

University of Michigan

Winter 2020 Instructor Report With Comments

EECS 481-001: Software Engin

Westley Weimer

40 out of 160 students responded to this evaluation.

Responses to University-wide questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	Univ-wide Median	School/College Median
This course advanced my understanding of the subject matter. (Q1631)	24	11	3	0	0	0	4.7	4.5	4.4
My interest in the subject has increased because of this course. (Q1632)	22	10	7	0	0	0	4.6	4.2	4.1
I knew what was expected of me in this course.(Q1633)	23	11	5	0	0	0	4.7	4.5	4.3
Overall, this was an excellent course.(Q1)	26	10	3	0	0	0	4.8	4.3	4.1
I had a strong desire to take this course.(Q4)	20	14	3	2	0	0	4.5	4.1	3.9
As compared with other courses of equal credit, the workload for this course was (SA=Much Lighter, A=Lighter, N=Typical, D=Heavier, SD=Much Heavier). (Q891)	4	15	18	2	0	0	3.5	3.0	2.9
How did the unexpected change to remote course format affect your learning experience in this course this term? (SA=Very Positively Affected, A=Somewhat Positively Affected, N=No Effect, D=Somewhat Negatively Affected, SD=Very Negatively Affected) (Q1840)*	6	3	8	15	6	0	2.4	2.4	2.4

Responses to University-wide questions about the instructor:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	Univ-wide Median	School/College Median
Overall, Westley Weimer was an excellent teacher.(Q2)	35	4	1	0	0	0	4.9	4.6	4.5
Westley Weimer seemed well prepared for class meetings.(Q230)	36	3	1	0	0	0	4.9	4.8	4.7
Westley Weimer explained material clearly.(Q199)	34	5	1	0	0	0	4.9	4.7	4.5
Westley Weimer treated students with respect.(Q217)	35	3	1	0	0	0	4.9	4.8	4.7

Responses to questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	University-Wide Median
Prerequisites provided adequate preparation for this course. (Q61)	25	12	1	0	0	1	4.7	4.3
The textbook made a valuable contribution to the course. (Q64)	7	6	4	1	1	19	4.1	3.6
I felt included and valued when working with other students. (Q253)	27	8	3	1	0	0	4.8	4.6
I felt comfortable asking questions in class. (Q521)	28	7	3	0	0	0	4.8	4.2
I developed confidence in my abilities as an engineer. (Q1769)	21	14	4	0	0	0	4.6	4.1
I developed the ability to solve real world engineering problems. (Q1770)	23	14	2	0	0	0	4.7	4.1
The discussion section was a valuable part of this course. (Q1771)	10	12	7	2	1	7	4.0	4.0

The medians are calculated from Winter 2020 data. University-wide medians are based on all UM classes in which an item was used. The school/college medians in this report are based on classes that are upper division with enrollment of 75 or greater in College of Engineering.

Written Comments

Overall, this was an excellent course.(Q1) (Comments)

Comment
- Loved it

Overall, Westley Weimer was an excellent teacher.(Q2) (Comments)

Comment
- So excellent I really admired him and i was so sad I couldn't attend more classes in person
-

Westley Weimer seemed well prepared for class meetings.(Q230) (Comments)

Comment
- Always

Westley Weimer explained material clearly.(Q199) (Comments)

Comment
- Great at articulating his points
- Always

Westley Weimer treated students with respect.(Q217) (Comments)

Comment
- Always

What teaching methods worked well? [e.g. videoconferencing; asynchronous interaction; etc.] (Q1841)*

Comments
The lecture recordings went well and I still felt engaged.
Videoconferencing was ok, I was actually more likely to pay attention during online lecture than I was in a normal lecture, and not having to commute to office hours meant I could go more frequently. Piazza was also a great help.
Live lectures
throwing candy to participants
Live streaming lectures and providing recordings of those live-streams
In-person teaching worked the best. All things considered, the videoconferencing worked fine.
Live lectures
Videoconferencing and lectures worked well remotely.
in person
Live lectures were better than the asynchronous alternative.
Videoconferencing worked marvelously for this course.
videoconferencing
Recorded lectures
videoconferencing
Livestream
Wes's Teaching Style was absolutely wonderful, I loved every minute of it.
videoconferencing and Piazza
Live lecture with professor interacting with comments
BlueJeans
I never go to class, but I liked going to class at Michigan :(but online was the best it could be

What were your greatest challenges in remote learning for this course? [e.g. internet connectivity; personal motivation; managing life stresses; etc.] (Q1842)*

