Rutgers University Student Instructional Rating
Fall 2020

Zhu, Songhao - SZ446
Diff Eqs/engr&phys - 01:640:244:01, 02, 03
Survey Form: *Standard SIRS

Enrollment: 64
Responses Received: 26

Special University-wide Questions for Fall 2020

Due to the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, three additional questions were added to the Fall 2020 survey.

Weight of responses: 1=SD (Strongly Disagree), 2=D (Disagree), 3=N (Neutral), 4=A (Agree), 5=SA (Strongly Agree), Resp=Number of Student Responses
Weighted Means: Section, Course, Level, Department

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp	Section	Course	Level	Dept
Given the content and level of the course, the course workload was manageable.	1	3	3	13	6	26	**3.77**	4.23	3.84	3.81
The course site used for this course, whether in Canvas, Sakai, or Blackboard, was well organized.	0	4	5	13	3	25	**3.60**	4.06	3.94	4.06
The instructions given for assignments, exams, quizzes, and other course activities were clear and easy to understand.	3	1	6	14	2	26	**3.42**	3.98	3.75	3.84

University-wide Instructor Questions

Weight of responses: 1=SD (Strongly Disagree), 2=D (Disagree), 3=N (Neutral), 4=A (Agree), 5=SA (Strongly Agree), Resp=Number of Student Responses
Weighted Means: Section, Course, Level, Department

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp	Section	Course	Level	Dept
The instructor Songhao Zhu was prepared for class and presented the material in an organized manner.	0	0	0	12	14	26	**4.54**	4.34	4.16	4.22
The instructor Songhao Zhu responded effectively to student comments and questions.	0	1	2	7	15	25	**4.44**	4.14	4.10	4.21
The instructor Songhao Zhu generated interest in the course material.	1	1	4	10	10	26	**4.04**	4.04	3.91	4.02
The instructor Songhao Zhu had a positive attitude toward assisting all students in understanding course material.	0	1	2	11	11	25	**4.28**	4.34	4.21	4.32
The instructor Songhao Zhu assigned grades fairly.	0	0	8	6	12	26	**4.15**	4.31	4.05	4.15
The instructional methods of Songhao Zhu encouraged student learning.	1	2	3	10	10	26	**4.00**	4.08	3.91	4.02

Teaching Effectiveness

Weight of responses: 1=P (Poor), 2=F (Fair), 3=A (Average), 4=G (Good), 5=E (Excellent), Resp=Number of Student Responses
Weighted Means: Section, Course, Level, Department

	P	F	A	G	E	Resp	Section	Course	Level	Dept
I rate the teaching effectiveness of the instructor Songhao Zhu as:	1	3	2	6	13	25	**4.08**	4.10	3.90	4.03

University-wide Course Questions

Weight of responses: 1=SD (Strongly Disagree), 2=D (Disagree), 3=N (Neutral), 4=A (Agree), 5=SA (Strongly Agree), Resp=Number of Student Responses
Weighted Means: Section, Course, Level, Department

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Resp	Section	Course	Level	Dept
I learned a great deal in this course.	0	0	8	14	4	26	**3.85**	4.19	3.95	3.88
I had a strong prior interest in the subject matter and wanted to take this course.	0	4	12	7	3	26	**3.35**	3.65	3.66	3.37

Course Quality

Weight of responses: 1=P (Poor), 2=F (Fair), 3=A (Average), 4=G (Good), 5=E (Excellent), Resp=Number of Student Responses
Weighted Means: Section, Course, Level, Department

	P	F	A	G	E	Resp	Section	Course	Level	Dept
I rate the overall quality of the course as:	2	1	11	10	2	26	**3.35**	3.91	3.62	3.66

What do you like best about this course?

These comments are intended for all instructors.

