UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

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- CSCE423

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UNL Online Course Evaluation System

Individual Course Report - CSCE423 Sec. 001

CSCE423 Section 001: DSGN&ANLYS ALGORTHMS

Semester:'11-'12: Spring Semester
Survey Trigger:UNL Spring 2012
Instructor: Stephen D. Scott
Students: 43
Respondents: 39

90.7%

Download raw response data (CSV/Excel)

Evaluation of Course and Instructor

Base Questions item 4

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate Student
1. My year in college is:	0	2	2	11	24

Base Questions item 5

	4.0 to 3.5	3.5 to 3.0	3.0 to 2.5	2.5 to 2.0	Below 2.0
2. My overall grade point average is:	24	11	3	0	1

Base Questions item 6

	More than 18 hours	15 to 17 hours	12 to 14 hours	9 to 11 hours	Less than 9 hours
3. I am enrolled for the following number of credit hours this semester:	2	4	9	21	3

Base Questions item 7

	More than 40 hours	30 to 40 hours	20 to 30 hours	10 to 20 hours	Less than 10 hours
4. I currently work the following number of hours per week at a job:	1	3	13	12	10

Base Questions item 8

	Yes	No
5. This course is my major field of study:	35	4

Base Questions item 10

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Indifferent (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	N/A ()	mean	mode	Std. Dev.
6. I see myself as a motivated student in this course.	0	1	2	26	10	0	4.15	4	0.63
7. I was academically prepared to take this course.	2	3	4	22	8	0	3.79	4	1.03
8. I was challenged to think in this course.	0	0	0	24	14	1	4.37	4	0.49
9. My course grade will be a fair representation of my learning.	2	7	10	16	4	0	3.33	4	1.06
10. I treated the instructor fairly and respectfully.	0	0	0	23	16	0	4.41	4	0.50
Question Set Statistics							4.01	4	0.88

Base Questions item 12

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Indifferent (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	N/A ()	mean	mode	Std. Dev.
11. Before taking this course, my interest in this subject was very high.	1	5	8	16	9	0	3.69	4	1.06
12. I understand the objectives of this course.	0	0	3	27	9	0	4.15	4	0.54
13. The organization of the course topics is reasonable and logical.	1	0	3	27	8	0	4.05	4	0.72
14. The pace at which course topics are covered is reasonable.	2	1	4	27	5	0	3.82	4	0.88
15. This course helped me improve my rational thinking, problem-solving and decision-making ability.	0	1	2	24	12	0	4.21	4	0.66
16. After taking this course, my interest in this subject is very high.	1	4	9	18	7	0	3.67	4	0.98
Question Set Statistics							3.93	4	0.85

Base Questions item 14

	Strongly	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly	N/A			Std.

	Disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Agree (5)	()	mean	mode	Dev.
17. The textbook, workbook, and/or lesson notes help me understand course material.	0	4	4	16	15	0	4.08	4	0.96
18. The method (or methods) of presenting information in class enhances my learning.	1	3	4	24	6	1	3.82	4	0.90
19. The coursework helps me understand and apply the subject matter.	0	2	4	24	8	1	4.00	4	0.74
20. The amount of coursework is reasonable for what I am expected to learn.	0	2	5	27	5	0	3.90	4	0.68
21. Testing methods fairly measure my understanding of the course material.	1	9	6	20	3	0	3.38	4	1.02
Question Set Statistics							3.83	4	0.89

Base Questions item 16

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Indifferent (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	N/A ()	mean	mode	Std. Dev.
22. The instructor is prepared for the class and is concerned about his or her preparation.	0	0	3	16	20	0	4.44	5	0.64
23. The instructor makes good use of class time.	0	5	3	18	12	1	3.97	4	0.97
24. The instructor is enthusiastic and interested in teaching this course.	0	0	1	18	20	0	4.49	5	0.56
25. The instructor treats students in a professional manner.	0	0	2	19	18	0	4.41	4	0.59
26. New concepts and examples are clearly explained at a level students can comprehend.	1	2	2	22	12	0	4.08	4	0.90
27. The instructor motivated me to understand and apply course concepts.	1	0	5	20	12	1	4.11	4	0.83
28. The instructor provides useful feedback on how I am doing in the course.	0	3	6	20	10	0	3.95	4	0.86
29. The instructor is accessible for help outside of the classroom.	0	1	1	25	12	0	4.23	4	0.63
Question Set Statistics							4.21	4	0.78

