

Project Title: **Vanderbilt University Course and Teaching Evaluations**Course Audience: **15**
Responses Received: **8**
Response Ratio: **53.33 %**

Report Comments

The following is a report for an individual section of a class. Please do not distribute, print, or share this report except for administrative purposes.

Project Audience - Total number of students enrolled
Responses Received - Number of evaluations submitted by students
Response Ratio - Percent of enrolled students who submitted evaluations

If you have any questions about the evaluation system please contact courseevaluations@vanderbilt.edu.

Questions about the Instructor (**Kevin Leach**):

Question	This Class Section		Department (CS)		School (ENGIN)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
The instructor helped me understand the core ideas and issues in this subject.	4.71	0.49	4.46	0.84	4.40	0.89
The instructor explained what was expected of me in the assignments and assessments for this course.	4.75	0.46	4.54	0.79	4.43	0.88
The instructor encouraged critical, original, or creative thinking.	4.88	0.35	4.46	0.85	4.43	0.89
The instructor demonstrated interest in students' learning.	4.75	0.46	4.54	0.77	4.51	0.84
The instructor used class time productively.	4.88	0.35	4.48	0.87	4.39	0.94
The instructor created a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment.	4.88	0.35	4.57	0.75	4.54	0.81
Overall, the instructor (Kevin Leach) was:	4.75	0.46	4.36	0.91	4.30	0.96

Questions about this Course (**CS 6380 01**):

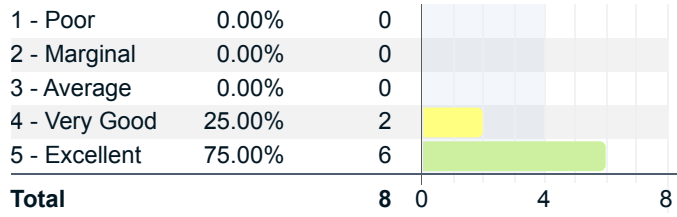
Question	This Class Section		Department (CS)		School (ENGIN)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
This course helped me appreciate the significance of the subject matter.	4.63	0.52	4.32	0.95	4.32	0.98
The components of the course, such as class activities, assessments, and assignments, were consistent with the course goals.	4.38	0.74	4.46	0.80	4.43	0.88
The feedback I received during the course was helpful.	4.63	0.52	4.23	0.97	4.23	1.01
I felt comfortable asking questions in this course.	4.88	0.35	4.41	0.86	4.42	0.91
This course helped me consider connections between course material and other areas of my personal, academic, or professional life.	4.63	0.52	4.27	0.98	4.34	0.96
Overall, the course (CS 6380 01) was:	4.75	0.46	4.02	1.02	4.03	1.04
Compared to other classes, the amount I learned in this course was:	4.25	0.89	3.68	1.03	3.65	1.02
Compared to requirements in other classes, the workload assigned in this class was:	3.38	0.52	3.52	0.97	3.46	0.99

Please respond to the following questions about the instructor (Kevin Leach).