Comments
Songhao Zhu was an excellent TA whom without I would not have passed or done as well
The actual concepts and applications.
The course did have a lot of applicable aspects to later classes. It also taught us to explore the possibilities of equation manipulation, which is very beneficial.
I liked understanding the material presented in the course.
Overall, I enjoy Calculus, but this class was a bit less interesting for me. I liked the material for the first exam, going over the clever substitutions to solve certain equations, but once we got into linear algebra I began to struggle more.
Recitation problems helped the best
The recitations were well organized.
I enjoyed how lectures were recorded, so we can look back at stuff if we missed a day.
I liked doing the labs as a means to apply the material in creative ways.
N/A
I don't really think I like anything about this course.

If you were teaching this course, what would you do differently?

These comments are intended for all instructors.

Comments
nothing
Assign weekly homework and go over more problems, not concepts. Review sessions are very helpful but we had none.
Use modern visual material/aids for lectures instead of sketching touchscreen drawings. Try not to make assumptions that things are obvious to students since they are obvious to you (i.e. theory of mind). I'd answer my emails. Assign labs that the TA knows how to do/help students with.
I would try to get better technology for the professor, as that became a big difficulty for students trying to attend lectures and be able to understand the professor. I would also try to make sure students questions during lectures are answered and not missed.
I would have weekly quizzes instead of biweekly quizzes and assign homework that would be due every week.
I would have Linear Algebra as a pre–req. With the amount of Linear Algebra in this course, we should have had past experience with the subject. This is not the instructor's fault, but rather the fault of not
Help the students with the Matlab projects instead of just telling them to do it.
Not have it online
I would try to incorporate more assignments that involve projects as opposed to exams, just because exams in an online testing format sometimes are more stressful than in–person ones.
I would provide graded homeworks as a motivation for students to keep up with the pace of the class.
N/A
Thank you. I would literally do almost everything differently. I understand that some changes like the thickness of their accent or verbal cohesion cannot be entirely raised to claim as this is quite unchangeable and maybe even slightly offensive. BUT, there are most definitely many other changes that can definitely be made and which are a product of slightly subpar teaching skill.

Comments

Regarding the professor (and not the recitation instructor), the equations are just quite blandly given to us and we go through a couple of examples roughly. I strongly feel like it would be so much more beneficial to give us some sort of derivation to each equation and a bit more context and background to each topic as to WHY we are using this equation and HOW exactly we are using it; how did it arise exactly? I do realize that each lecture time would not suffice to accomplish this sort of mathematical purity for each concept; to derive and make each and every one of us understand the "behind the scenes" for each equation. So, instead, I feel like pre–recorded lectures, in relatively decent detail, could be posted and the actual lecture times in our schedules could be dedicated to reviewing the lectures for that week thereby, clarifying any concerns or queries AND re–enforcing the material. For example, the topics could be explained and posted on youtube or one of the canvas sites itself. These could be explained on a blackboard or whiteboard and can include simple derivations and a couple of worked examples. The presentation of the written material during the class itself is super bland and extremely monotonous. We could probably then watch these posted lectures before coming to the actual lecture time and, as I mentioned earlier, we could review the topics quickly during the scheduled lecture time, go over any doubts that anyone has and go over a few examples to further understand the concepts.

The other issue is the fact that the professor does not frequently check the chat for questions during each lecture. The average time frame between each question checked is about 25–30 mins. It is mildly absurd because if I do not get the first part of a concept being explained, and the other parts spring from the first part, then my confusion is carried on for all those parts for about 30 minutes till my confusion gets resolved (maybe). Although I do realize that checking the chat every 2 minutes for a question in the middle of a lecture is a bit of a stretch and not to mention a hassle for the professor, another device or another mode to simultaneously view the arising questions while also doing the lecture would be a very viable and beneficial option. If I were the instructor, definitely the students' understanding of the concepts is very critical, and some method to check the chat frequently would very much be implemented.

In third, one of the biggest issues is with the MATLAB labs. Largely in this course, I feel like we are being thrown in the dark with these lab assignments. We haven't been given any proper guidance and the labs are really stressful. There should definitely be way more assistance for the labs and way greater leniency. If I were the instructor, I would definitely keep some sort of mini tutorial or review session before each MATLAB lab to give the students some idea of what the lab is and how to approach it.