Base Questions item 18

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Indifferent (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	N/A ()	mean	mode	Std. Dev.
30. The classroom physical environment (e.g. temperature, lighting, acoustics) is comfortable for learning.	0	0	2	22	14	1	4.32	4	0.57
31. The classroom is free from outside distractions.	1	1	1	23	12	1	4.16	4	0.82

32. The classroom design and furnishings do not interfere with my learning.	0	0	3	23	12	1	4.24	4	0.59
33. The classroom has adequate instructional equipment and technology.	0	0	0	26	12	1	4.32	4	0.47
Question Set Statistics							4.26	4	0.63

Base Questions item 20

34. What are 1 or 2 specific things that helped you learn in this class?

- Instructor's attitude while teaching
- powerpoint availibility office hours
- The examples presented during lectures after we covered the basics helped me to better grasp the algorithm. The homework, though challenging, was also helpful.
- in-class algorithm tracing exercises
- The instructor gave us team work for cooperation and instructor let student attend grading homework.
- Homeworks.
- NPC reductions
- Dr. Scott clearly explained all the concepts, and his slides/diagrams were very helpful.
- Understand the Graph algorithms better
- Good in class exercises and examples
- Dr. Scott's enthusiasm was contagious. Without it, I would have struggled to make it through the material.
- The examples shown in class are critical to understand. Great job with those.
- The professor gives several bonus points to get us involved deep thinking of the topics.
- The textbook was excellent.
- The TA, Yuji, was very helpful. He always knows the answer to my questions and gives great feedback.
- Having the presentation notes handed out before going over the subject.
- use of graphs.
- Algorithms.
- The homework, although long and cumbersome, helped me understand several concepts. Attending office hours was also helpful, because MANY questions arose throughout the semester.
- having the lecture notes being given out by the professor and going through examples for each algorithm we review
- The quizzes and the occasional in class activities kept me on top of the material from week to week, and helped me not fall behind.
- Quizs and homeworks make me review the notes every week.

- The homeworks, while tedious require synthesis of information that most other classes don't require. This forces an understanding of the material.
- The slides were well put together, in-class exercises and quizzes helped quite a bit, and the textbook was one of the better textbooks that I've used.
- The professor was clear and willing to clarify any ambiguity. The in class exercises were helpful when learning new things.
- Assignments helped me to study through the topics.
- I learned a lot of different ways to solve a problem
- Course materials
- Always willing to answer questions and help explain difficult subject matter. Everything was stated clearly and concisely.
- Discussing homework solutions in class helped connect concepts. In class exercises were also helpful.
- Improved my problem solving skills. Helped me to broad my perspective on how to design solutions. Gave me experience with unknown algorithms
- The slides provided helped me learn a lot outside of class. I didn't pay a lot of attention to them during class, however. I didn't use the book at all.
- Mostly being able to see the professor outside of class and ask questions.

Base Questions item 21

35. What are 1 or 2 specific things that caused a problem with your learning in this class?

- very complex and abstract ideas
- my Interest in subject
- TA's timings clashed with other class timings
- The background knowledge is not enough for me to understand.
- N/A
- Other students sometimes asked questions that were repetitive or had already been addressed in the slides. Dr. Scott patiently answered these questions, but they could be distracting.
- other course load
- Lengthy sidetracks with lots of class questions, some of which were helpful, but most which seemed would be better handled outside of class.
- Algorithms is, well, pretty hard stuff.
- 1. The beginning was hard. For the first two homework assignments I was clueless on how to solve them. 2. The grading is very very strict. Almost any original idea gets severely graded and there are always little details that cost lots of points. I would expect grading to be more tolerant about those details (example, losing 25% of an exercise because "you didn't mention that a vertex can only be visited once").
- So many homeworks that sometimes we need to get things done instead of get the ability of thinking how to get things done.

