Individual Instructor Report Spring 2025 Version A for C S 373 - SOFTWARE ENGINEERING (51175) (Glenn Downing)

Project Title: **Course Evaluations Spring 2025**

Courses Audience: **54**
Responses Received: **54**
Response Ratio: **100%**

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.

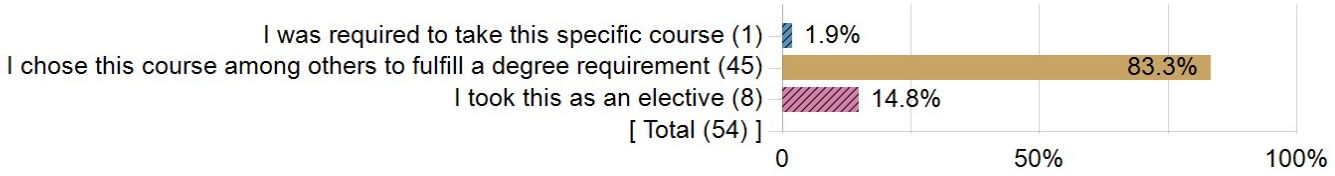
The number of students (e.g. respondents) marking each option is reported for each of the items. These frequency distributions provide information about the level of student ratings and the spread and shape of the class distribution of responses. The distributions thus provide a picture of student perception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

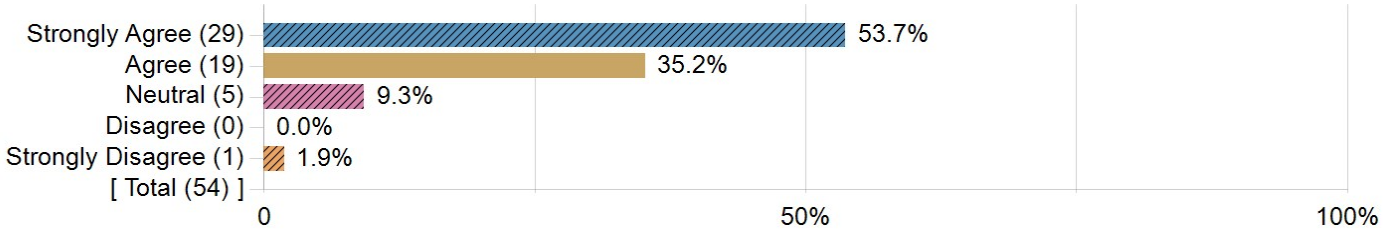
Creation Date: **Friday, May 9, 2025**

Course Questions

Why did you take this course?

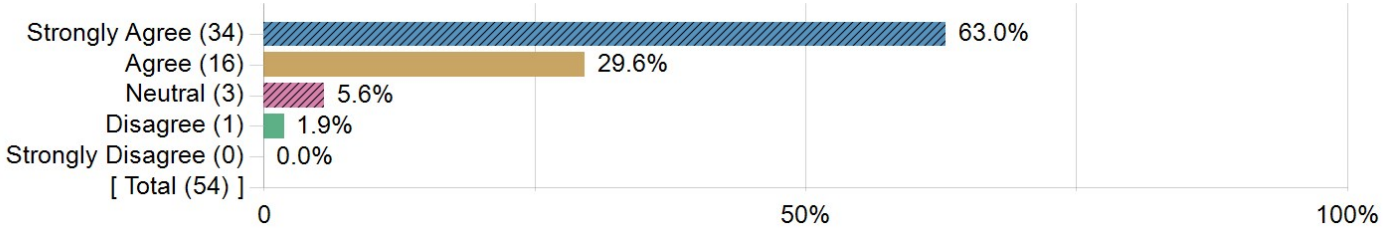


During this course, I gained a deeper understanding of the subject matter.



