overemphasized in the grading spec, and even though I did quite well in all other categories, I'll be suffering disproportionately simply because of my attendance and poor performance on the quizzes.
the lectures could've been more tied to the project
I found the quizzes to be pretty challenging, and honestly not the best assessment of how well I was doing in the class. Many of the questions were really niche points from lecture and most of the time did not relate to the project we were working on. I know our Professor is already quite lenient on quizzes, but it is still the quizzes that are bringing my overall grade down significantly, even though I've spent the vast majority of my time working on the projects for this class.
The projects are virtually impossible or take absurd amounts of time for a 3 hour course unless at least some number of your group members have prior experience in web development. I suggest actually teaching some of the programs/libraries/APIs required for the projects instead of leaving it entirely up to the TAs to attempt to teach in 30 minute weekly meetings.
Having to self learn most of the material, in the given time frame also.
Self-learning, projects
I found the quizzes in the course to be the most challenging because of the time constraint. Giving a little extra time would do wonders in helping get past this challenge.
It was challenging to learn much of the project content ourselves, but I think that was the point and the struggle taught me more than I expected. Students should embrace the challenge rather than come at it with a negative attitude.
Some of the quizzes felt like they were trying to be tricky for the sake of it instead of to test us on our learning
I found a lot of the work behind web development to be challenging, largely because not much was done in class to help us learn what to do.
The disconnect between lecture material and project requirement made it feel like I was taking two classes, would love to see more

Comments
crossover
The most challenging aspect of this course was collaborating with a group. I think it might be beneficial if students could have some say in how they are paired up through ed discussion posts and whatnot.
projects, quizzes
The diy project was like a completely other class. There was little to no guidance other than the occasional pointer by the TA.
The projects were completely different than what was talked about in lecture
Our TA did not have much topic knowledge, so going to office hours/asking them specific implementation questions was not helpful. I mostly interacted with Canyon and William. Canyon is great; William is less helpful.
Our TA did not do a good job of managing the group. He brought his own biases into our discussions and he did not take the role of a good and fair manager.
The IDB project was pretty difficult.
It would be better if the lecture is more related to the project. It is sometime challenging to start new.
I think there's too much of a focus on participation grades outside of class, combined with the grading metric. It meant that for me there was disproportionate weight placed on the blog, paper, and quizzes (which in reality were probably my biggest roadblock as far as making the grade goes), especially because all three didn't contribute to my understanding as much as the other stuff I mentioned.