- Some parts seemed to be ran through quickly for the sake of handing out homework or quizzes. I felt understanding the material came second to learning.
- Topics are not clearly presented in class. Also, the topics presented in class do not correlate to the assignments or exams at all. I feel that there should be at least one example for each algorithm of how to translate an algorithm to solve additional problems. I also feel like the instructor should be able to give insight on how to convert problems to other problems, but I don't think anything like this was covered.
- The lectures could be a bit hard to follow and understand. Lots of talk about other things and repetition of things that didn't have to do with the subject during class time or just a lot of repetition and not coming to the point.
- the instructor is not practical, He is always trying to prevent bad things by not helping students. but is giving ways to those things indirectly.
- Only concepts of things which are already present in the book are discussed in the class. We are not really shown how to do proofs or find solutions to questions or how to apply those concepts through examples. The class assignments are not on things which are taught in class but applying those concepts. So it was really difficult and time consuming to find the answers.
- The deadlines for the assignments were unrealistic. These assignments took (at times) 15 to 20 hours to complete thoroughly. Two weeks/assignment is a better target (rather than having to extend it every time). Also- having student graders was a bad idea. Not only did I feel like students HAD to take of points in order to get full points for grading (even if the points were legitimately earned), the quality of grading was low (and rushed). Finally, it seems that allowing students (i.e. the graders) to have access to all the assignments (including the grade and name) is a major breech of student confidentiality.
- the TA does not help very much to solve issues, I understand that he cannot give me the answer but he should at least guide me if I have no idea where to start or if I'm going in the wrong direction. I think the professor should not assume everyone to understand the master theorem and also explain it in class (more if he is going to expect people to use it in the midterm) and a little more detail on to how time complexities are calculated (specially the complex ones or the ones using master theorem or aggregation theory)
- Sometimes class seemed to go a bit slow, but that did not really bother me since it was due to questions being addressed.
- 1, fairness, the instructor shouldnot have different students grade the same homework question which is totally unfair. For example, I made a little, tiny typo error, the grader deducted half points, but others made a real mistake and only got 1 or 2 deducted. This happens to me too often, and it makes my homework grades suck. 2, the exam grading is kind of too fussy about every detail. In the midterm, I made a small mistake that using plus instead of multiply, and this took me half points off. I supposed the exam was designed to test whether students understand all the concepts.
- The homework can be a bit lengthy.
- Nothing.
- I felt that sometimes the lectures became just walking through the slides, I prefer more engaging lectures where the slides aren't the focal point. Just a personal preference, and part of the responsibility of course does lie on me.
- I don't like pop quiz though they forced me to read and get a better understanding of the material.
- The exam is hard
- I felt that even though the concepts were covered well and in depth, that actually teaching us how to convey that information in a formal proof was lacking.
- n/a
- I had no mathematical background for this course. Understanding was very hard for me.

- I thought the course moved much too slowly. I often grasped the concept within the first ten minutes of class and then daydreamed for the rest of it. Of course, there were a lot of students that asked a lot of questions and you took the time to answer them thoroughly but I thought the majority of the questions were stupid and could be figured out if they thought about it themselves a little bit longer. More importantly I hated that the other students graded my homework. There was hardly one assignment that they didn't down grade me unfairly. A student grader may help you understand that one problem but that one problem is hardly going to make you a whiz at the whole class and I don't think its fair to hurt all the other students by having student graders.