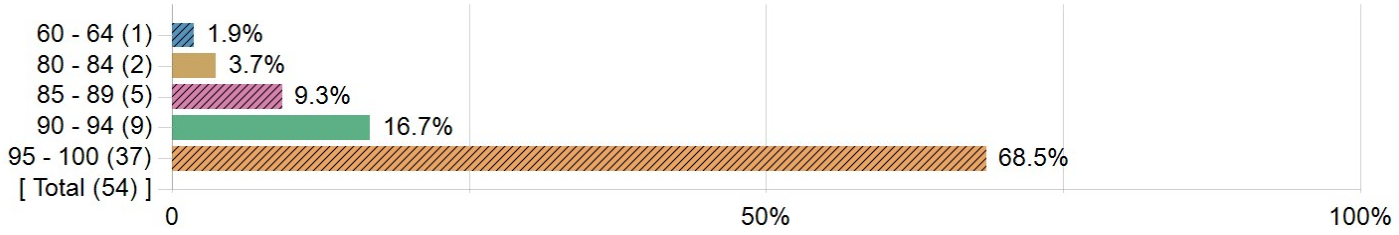
Statistics	Value
Mean	4.39

The course was well organized.



Statistics	Value
Mean	4.54

Overall, approximately what percentage of the course meetings did you attend or complete (online, in person, or asynchronously)?



Statistics	Value
Mean	94.48

The course assignments improved my ability to express my ideas in writing. (Flag Question)

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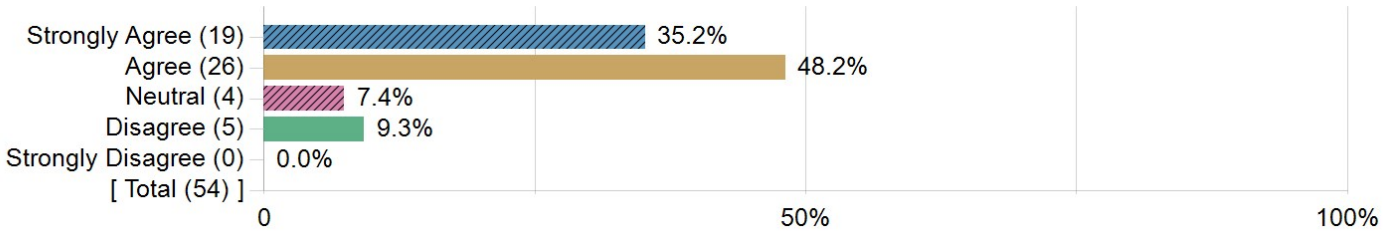


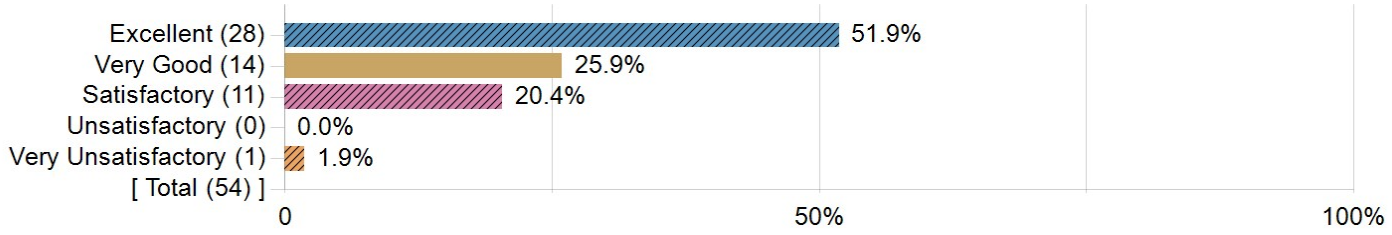
Statistics	Value
Mean	4.09

Instructor Questions

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Responded	Mean
The instructor clearly explained the course objectives and expectations.	59.3%	33.3%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	54	4.52
The instructor fostered an inclusive learning environment.	57.4%	35.2%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	54	4.50
The instructor effectively explained the concepts and subject matter in this course.	53.7%	37.0%	5.6%	1.9%	1.9%	54	4.39
The instructional techniques kept me engaged in learning.	50.0%	37.0%	5.6%	5.6%	1.9%	54	4.28
The instructor checked for student understanding of the concepts presented in the course.	66.7%	29.6%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	54	4.63

