Individual Instructor Report Fall 2025 Version A for C S 373 - SOFTWARE ENGINEERING (55085) (Glenn Downing)

Project Title: **Course Evaluations Fall 2025**

Courses Audience: **53**
Responses Received: **51**
Response Ratio: **96.2 %**

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. 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. For additional details, including the scales and how the Mean scores are calculated, please review the Report Guide at the end of this document or, UT Austin's Viewing Course Evaluation Results webpage.

Creation Date: **Friday, December 19, 2025**

Core Questions

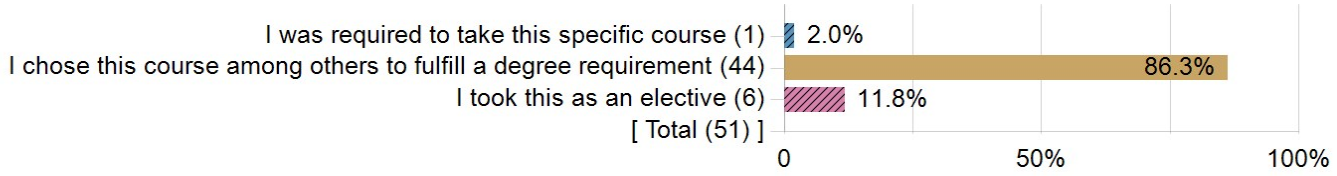
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Responded	Mean
During this course, I gained a deeper understanding of the subject matter.	27.5%	58.8%	11.8%	2.0%	0.0%	51	4.12
The course was well organized.	35.3%	47.1%	15.7%	2.0%	0.0%	51	4.16
The instructor clearly explained the course objectives and expectations.	33.3%	56.9%	9.8%	0.0%	0.0%	51	4.24
The instructor fostered an inclusive learning environment.	45.1%	43.1%	9.8%	2.0%	0.0%	51	4.31
The instructor effectively explained the concepts and subject matter in this course.	41.2%	49.0%	9.8%	0.0%	0.0%	51	4.31
The instructional techniques kept me engaged in learning.	41.2%	39.2%	15.7%	2.0%	2.0%	51	4.16
The instructor checked for student understanding of the concepts presented in the course.	51.0%	47.1%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	51	4.49

Overall Questions

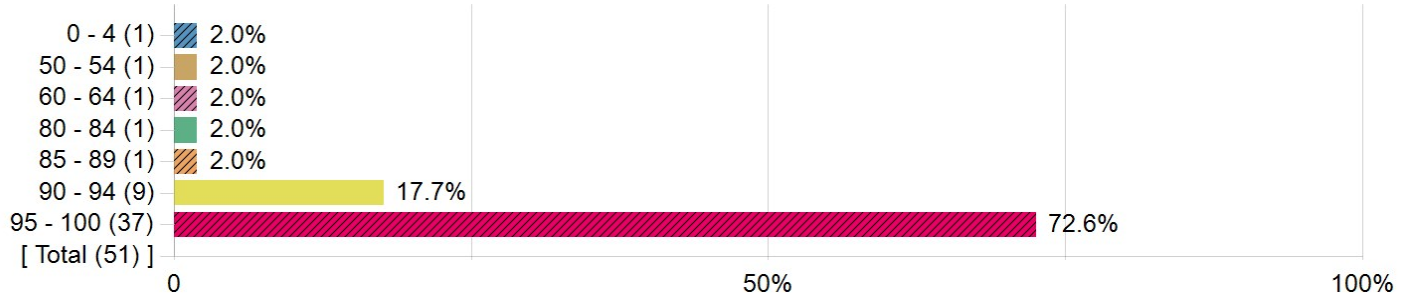
	Excellent	Very Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very Unsatisfactory	Responded	Mean
Overall, this instructor was	41.2%	37.3%	17.6%	3.9%	0.0%	51	4.16
Overall, this course was	27.5%	47.1%	23.5%	2.0%	0.0%	51	4.00

Other Course Questions

Why did you take this course?