- It sometimes seemed like the professor was explaining new material as if the students all had in-depth knowledge of it beforehand. It may have been some things were skimmed over a little quickly. Some of what we were expected to do on homeworks or tests I don't feel like we were really given adequate instruction on. For instance, for proving certain things about algorithms, I feel like we weren't really told in class exactly how to go about that in a way that would guarantee our success. I felt I kind of had to blunder my way through much of the homework, and I needed to ask for help frequently. Also, frequently I'd consult the text for help in understanding something, but sometimes the text would say something to the effect of "we leave the understanding of this concept as exercise ###", when this was the very thing I needed to understand. I don't see how we can learn how to do something when it isn't taught to us or explained in the text.

Base Questions item 22

36. Please provide 1 or 2 practical suggestions on ways to help improve student learning in this course.

- Perhaps more group activities/quizzes in class. Those activities were more about being able to implement an algorithm than create/manipulate one but, they helped solidify my understanding of core concepts. It would also be helpful to have a (optional) recitation so students could practice evaluating and designing algorithms with guidance.

- More in-class practice sessions; offline detailed discussion of homework (mandatory sessions)

- give student more practice for exam

- Not much to say here. Take the names off the homeworks for student grading I suppose. It'll prevent bias and awkward situations.

- Discuss solutions to hws in class to make sure everyone is on the same page

- I was initially excited by the opportunity to grade, and anticipated learning a lot from the experience. I was disappointed to find it dull and uninformative. Perhaps that was just me, though.

- I´m not sure whether grading other students' solutions helped me. Maybe it´s because my question was quite straightforward and without any algorithm, so I didn't really learn a lot. The fact that students are the graders always made me wonder if my grade was fair (and sometimes it wasn't). This creates a weird feeling of "never trusting the grade" that I don't know if I really appreciated.

- Let students discuss with each other about each assignment so that we can see different ideas of solving a problem.

- Test should be made for the time given in class.

- Examples of converting algorithms to solve other problems. Less complex examples for NP complete problems. (The NP reductions presented in class take way too long to cover)

- Go through the core stuff first, then come back to it with questions after it has been covered once and it makes more sense. First time around nothing makes sense before you get the rest of the information.

- Help students more

- A more example oriented class where we are shown how to solve problems, do the proofs and apply the concepts taught in

class or which are in the book. I definitely think atleast one class per exercise should be definitely devoted to solving problems from that exercise. I strongly believe a class like that for this course would have helped me learn better.

- More realistic deadlines, add SOME coding to the assignments (I would have been much more comfortable with some of the algorithms if I had to implement them), refine (or eliminate) the student grading, give a thorough tutorial on proofs (we were expected to do them, but not given explicit instruction on HOW to do them... unfortunately this was not covered in my 310 class).
- Some in-class exercises that are similar to those in the homeworks, to help students get an idea of how to approach those problems
- 1, the instructor should have the same person to grade the same question, which is at least fair to all students. By the way, is the grader TA designed to grade the homeworks and exams, if not, how he can work 10 hours per week? 2, the exams should be designed to test whether students understand the notes, and also the grading of exams should be aware of that.
- I would appreciate LaTeX source available for things including the homework and slides. I spent a lot of time retyping equations from the book, homework and slides into LaTeX, though I was also one of the few to actually bother with LaTeX it seemed from grading.
- I don't really know, I thought it was well put together and I learned a lot in this class.
- I think if maybe there were more examples we worked out on the board, sometimes I just feel like it gets too easy to lose focus if I'm just following along with slides on my own copy.
- make it more funny
- Provide more examples for each algorithm. Students will usually learn from what their instructor did. Making it a concrete example is better than trying to explain something that is not easy to understand. Showing what is the correct way to design or prove the algorithm step-by-step will help improve understanding. Teaching and emphasizing what you will be graded is also very important.
- Offer at least one formal proof, or part of one, per section. Preferable one that isn't already in the book for the class. For the testing, providing some suggested questions to study would be helpful. Not necessarily questions similar to the test, but questions that involve applying concepts that could be tested on.
- I'm not sure. Homework was very hard. But, I don't know.
- I would suggest if you are going to continue with student graders then provide a more thorough grading rubic before the assignments are handed out. I believe you said at the beginning of the year that you didn't necessarily have to include pseudocode for your solutions to the homework but I know at least for the problem I graded my rubic said automatically take off ten points if you didn't have pseudocode. If you are going to have students stick to strict guidelines like that I think all students should have a better idea of what the guidelines are.
- Maybe go over in more depth exactly how students are expected to accomplish this or that on homeworks and tests. Granted, many may already know, but some might not have as deep a background in the subject, and so might need more of a refresher on how to go about analyzing and proving things.