All in all, I don't entirely feel like I learned too much in the course from the lectures themselves. I literally studied and learned all the concepts on my own. With all due respect, I most certainly do not think I am paying tons of money just to learn more from youtube videos, online notes of other people, and just IMMENSE amounts of self–studying. I most definitely don't think the professor's character was lacking in any way, but the teaching is just really disappointing. From delayed responses during lectures and delayed and extremely unenthusiastic responses by email, to no–guidance labs, and poorly organized lectures; I'm extremely disappointed with both the professor, the course, and the university. It's really disheartening.

In what ways, if any, has this course or the instructor Songhao Zhu encouraged your intellectual growth and progress?

These comments are unique to the instructor Songhao Zhu.

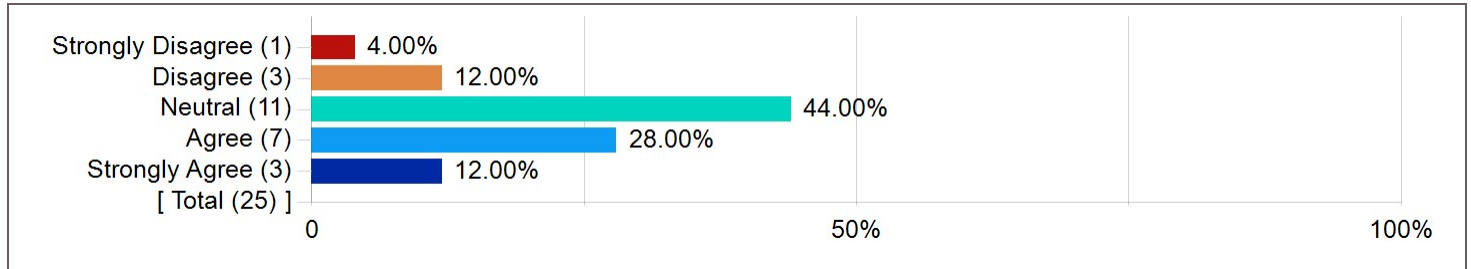| Comments |
|---|
| Very helpful with questions and tried to get you to understand rather than brush you off. |
| It's encouraged me to become better at teaching myself. |
| He was able to answer questions effectively and make sure we understood all aspects of the concept. He took the time to fully explain the approach to practice problems in class. He was also very approachable as an individual, whether it be a question during a recitation, or through an email conversation. |
| Songhao was one of the best TA's I have ever had, he was always very enthusiastic in our recitations, went slow enough to make sure everyone understood the topics, and would even take detours in material just to explain a topic to a student struggling to understand preliminary material. His office hours were also extremely helpful, and overall I would not have done nearly as well in this course if it weren't for his help and great practice problems from recitations. |
| Knew much about the subject, so was able to help with any problem I had. |
| He made sure all the students understood the material by asking questions throughout recitation. |
| Very good TA who answered questions to the best of his ability and was knowledgeable about the course material. |
| Songhao really tried to simplify the Vladimir Shtelen's lectures for their main concepts only. He really did try to streamline as much of the calculus as possible, however he graded slightly harsher than Professor Shtelen. I believe he is an extremely fair TA all in all and balances out Shtelen's lighter grading. |
| Very helpful |
| Does a really good job at accommodating students' questions and going over a sufficient number of example problems to support an understanding of the material. |
| N/A |
| Although he was a fairly good instructor, he did not really "encourage my intellectual growth and progress" |

Other comments or suggestions:

These comments are intended for all instructors.