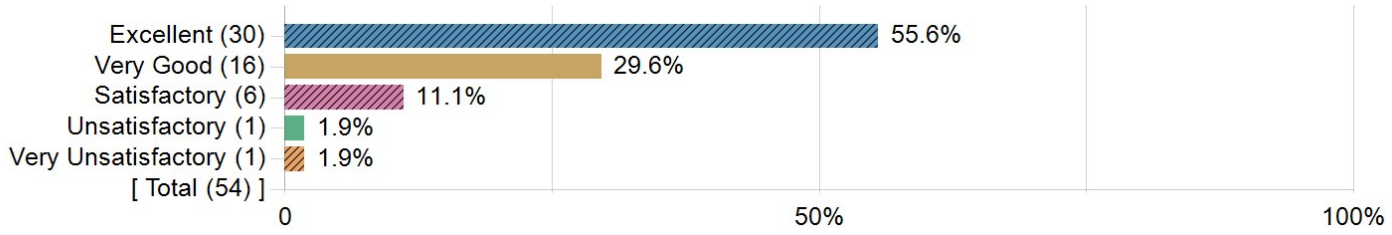
Overall Questions

Overall, this course was



Statistics	Value
Mean	4.26

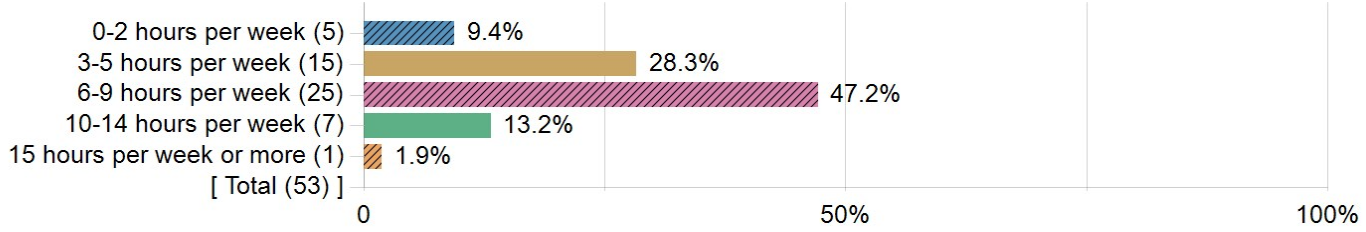
Overall, this instructor was



Statistics	Value
Mean	4.35

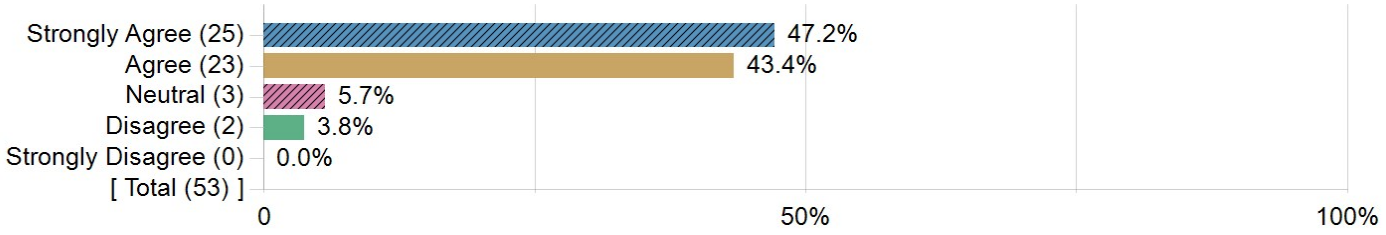
College, School, or Unit Questions

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	2.70

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



Statistics	Value
Mean	4.34

Comment Questions

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

Comments
The quizzes, projects
Quizzes
I liked the interactive classes.
He went into depth on programming concepts.
The quizzes.
The lectures and cold calling was quite helpful in keeping me engaged and focused on the material.
I liked how well organized the assignments were.
The projects were the most effective in helping me learn
I found that Downing's lecture style was very engaging, and it's very obvious that he has a passion for CS and software development (and Python), and it carries over to the experience of the class.
Clear requirements that made completing assignments unambiguous
The lectures helped me learn the most.
The projects were extremely helpful in simulating how a real internship would be.
I think the project itself was very effective in helping my learning, as I was able to learn many important languages and tools. I particularly think working with AWS was very helpful.
The quizzes at the beginning of class were useful to reinforce concepts we learned, and the exercises were also good applications of coding concepts from lectures.
Lecture notes posted after class, lectures recorded for review.
I liked the Ed Lesson exercises
Projects provided hands on learning experiences
The projects and the exercises
The lectures were incredibly engaging. I really felt that I gained a deeper understanding of a lot of material that was skimmed or passed over in earlier courses. Additionally, the project(s) (different phases) gave me a great chance to test out the material that we covered in class as well as learn a lot of information on my own.