Base Questions item 23

37. Other comments that you would like to make:

- the work load of this course is too much. the hw problems are very tough and takes hours to solve.
- less problems on the exam, its not that someone doesn't understand the material, it's that they take a little longer to work through the logic

- NO
- Didn't like or approve of student grading
- Student grading of assignments is subjective and highly variable.
- Good job!
- N/A
- Dr. Scott has talent to get the class attention and he has VERY GOOD teaching skills. What I mean by this is that, not only the contents are clearly explained, but also the class is entertaining on its own. I believe Dr. Scott creates a very friendly environment in class and he makes me laugh at least two times per class, which doesn´t happen very often. Great attitude! Really, keep doing that. One of the best professors I´ve had.
- NO
- I felt that the tests where too long to fit into a 50 minute period. I feel that the "chance" of a curve could not offset this.
- The course became better organized as the class came further into the semester.
- nil, other than this the instructor is great.
- NA
- Overall, good course. I learned a lot and Dr. Scott is an enthusiastic teacher. This class was a lot of work, but worth it as a theory course.
- I think that I really learned a lot in this course. The homeworks really pushed me to understand the material and improve my problem solving skills. I think it was an excellent class, and that I learned a ton of stuff that can be applied in many places.
- Great professor, but more examples would make it easier to understand the algorithms.
- Please drop a quiz or two. I marked above that I don't think my grade will reflect my learning in the class. It's completely, completely on me, but I did manage to miss two of the seven quizes. Despite having a 24+/25 average on the quizzes I took, missing those two quizzes causes my grade to be 5-7% lower than it could be. Again, it's my responsibility to come to class, but with this class's challenging homework and difficult midterm/final, a bit of leniency on the quizzes would be quite nice.
- One has to wait for too long to get a chance to talk to the professor during his office hours. I would suggest that 15 minutes max for each student if there is a long line outside.
- no other comments
- 1) Sometime, you spent more time to explain something, and wrap up the slides in 5 minutes. Student will not get anything from that. 2) Grading have to be improved. Your grading tends to grade only the top level students. If we won't get 100%, we will get only something less than 60%. I think, different answer to the problem, if it is not exactly correct, it should be graded on what student's understanding without ignoring.
- I feel the testing in such a short period of time doesn't accurately reflect a person's knowledge of the class. Some students are slower test takers then others.
- It was a great experience, the professor always maintained a great class environment. He always explains as many times as needed and his jokes are very funny. It was a very nice class for me, even though it was hard. Another very positive aspect is his availability outside of the classroom because feeling that I always could count on him really motivated me during the course, and his advise was always helpful.
- Grading on tests and homework might be a little overly-excessive on deducting points for bad answers. With many, many of

the problems, I don't think it was particularly obvious I was going on a faulty argument, even after spending hours trying to refine my answers based on it. In the end, I would frequently earn almost no points for my answers, despite the amount of time and effort put into them. It made it frustrating to answer future assignments, knowing that I might well not get much credit for my work. I think if students put a good effort into their answers, they should get half points at the minimum. Sometimes I gave answers that covered a full page and a half, and got, say, 5 out of 30 points for them. It's incredibly difficult to get motivated when you know your grade is going to suffer like that. I don't think the grading of the homework was a very accurate reflection on what we've learned. I also wonder if the grading can't be a little subjective sometimes. One person might give 5/10 points for something, but another might look at it and think it's worth 7/10, for instance.