1. The instructor helped me understand the core ideas and issues in this subject.				2. The instructor explained what was expected of me in the assignments and assessments for this course.			
1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0		1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0	
2 - Disagree	0.00%	0		2 - Disagree	0.00%	0	
3 - Neutral	0.00%	0		3 - Neutral	0.00%	0	
4 - Agree	28.57%	2		4 - Agree	25.00%	2	
5 - Strongly Agree	71.43%	5		5 - Strongly Agree	75.00%	6	
Not Applicable	0.00%	0		Not Applicable	0.00%	0	
Total		7	0 3 6	Total		8	0 4 8
Statistics			Value	Statistics			Value
Response Count			7	Response Count			8
Mean			4.71	Mean			4.75
Mode			5	Mode			5
Standard Deviation			0.49	Standard Deviation			0.46
3. The instructor encouraged critical, original, or creative thinking.				4. The instructor demonstrated interest in students' learning.			
1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0		1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0	
2 - Disagree	0.00%	0		2 - Disagree	0.00%	0	
3 - Neutral	0.00%	0		3 - Neutral	0.00%	0	
4 - Agree	12.50%	1		4 - Agree	25.00%	2	
5 - Strongly Agree	87.50%	7		5 - Strongly Agree	75.00%	6	
Not Applicable	0.00%	0		Not Applicable	0.00%	0	
Total		8	0 4 8	Total		8	0 4 8
Statistics			Value	Statistics			Value
Response Count			8	Response Count			8
Mean			4.88	Mean			4.75
Mode			5	Mode			5
Standard Deviation			0.35	Standard Deviation			0.46
5. The instructor used class time productively.				6. The instructor created a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment.			
1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0		1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0	
2 - Disagree	0.00%	0		2 - Disagree	0.00%	0	
3 - Neutral	0.00%	0		3 - Neutral	0.00%	0	
4 - Agree	12.50%	1		4 - Agree	12.50%	1	
5 - Strongly Agree	87.50%	7		5 - Strongly Agree	87.50%	7	
Not Applicable	0.00%	0		Not Applicable	0.00%	0	
Total		8	0 4 8	Total		8	0 4 8
Statistics			Value	Statistics			Value
Response Count			8	Response Count			8
Mean			4.88	Mean			4.88
Mode			5	Mode			5
Standard Deviation			0.35	Standard Deviation			0.35

Overall, the instructor (Kevin Leach) was:

Overall, the instructor (Kevin Leach) was:



Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.75
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.46

Questions About This Course (CS 6380 01):

1. This course helped me appreciate the significance of the subject matter.

1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0	
2 - Disagree	0.00%	0	
3 - Neutral	0.00%	0	
4 - Agree	37.50%	3	
5 - Strongly Agree	62.50%	5	
Not Applicable	0.00%	0	
Total		8	0 3 6

Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.63
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.52

2. The components of the course, such as class activities, assessments, and assignments, were consistent with the course goals.

1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0	
2 - Disagree	0.00%	0	
3 - Neutral	12.50%	1	
4 - Agree	37.50%	3	
5 - Strongly Agree	50.00%	4	
Not Applicable	0.00%	0	
Total		8	0 3 6

Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.38
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.74

3. The feedback I received during the course was helpful.

1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0	
2 - Disagree	0.00%	0	
3 - Neutral	0.00%	0	
4 - Agree	37.50%	3	
5 - Strongly Agree	62.50%	5	
Not Applicable	0.00%	0	
Total		8	0 3 6

Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.63
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.52

4. I felt comfortable asking questions in this course.

1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0	
2 - Disagree	0.00%	0	
3 - Neutral	0.00%	0	
4 - Agree	12.50%	1	
5 - Strongly Agree	87.50%	7	
Not Applicable	0.00%	0	
Total		8	0 4 8

Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.88
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.35

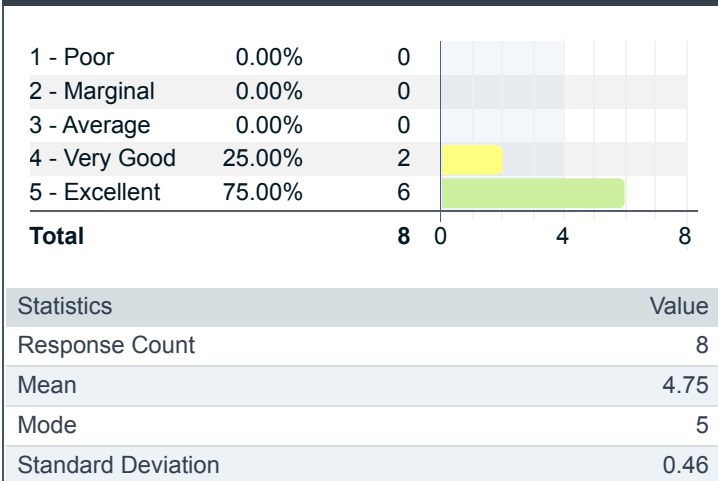
5. This course helped me consider connections between course material and other areas of my personal, academic, or professional life.