The projects and working with a group.
I thought the way Proffesor Downing taught topics was a good way to teach. By cld calling it makes sure we stay focused on material. May seem scare at first
In person quizzes/exercises that forced you to talk to people.
I thought that the exercises were very helpful in understanding all of the topics.
I liked the readings
The lectures were incredibly useful in increasing my understanding of the subject matter, while the quizzes reinforced any topics learned.
I appreciate the coverage of SQL in class as it became relevant for the project as well as the aws resources provided by the TAs, overall I think giving a lot of free reign on the project made the learning much more solid.
Most helpful aspects were the lectures and I liked that everything was collaborative it helped a lot
Lecture and project work
The project was very useful, doing a project of this scale helped me learn a lot.
I think cold calling was helpful, as were daily quizzes.
I enjoyed the exercises and quizzes.
The daily quizzes that go over the material from the previous day/week as well as the exercises that taught us what we were learning from lecture.
The projects
The projects provided practical experience.
Exercises and active communication in class.
The in–class quizzes each morning along with the in–class exercises were the most effective in helping me learn.

Comments
standup with the ta every monday
I thought the notes being uploaded online were quite useful.
The quizzes helped reinforce ideas.
I really enjoyed Professor Downing's lectures. He has a great teaching style!
The cold calling in lectures was helpful because every lesson was interactive and felt like a conversation. The blog posts were good because they forced us to reflect on what we had learned that week and also on the papers. The group projects were nice because we could easily split the work and you learned a lot from the people in your group.