Evaluation of GTAs

The CSE department is committed to continuous improvement of its programs and would like to have more information than is provided by the end of the term evaluation form. All responses remain absolutely anonymous.

Yuji N. Mo

GTA

	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Average (3)	Below Average (2)	Poor (1)	N/A ()	mean	mode	Std. Dev.
38. The GTA's preparation for the course, recitation and/or lab sections is	13	13	5	1	0	7	4.19	5,4	0.82
39. The GTA's effectiveness at stimulating productive discussions is	12	10	7	1	0	9	4.10	5	0.88
40. The GTA's respect for all students and sensitivity to their views are	16	16	3	0	0	4	4.37	5,4	0.65
41. The adequacy of the GTA's hours in the office/resource center is	16	17	3	1	0	2	4.30	4	0.74
42. The GTA's punctuality at office/resource center for the specified office hours is	15	17	1	0	0	6	4.42	4	0.56
43. The GTA's availability at office/resource center for the specified office hours is	16	19	1	0	0	3	4.42	4	0.55
44. The quality of the GTA's explanations during office/resource center hours is	14	14	3	1	1	6	4.18	5,4	0.95
45. The GTA's fairness in grading is	13	12	9	1	1	3	3.97	5	1.00
46. The timeliness with which the GTA returns the graded materials is	12	15	8	1	1	2	3.97	4	0.96
47. The GTA's feedback on written work he or she graded is	14	12	4	4	2	3	3.89	5	1.21
48. The extent to which the recitation/lab section is beneficial.	14	8	2	1	1	13	4.27	5	1.04
49. The communication skills of the GTA are	12	14	4	3	1	5	3.97	4	1.06
Question Set Statistics							4.17	5,4	0.90

GTA Text Response

50. What strengths does the GTA display?

- Explanation of complex algorithm problems in a lucid manner. very friendly and accessible to students. can set up time to meet apart from office hours too.
- N/A not enough time spent with TA to know
- patiently explains until he makes sure we understand
- He understand deeply about this course
- Great about making himself available
- I cant see any strengths from him.
- Quick response to e-mails, knowledgable.
- Strong support
- An willingness to go out of his way to meet with you to help.
- Good job grading quizzes and exams.
- Attend all TA time.
- Know the subject well
- subject
- strong understanding of the subject, able to motivate students, very helpful
- Fair about giving points back (that were taken by student graders).
- Honestly I don't know.
- I didn't really talk to him much over the course of the semester, but the one time I did go in to talk to him, he was very helpful.
- Very good at explaining things
- The GTA is perfect in all aspects.
- Good knowledge
- Always willing to help, and responds in a timely fashion.
- Understanding of material and enthusiasm for the class.
- He is always available to help. He offers useful advise
- I didn't really have much contact with the TA, so I can't really comment.

51. What areas does the GTA need to improve in?

- nothing as such
- N/A not enough time spent with TA to know
- Respond to the e-mails slightly quicker
- communication skill

- Grading.
- Nothing I can think of.
- N/A
- English could use some work, but that's about it.
- Sometimes lots of points are lost for very small mistakes. Fairness in the grading can be improved. Yet good job overall.
- Spoken English.
- Very hard to communicate with, both the written feedback on homeworks are very poor and when asking questions about it he doesn't understand my question and I don't understand his answer.
- understanding the student rather than just trying to say what he is saying.
- NA
- No major suggestions.
- The GTA I supposed is in charge of grading, instead of having students grading. I know this is the instructor's decision.
- Better communication. The first homework grading procedures were not communicated well, and the Professor's email to the class caused unnecessary stress for me. Further, I had emailed with him about some grading problems and finally just didn't get a reply which I'm hoping means he agreed and updated my grade.
- I didn't really have any problems with the GTA
- Try to be funnier maybe.
- nothing
- Nothing.
- Same as above.

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