1 - Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0	
2 - Disagree	0.00%	0	
3 - Neutral	0.00%	0	
4 - Agree	37.50%	3	
5 - Strongly Agree	62.50%	5	
Not Applicable	0.00%	0	
Total		8	0 3 6

Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.63
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.52

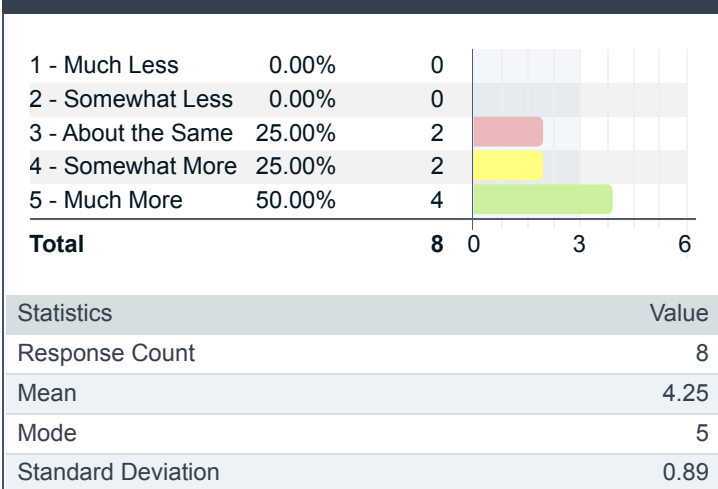
Overall the course was:

Overall, the course (CS 6380 01) was:

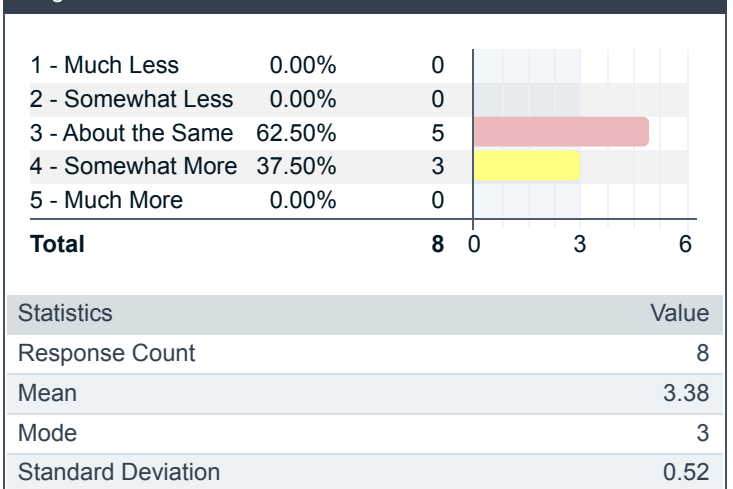


Questions About This Course (CS 6380 01):

1. Compared to other classes, the amount I learned in this course was:



2. Compared to requirements in other classes, the workload assigned in this class was:



What elements of the course (CS 6380 01) most contributed to your learning?

Comments
<p>The course required reading multiple papers (expected given its nature) which produced two distinct types of knowledge: familiarity with the papers' content itself, and the ability to analyze academic work from a peer reviewer's perspective.</p>
<p>The in-class discussions were equally valuable. Portions of papers that I had not fully grasped when reading independently became clear once the professor elaborated on them during class.</p>
<p>This might sound cheesy, but the professor's passion and depth of knowledge on the discussed topics genuinely increased my interest in cybersecurity.</p> <p>Beyond the course material itself, the insights he shared from his own experience in academia and the publishing process were particularly impactful. Hearing a firsthand perspective on what it means to contribute to a field through research was both eye-opening and motivating, and played a meaningful role in my decision to pursue a PhD (or at least apply).</p>
<p>The idea about how to do research and other general knowledge beyond Computer Security.</p>
<p>I really liked that this course taught me real-world security research topics. I really liked the way Dr. Leach explained things and made things understandable. He really is a great teacher.</p>
<p>Paper readings – having to do them prior to every class gave me a good understanding of what was to be discussed.</p>
<p>Critical thinking element in class, and final project</p>
<p>I liked the homework as they were a direct application of my learning, but I didn't love the associated writeup.</p>
<p>Reading the research papers (yes, I read every single [required] one)</p> <p>I appreciate that we are technically allowed to use AI on HWs (since it wouldn't be enforceable to disallow that anyway), but also emphasizing in class that we will learn more without AI and that assignments are designed to be done without AI was legitimately very motivating to try it without.</p>