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 found working on projects challenging since most of the lecture material doesn't offer any guidance on how to approach the projects.
Projects
Honestly none of the stuff we covered in class was particularly useful for the projects we need to do.
The random groups made the projects challenging even with the matchmaker because my group struggled to find times that worked for us to meet.
The projects.
Exercises were the most challenging since the instructions were unclear sometimes. But the TAs and professor answer your questions which help a lot.
It was extremely challenging to understand the course material. The conversation–based lectures are confusing and hard to understand. The tools and skills needed to complete the projects are not discussed at all in class. The content itself does not feel relevant to software engineering—and if it is, it is not clear how it connects. The grading policy makes coming to class even more unmotivating. Overall, the class content and structure needs to be changed to make this more relevant to today's software engineering field and help students remain engaged for more than just the grade.
The most challenging aspect of the course was the amount self–learning and freedom you had in approaching the project phases.
I found that lecture was often unrelated/ trivially related to the skills needed for the project. While I understand that the project is intended to be specific to the group and independent, I would have liked to learn more of the basics in SWE as I felt that would help me understand the project more.
The constant flow of small assignments felt like busy work, which made it challenging for people with busy schedules. Assignments like the papers or the blogs incentivized students to make low–effort responses using GPT. I think the blogs are fine as assignments, but the relevance of the weekly papers to the material taught sometimes felt questionable.
The projects were the most challenging part of the course, as the students are expected to learn everything on their own.
It would be helpful if the lectures focused on topics that would be used in projects. I felt like a lot of the lecture material was irrelevant to our projects.
I thought the aspect of having to learn all the software tools without much learning in class was very challenging. I think it was good to work with AWS, but I would have liked to have gotten a walk–through in class about the various platforms they have. I also would have liked to gain more formal knowledge on Flask. I also think it is difficult to not have to spend at least a little on AWS products, and I would have liked to be informed of that ahead
I found setting up the project to be the most difficult, but I see why it was designed to be that way. I still think that it would've been beneficial to have some more guidance at the start with setup.
Minimal project guidance made it difficult to complete projects. The rubric was given and no instructions on how to get the website set up or build it from scratch were given. Tutorials on how to start building a website would be helpful. Also giving students AWS credit would be beneficial since AWS starts to charge for certain services. Better AWS tutorials would help because AWS is confusing and some of the current tutorials were outdated.
I thought the project was pretty challenging.
Some parts of the project were more challenging due to not going over them in class. Maybe a brief overview could be helpful.
The project, in one way is because the aspects of webs scraping, hosting backend, doing database is not directly taught.
The most challenging aspect was probably the group project. While it was also one of the most rewarding parts of the class, I think that there are certain difficulties that are unavoidable when completing group projects, but Professor Downing did everything he could to ease that process by using CATME to create groups that had similar time availabilities and differing skillsets. Additionally, I had a hard time at first with the 'cold calling' aspect of the class, simply because it is a very anxiety–inducing experience for me, but I found that it made me focus more in class.

Comments
Some of the quizzes were poorly formatted in my opinion, for example due to answer choices that didn't match the actual output. Also, the weird grading scheme that could lock you out of an A by doing poorly on 2 blog posts out of 14 in a SWE class.
Maybe teach more about modern tech stacks. I thought this class would be more about modern tech stacks and teaching frameworks.
Very time consuming.
I think it would be beneficial to be able to complete the exercise late instead of writing about it, so that practical experience is still taking place. I thought that the quizzes were challenging but being able to collaborate with others was helpful.
Finding the time to learn libraries required for the project. I think covering these libraries during lecture would make this simpler
The aspect of the course I found most challenging was the projects, simply because they were meant to be time–consuming and difficult. I do feel that the expectations were clearly defined and fair.
I wish we had a little more starter explanations for the first week or so of the project, or maybe a shorter list of requirements for the first two weeks. It felt like the project was heavily frontloaded and then once the core of the website got built it chilled down a lot.
The most challenging was the exercises cause they were hard :(
Project work, wasn't tied directly to the lecture.
The most challenging part was the quizzes and exercises, I think having quizzes every other class would be more helpful
I think the specifications grading was somewhat difficult.
The projects. I found it challenging to work with some people, as they wouldn't always complete their part on time. Additionally, I don't like that we were limited to AWS. It's extremely easy to exceed the free tier with AWS, and I did end up being charged approximately $20 over the semester. This was frustrating, as Google offers $300 in free credits.
The exercises were the most challenging part of the lectures because you had to know the material and know what the exercises asked of you to do. The time given for the exercises was generous though, I could complete all of them with a few minutes to spare.
I found some exercises challenging
Exercises, because some we had to implement right away after learning it minutes before. Having more comments in the lecture notes would be helpful.
I think the most challenging aspect of the course is getting started on the semester project with random people, but after that initial speed bump the rest is smooth sailing.
the project
I don't know if I would call anything challenging, to be frank.
The exercises were challenging. Maybe some hints when the timer is closer to being up would be helpful.
The most challenging thing is the projects, but I felt like I was prepared.
I didn't find much challenging about this course, everything was easy to understand/learn. I've heard some people have issues with the group they are assigned with but for me it wasn't an issue, and for me trying to chose a group would be much more stressful than what we did, so I wouldn't change it.