Comments
Working together with a partner remotely was definitely a struggle.
Personal motivation and stress. Not having something to physically prepare for meant I was less likely to do anything before class and I would just roll out of bed right before lecture. I also had one elderly grandparent move in and another one die during the time between classes being cancelled and now, along with after-graduation plans being severely delayed. It's been a lot.
Personal motivation
personal motivation
Managing due dates on my own and lack of Motivation to tune in live to class/discussion
Internet connectivity, less motivation to read for every class because we had a long time to do the reading quizzes.
Personal motivation
Staying motivated for the homeworks and final projects, and not being able to communicate privately with GSI's during office hours.
zoom classes sucked
Not much really. The problem was more about the fact that I was already stressed about everything and this compounded it to above the tolerable point. I don't know what to do about the future or about housing or anything. I hate sticking to the routine of school when I just want to relax from it all with a book or exercise but instead Ive been couped up in my room just working nonstop from all my classes like always.
Motivation and personal issues.
internet connectivity
Working remotely with my team member
internet connectivity
N/A
Not getting to see him direct :c
The personal motivation was definitely hard and it was definitely hard to get my internet to load videos and such properly.
Personal motivation
Personal motivation
Life stresses

Comment on the quality of instruction in this course. (Q900)

Comments
Professor Weimer was incredible. He was funny and engaging as a lecturer (truly, these lectures were easily my favorite in all of EECS) but what I really valued most about having him as a professor were the insights that he shared with us on Piazza. He tackled questions ranging from silly trivialities to hard-hitting questions and answered them in a well-researched, developed way that gave us insight into his thought process and helped us consider other perspectives.
The instructors are well prepared and really put their best effort into the class.
Amazing
It was unreal, Wes is a legend
Wes is really passionate about this course and it has really reflected in the course and on the students taking it!
Great quality of instruction. Lectures were engaging but mostly because of the professor, not the content.
Professor is a great speaker and teacher
Wes was phenomenal, inclusive and explained things very well. Made me excited to come to class and learn about the material.
He was a very well prepared instructor and highly motivated
Prof. Weimer is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable instructor who cares about his students.
This course is one of the best that this department has to offer. It encourages students to recognize intersectionality; it offers insights into the human factor of software engineering; and it recognizes that having an interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving is likely the best approach.
I really loved this class and how it was taught. Professor Weimer is excellent and makes me actually feel like I'm taking a class at a prestigious university.
I just want to say, thank you. I've been stuck struggling through CS classes since I declared in 2014 and I've had a lot of doubts about my choice, but this class has helped me to feel a bit more comfortable with that choice going into my final semester.
good
Great
Amazing 10/10
Wes Weimer is an amazing instructor.
Wes was the best professor I've ever had. Incredibly welcoming, humorous, encouraged questions.
Wes is one of my favorite professors at UMich. Great lectures and great delivery.
Wes is probably among the top three teachers I've ever had. His energy and enthusiasm made the classes extremely entertaining and made it easy to stay focused on the material. For me, the move to remote classes was most disappointing with this class. I feel that experiencing it in person is much more important than with some other classes I have taken.
Wes is so well spoken and prepared during class. I always enjoyed sitting in class and listening to him speak and teach. He's so knowledgeable about anything and everything and seems to really care about his students. I learned so much.
I am a senior and wes was the best professor I had during my time here at michigan. I cannot say enough good things about how much more knowledgable I am because of him and this course. I think this course should be mandatory for all CS students and a class like this should be developed for all other engineering disciplines too. I feel much more prepared for what working in industry will be like after this course.

How might the class climate be made more inclusive of diverse students? (Q910)

Comments
I never felt that this class treated people differently beyond treating them as being capable software engineers.
I don't think I can speak to this, I haven't had any experiences I could identify as adverse.
If classes were smaller. People are generally more comfortable speaking with less people around.
probably couldn't
Maybe a short lecture dedicated to inequalities that certain underrepresented members in tech may face and how representation is being addressed
Difficult to say with online instruction, keep students participating and discussion questions amongst each other.
not sure
This is a tough question, and this advice definitely would not be the best course of action given our enrollment problems, but a reduced course size would definitely benefit the class in this way.
I think having more women and PoC on staff and giving guest lectures could be helpful.
keep encouraging students to speak
N/A
N/a
N/a, Wes made everyone feel included and was very concerned for students
Not sure, I felt very included.

What were the strengths of the course ? (Q953)

Comments

Fantastic instruction. Questions of all varieties were welcomed and encouraged. Lectures were kept lively even in the duller content moments and information was made easy to understand.

Wes's cult of personality is strong, so engaging in class is fun. The topics can be a little tedious at times, but so is software engineering and it's important to learn these things. There's a nice balance between tedious but important and silly but interesting.

Engaging lectures

Projects

The course materials were readily available and OH were not super packed so I could get my questions answered.