What improvements to the course (CS 6380 01) would you recommend?

Comments
Encouraging greater student participation: While the professor made a genuine effort to foster a discussion-oriented environment, not all students took full advantage of the opportunity to deepen their understanding through dialogue, which ultimately impacts the entire class. Every student who does not participate is one fewer voice enriching the exchange of ideas. I believe students benefit from being called upon directly, both to reinforce learning and to simulate real-world scenarios where thinking on one's feet is essential.
Regarding quizzes, rather than conventional timed question sets, I would suggest incorporating a tool like Kahoot: questions would be presented one at a time, each with a response window of under 30 seconds. This format would effectively test student's retention of the assigned readings, particularly for concise, fact-based questions. Kahoot's live ranking, based on both accuracy and response speed, could also work as a nice supplementary performance measure.
Also, as a counterbalance to the growing use of AI tools for homework, students could be asked to complete a live coding exercise in front of the class, drawn from the easier problem sets on pwn.college (which they would be free to practice beforehand). This would simulate a technical interview setting and reinforce genuine mastery of the material, without necessarily needing a formal grade attached to it.
It would also be really cool to attend a conference, lecture, or paper presentation together as a class and then talk about it in the next session. I know it's a lot to coordinate logistically, but it would be an amazing way to wrap up the course.
It would be great to occasionally invite Professor Leach's current PhD students to come speak to the class about the research they are actively working on.
Finally, another great exercise would be to have each student pick a paper authored by a Vanderbilt computer science professor, reach out to that faculty member for a brief interview (by email, in person or video call), and write a short report highlighting either the publication process or the paper itself.
I think if students are free to choose the topic for their paper presentations (preferably related to their recent work) in early stage of a semester, it may better facilitate team formation and peer-to-peer exchange.
I would say maybe some more real-world topics. I really found it enjoyable and wanted to engage when we learned about his Hotspot story using his own phone and the pipeline that he made. I found that genuinely interesting and the real-world application enjoyable to hear. I would love to hear more about those topics, and how it can be applied.
I think the course homework assignments were slightly tedious because they were out of date versions. Could be updated.
It's great.
I think having SoK and research both as options for the class project makes the final presentations feel a little odd. Not sure the best way to word it, but it almost feels like the SoK people did less compared to research since those who did a new project also had to do the literature readings the SoK people did. I guess that comes as a trade-off of choosing to do a new research project, but I felt a lot more engaged listening to those over the SoK presentations.
I appreciate that written paper reviews were not reinstated as that would, indeed, have been quite tedious. I understand trying quizzes to ensure we read the paper, but honestly it's too easy to ctrl+F for an answer for that to be a huge motivator I think.
What would have motivated me the most to read the papers would be if we had a dedicated amount of time in each class to discuss the papers and you noted who did and didn't participate well. I know this would take away from lecture time, but I think this would be a good enough way to learn and better understand the paper topics that it would be worth it. However, again, I did read all the papers so it's worth noting that what would be enough to motivate me may not necessarily work for others.

Do you have any other comments?

Comments
General suggestion: As part of the course evaluations, one of the questions should be: Given what you know about this course and your experience, would you take it again?
My answer for this course would be: Absolutely, yes!
Thank you for your guidance about how to do research and what should we do against the backdrop of the LLM boom.
No