Comments
This course has a few serious issues. The biggest problems include: 1) An unusually strict quiz and test submission/upload policy. No other courses from RVCC or Rutgers in my experience have had this issue. 2) Although there is no programming or MATLAB prerequisite for this course listed, all lab assignments are exclusively MATLAB assignments. A Rutgers tutor, Vincenzo DiMatteo, stated that these assignments, "require a strong understanding of programming". Furthermore, not only was the teaching assistant, Songhao, unable to help with these assignments in any way, but the professor also provided no instruction or assistance. In fact, it required 4 correspondences to Professor Shtelen, 2 via email, and 2 verbally via lecture for him to answer my request for help. When he did finally answer, it was with a vague response that did not help answer my questions. I subsequently went to tutoring instead.
I felt our TA's grading was a bit harsh, and also rather unpredictable. Numerous times he would grade one quiz and give another quiz with relatively the same answers and work a completely different score.
Overall, great course, a few issues I had, but nothing major.
Ultimately students were really left to their own choices to prepare for this class. It was hard to communicate with other students during lecture, for obvious reasons cause of this pandemic, but I feel it was attempted at a good level.
N/A
N/A
I believe I said everything in the previous question.

The lecturer posted content that helped me understand the topics covered in the online lectures.

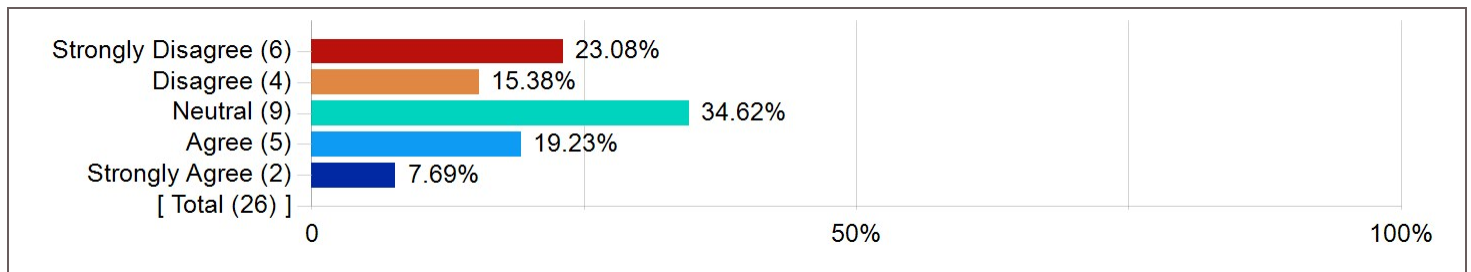| Section	Course	Level	Dept
3.32	3.95	3.91	3.97

The recitation/workshop instructor posted content that helped me understand the topics covered in the online recitations/workshops.
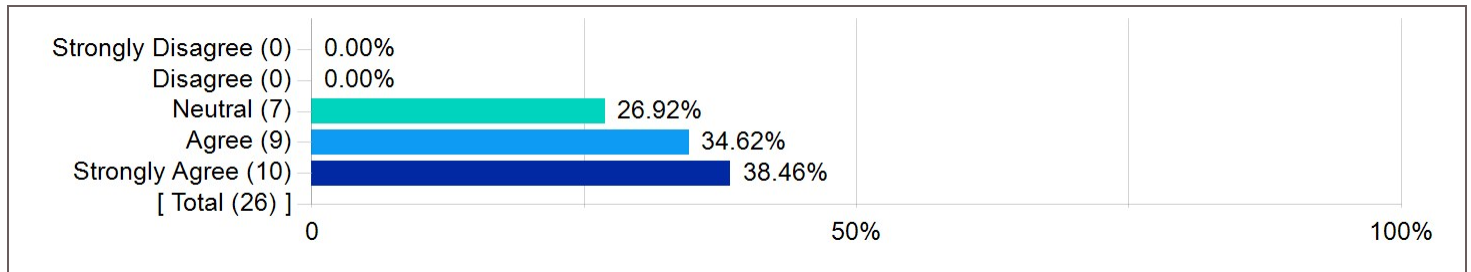
Section	Course	Level	Dept
4.12	3.99	3.75	3.85

I was glad to take this course in an online format; for me it is the preferred format for this course.

Section	Course	Level	Dept
2.73	3.12	2.75	2.78