The instruction

Lecture and HW 6

Instruction and diversity of assignments. Also contribution assignment gave a very real insight to development in a large codebase which was eye opening.

the prof

In this particular order:

1. the course staff
2. engaging course material
3. thoughtful selection of readings
4. great homework assignments

is "yes" a valid answer?

Particularly, I thought lecture, discussion, and homework assignments were all incredibly valuable.

engaging students in various ways

Amazing lectures

Wes

Professor was super helpful, staff was amazing at responding fast on Piazza to any issues with projects, lectures helped a lot

Wes' teaching was definitely the highlight, since the course topics were not typically things students find that interesting, but I had fun learning. The psychology tangents in each lecture were also nice. The final project taught good real world experience.

No other class teaches what this class does, and the topics covered in this class are essential in the industry in my opinion.

The teaching was by far the biggest strength. I'm not particularly super interested in the material, but Wes made it fun and enjoyable. I can't imagine this class with a different instructor.

Aside from teaching, I think that the actual material covered and the type of class it is was a huge strength. While I said I'm not super interested in the material, that's not to say that it's not extremely useful and important stuff to know. This is the only CS class I've taken that actually focuses on what things are like in the real world, and how to "survive" as a software engineer after college. It's not just learning C++ and going on our merry way. We actually learn about techniques that are used in the workplace and some of the tools that will be available and what managers will expect of us.

Everything was well organized and piazza was so helpful. The material was interesting to me.

What suggestions would you make for improving the course ? (Q955)

Comments

I disagree with how the reading quizzes are implemented. Personally, I started off this semester by taking detailed notes on each reading and ended up just skimming the readings 20 minutes before lecture (before the Covid situation obviously changed how reading quizzes were structured). The reason for this shift was because I honestly didn't see a difference in preparedness for the quizzes – perhaps that's an indictment of my poor note-taking skills (not my strength) but I do think that the quizzes test the wrong things. I would propose instead having to write a response on a topic from the reading via canvas discussions or similar due before class. That would, at least for me, help me learn more and I would benefit from the thoughts of my peers.

More candy! Please use the candy you couldn't give to us to shower future students in sugar.

Smaller classes... if I absolutely had to make a suggestion

More explanation of how to prepare for projects

n/a

In-class quizzes generated some anxiety rather than solely encouraging preparedness, but not sure what an alternative would be.

assignments seemed like they were separate from the material we learned

A little bit lighter of a reading load could be beneficial, and a lack of a pandemic might help too.

none

N/A

More Wes

More initial direction in specification on homework assignments

Reading quizzes in class had a short time limit, maybe a few extra minutes for those.

Have shorter readings

Maybe it was my lack of understanding, but perhaps better understanding why our homeworks were important and made swe more efficient.

Among the courses you have already taken, which proved the most (or least) effective in preparing you for this course, and why? (Q1098)

Comments
EECS 485 and 388 were useful in that they introduced me to linux and Python, as well as WSL and VirtualBox (both of which I made extensive use of in this class). However, in terms of the meat of this class – the reports and writeups – I feel that my background as an LSA student was far more useful than any EECS course.
Other upper levels I took (security, web systems, databases) tied into a lot of the content. Seeing it again after becoming familiar with th etopic from a previous class meant I could focus on the new things more.
EECS281, just so you have a basic understanding of algorithms. Makes the homeworks much easier.
eecs281 because of the many ways we tested in that course
Eecs 370
I took it along with EECS 441, but there were many overlapping concepts which was useful
Learning bash and python in 485 helped for many of the homeworks
EECS 490 for test case creation and bash scripting.
im confused by the question
Honestly, the only course that I felt had helped prepare me for this course was EECS 494 and the independent studies/MDPs I've participated in. No other courses besides those have been open-ended and holistically-graded like 481, and more importantly, no other courses focused on the "softer" skills, like communication and flexibility, like those ones had.
none
All useful
ldk
eecs 281 helped a lot because we were able to learn about everything except the new content in 481, so it helped us tie together. in addition eecs 495 helped a lot because there were a lot of overlapping aspects.
I'd say a combination of MO 302 (a class in Ross), since it got me used to reading a lot every week, and EECS 485 due to writing in Python and running tests.
Most ULCS courses helped me prepare for this class, as this class covers a wide variety of skills.
Having some basic coding knowledge is definitely useful for this class in order to complete some of the assignments, however I think that the requirements could be a bit relaxed. While the amount I learned in EECS 281 helped, I don't feel it was completely necessary in order to succeed in 481.
485 with writing scripts maybe

* Due to the unexpected shift to remote instruction, questions 1840, 1841, and 1842 were added to all end-of-term Winter 2020 teaching evaluations.