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



Statistics	Value
Mean	93.02

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Comment Questions

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

Comment
The ed problems helped me a lot
The projects and daily quizzes and practice problems did a good job of teaching me Python.
In class examples and ed lessons
He explained made sure to ask if we had any questions
One aspect that helped was that lecture notes are taken by the professor and posted online making them easily accessible for studying.
i think the quizzes and in class assignments
Weekly problems
Class participation was encouraged to help students pay attention and make sure we understood the material.
The structure of the lectures made it easy to follow along and understand what we were learning.
Lots of practice
I think the structure of the class helped me to learn the in–class materials. I liked the quizzes and the exercises.
The group project over the course of the semester was very beneficial as I was able to learn a lot of new software tools. I like the idea of forming groups and working on one project throughout the semester.
The quizzes and schedule outline were really helpful to keep organized and follow along this class well. Downing also facilitated a very inclusive learning environment and never made people feel 'less–than' for not knowing answers to his questions.
I enjoyed reading the papers. Felt like those were the most informative parts of the course. I also thought lectures were pretty engaging, so that helped my understanding as well.
Ed Lessons
Going over many examples during the lecture and explaining them, which was followed by practicing what we learned with the in–class exercises and collaborative quizzes
I found that the wide range of stuff that had to be done for the main IDB project that wasn't covered in the lectures was very helpful in my learning. I learned a whole lot about many things I previously didn't (such as hosting and managing how a site is hosted on the web), which I feel will provide me invaluable experience in the future.
I believe that Professor Downing's explanations were very clear and useful when it came to understanding content. He explained things in a way that just made it really easy to understand.
The IDB project was very good at giving us some idea of what real life projects that use industry standard tools feels like
The in–class discussions helped me understand the Python and SQL logic.
I feel like the projects taught me valuable practical skills dealing with the technologies we had to use, but also in terms of working with a team and splitting priorities appropriately.
The entire course long project was very informative. Though it was mostly 'do it yourself', I did end up learning a lot. Also, I finally was able to learn python via dedicating a course to it.
I liked how he called on us individually during lectures to teach us.
The daily quizzes and active participation in lectures
The in class quizzes were helpful to check my understanding about the last class topics. I think the projects were well–spaced out too.
Exercises and quizzes since they reinforce what we just learned
Cold calls during class helped make me pay more attention, showed good examples, and was always very detailed.
Daily quiziz, exercise, and the weekly problems as it kept us accountable to keep up with the learning!
The group assignment, getting hands–on experience with a real tech stack, and working with people
– Cold calling – Somewhat challenging exercises – Great organization of the class
The readings provided good principles of coding and also the professor sometimes. The lecture notes were always available as well.
The projects were very effective.
I think the lecture and the projects helped my understanding the most.

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Comment
I liked the kattis problems
The projects helped a lot in understanding the tools SWE use and also how the requirements also helped give me an idea of the environment actual engineers operate in.
Surprisingly have mandatory cold calls forced me to actively pay more attention to the topics so that I could answer the questions.
Quizzes to review last class helped reinforce concepts
I learned a lot through the in–class demonstrations and walking through them. The cold calling and no devices helped me focus on the material and try to engage actively.
Exercises and problems
Prof. Downing clearly knows his stuff and lectures with lucidity and clarity.
Projects
The aspects of the course that were most effective in helping my learning were definitely the group projects and understanding how to use all the technologies to build a full–stack application that fulfilled all the requirements.
the lectures
Consistent exercises and quizzes helped to reinforce learning without the pressure of an exam.
The daily quizzes and structure of the course were the most effective in helping my learning.
exercises and quizzes

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.

Comment
The kattis problems were challenging because it was difficult to find out the optimal solution.
I don't understand why retakes can't be done during the last weeks of the semester.
Quizzes every day– super strict attendance with very little leeway
I found working with a random team challenging because we didn’t click at the beginning which impacted our project at the beginning
The resubmitting policy for the last three weeks is a little bit unfair for the students who didn't use the resubmissions during the semester. I think a better way to modify this is that if you miss the class, you need a note from SES, but if you're present and you just didn't to the thing (quiz/problem) well, you are able to use the resubmission if you still have chances left.
the projects were challenging and couldve used more guidance
The projects were challenging because the class content in no way reflected the requirements from the project. The language being used was never taught, the tech stack wasn't discussed in class, and overall all the "software engineering", which is the name of this course, happened outside of class.
The grading scheme was not great and made the course seem unfair. Missing 2 exercises should not make you drop a letter grade even though you did great on the rest of the assignments.
The grading on projects took a very long time and feedback was not great so it was difficult to make adjustments as well as know how well we were doing on that. The projects also fell into a gap that was strict yet open ended which caused a stress when trying to figure out a topic. The other sections of coursework were very manageable, but going over project expectations in class as well as guidance in class would be helpful as well as better and quicker feedback.
Too many things to do, became really annoying/dragging to do my 5th SWE thing for the week. Nothing was particularly difficult, but still didn't enjoy having to do it all. The majority of it ends up feeling like busy work.
I found the projects challenging. I understand that they are open ended so it is hard to help students with these, but I wish in class we went over some of the tools and ideas we were expected to implement in our project. I feel like that would have helped me learn efficient ways to design my project, versus trying to learn it on my own with my teammates. This led to us wasting time and with not very efficient code because we were just trying to figure it out before it was due.
One thing that could've been helpful was a miniproject (maybe do Grades in it?) or some other reminder of Javascript, because as much as I've done in the past, checkpoint 1 was a lot of remembering and thus a slow start.
I think the exercises in class were a little challenging as there is a time constraint. I think more time could help.
I do wish we were able to choose our groupmates for our main project.
I found the project to be challenging. Not because of the technical aspects, but the fact of dealing with random teammates who were often aggressive. I suggest letting students create their own groups.
the grading criteria

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Comment
I found communicating with my team to be the most challenging part of the course, especially with getting everyone to collaborate at the same time. It would be beneficial for students to have graded checkpoint assignments for each phase of the IDB project, as our group often rushed to finish it in the end.
I feel like the tendency to get things done right at the deadline was strong, at least for my team. I've heard that other groups had similar issues, and what that led to (at least for me) was that on days where the milestones were due I'd spend 4–6 hours straight on the assignment. I feel like further issue tracking would've helped a little in this regard, but I don't see a way to help this without a shift in attitude or too many milestones.
I found the project most challenging as its a large group project with randomly assigned members. The members I got were less than satisfactory with 3 of them not showing up to work on the project.
Grading system, specifically the quizes. It is such an annoying requirement that you can do perfectly in all the projects, in all homeworks, exercises and papers, but if you happen to have a life situation and miss one in the last 3 weeks you lose the opportunity of gaining an A in the class. This was my case, where due to sickness that didn’t require medical attention I had to miss a quizz on the 5th to last class. What’s the point of having makeups and saving them if we’re not going to be able to use them? More generally speaking, having the daily quizes have such a big influence on our grade is a very unconsiderate policy, as it ignores circumstances of students that have it specifically though: in my case, I don’t live in west campus, I live far and depend on public transportation that is unreliable, so not being able to be more than 2 minutes late for every single class of the semester is a really hard constraint that puts me at an unfair disadvantage in front of other students.
I think the quiz was the most challenging because of the time constraint and outside of class the hardest was doing research on how to build a website.
I felt that we were rather unprepared for the projects. The lectures and the projects had very little in common and almost took away from each other. I feel if he instead focused on teaching relevant technologies we might use (i.e. Flask, SQL, AWS, React.js) earlier on, it would've saved us a lot of trouble and time and also be more useful. His lectures are too similar to his OOP class which is in my opinion not a great idea. While in OOP the lectures pertained a lot to the projects, in this class they are quite unrelated.
Horrible group partners. Do not recommend. I understand why the course is designed so you are stuck with them, but I hated every step of the process.
There's a lot of gray area when it comes to the project and a lot of the concepts in the project are not taught in class.
The project, solely due ot heir restrictive requirement. Instead of limiting to IDB style, it would be beneficial to have it be more creative while also following the message fo being informative to underserved.
Keeping up with all the weekly assignments and making sure we were completing everything from the rubric for the projects was a little difficult at times. I would suggest probably working on the projects earlier.
I think that papers should not be collaborative since the first few people to do the paper get all the good questions and the people who do it at the end will end up making the less thoughtful posts since many of the thoughtful comments and questions have already been made.
Getting work done on time, I would suggest to start early and leave time to clean up your work.
One thing I found most challenging was understanding the project requirements and how to go about it. I felt the instructions were very broad and some skills were not learned in class. Maybe touch on those concepts such as api, working with aws, reach, etc, especially for someone who does not have front end experience.
One thing I found challenging was knowing my grade since it isn't calculated in Canvas
Group formations. It was challenging to work with other people who are on a different page than you are, though I understand that this might be the point of not allowing us to choose our own groups. I would still suggest letting students choose their own group as it would likely result in better project outcomes.
It was very self taught in a lot of the technologies we use. There should be a day dedicated to what the class wants to learn about (Docker, Flask, AWS, Azure) and he explains how to use them so we aren't completely having to go out and learn
The projects, since they required a lot of work. I would suggest people to get started early.
I think the projects were the most challenging just because of how much time they took, I think giving more time would help.
I thought the most challenging part of the course was how the lecture material didn't align with the project
Maybe making the makeup system take into account attendance in case you mess up on one of the later assignments.
The most challenging aspects of the course was definitely the main IDB project since you were required to work with random teammates, assign tasks, and complete an entire software developing project while having to learn new tools to create it.
It wasn’t clear in the beginning of the semester how to make up quizzes, exercises, etc. I missed some chances to remake things because I didn’t understand it as an option.

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Comment
I found the group project to be challenging since I had no prior knowledge of website development. I think more beginner–friendly demonstrations would have helped, but I can also see how making us figure it out is beneficial and more realistic for the field. Also, having our group members be random was hard to navigate at times.
Some of the projects were challenging just in terms of working with the group
I found the grade = minimum(sub_scores) grading scheme to be most challenging because I was already down a few quizzes by week 2. Timely attendance is an important part of this course's lectures, so any scheme should incentivizes students to still arrive on time yet allow for more of a chance to make up past attendance. Perhaps allowing built up blog posts as a currency at double the rate for past quizzes could work. I think the project section of the course is well calibrated and requires little change – if any – but sometimes the predefined nature of the project was a bit limiting – however – I understand how it provides for a certain level of scope and depth expected by the course. It is highly possible this is an individual failing on my part, but I found the grading scheme description a bit confusing and actually implemented it incorrectly a few times on the basis of not understanding how the 1–>2 conversion happened and what scores actually counted toward the subscore total.
Projects since not a lot of guidance was given for all the complicated parts and tools
The most challenging part of the course was definitely having to learn everything related to the projects individually, such as all the new frameworks like Docker, AWS, etc. If we spent some more time going over technologies used in the project in class, it would have been beneficial.
the projects
Project requirements sometimes felt vague and seemed to be posted later than expected, creating difficulties in keeping of with the project at times. Examples of past projects, even just screenshots to get an idea of what was expected, would have been greatly appreciated.
I found the exercises the most challenging because of their time limit. One thing that could be done to help future students meet that challenge more effectively is to have TAs walking around to help those who are struggling to understand.
cold calling – always needed to be prepared but this forced me to be more attentive in class

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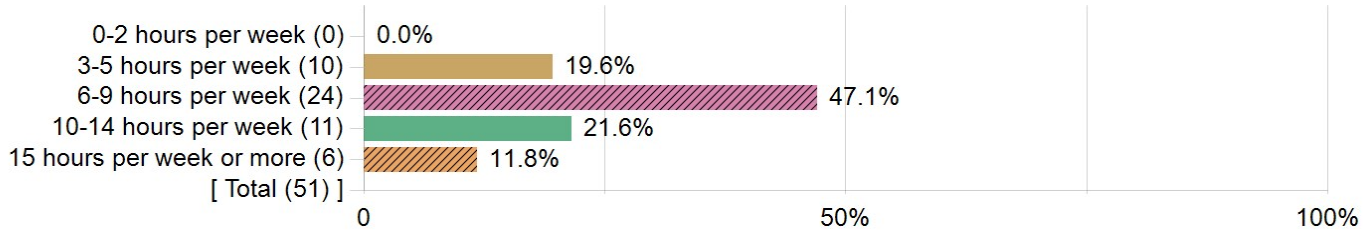
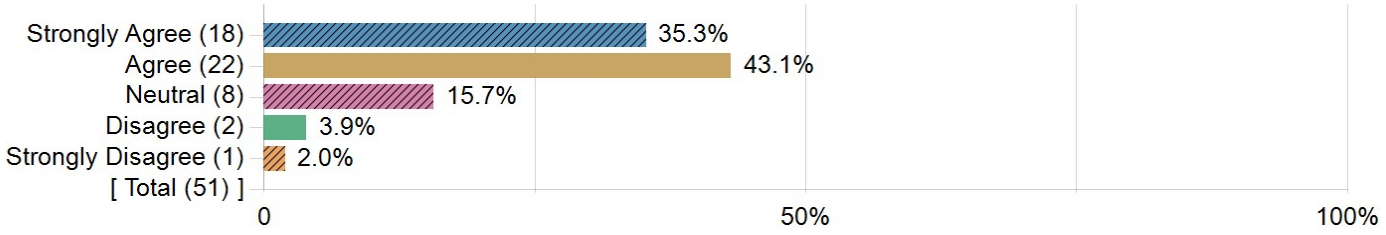
College, School, or Unit Questions

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	3.25

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



Statistics	Value
Mean	4.06

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Report Guide

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.

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