# Fundamentals of Computer Sci 1 (Fall 2019 202010)

Instructor: **Derbinsky, Nathaniel**

Section: **03**

Course Title: **Fundamentals of Computer Sci 1**

Course ID: **11286**

Subject: **CS**

Enrollment: **111**

Responses Incl Declines: **56**

Declines: **1**

Department: **Computer Science**

Number: **2500**

## Course Related Questions

| Question | Number of Responses | Response Rate | Course Mean | Course Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The syllabus helped me to learn. | 55 | 49% | 4.1 | 4.0 |
| The textbook(s) helped me to learn. | 55 | 49% | 3.5 | 4.0 |
| The materials posted online, including Blackboard, helped me to learn. | 55 | 49% | 4.1 | 4.0 |
| The out-of-class assignments and fieldwork helped me to learn. | 55 | 49% | 4.6 | 5.0 |
| The lectures helped me to learn. | 55 | 49% | 4.4 | 5.0 |
| The in-class discussions and activities helped me to learn. | 55 | 49% | 4.3 | 5.0 |
| The classroom technology helped me to learn. | 55 | 49% | 4.4 | 4.0 |
| The required textbook(s) were important for my success in this course. | 55 | 49% | 3.4 | 3.0 |
| I would recommend that the instructor continue requiring the textbook(s). | 55 | 49% | 3.7 | 4.0 |
| The required digital and/or other supplemental materials were important for my success in this course. | 55 | 49% | 3.9 | 4.0 |
| I would recommend the instructor continue requiring the digital and/or supplemental materials. | 55 | 49% | 4.1 | 4.0 |
| I found this course intellectually challenging. | 53 | 47% | 4.7 | 5.0 |

Note: 5:Strongly Agree; 4:Agree; 3:Neutral; 2:Disagree; 1:Strongly Disagree; -1:Not applicable;

## Learning Related Questions

| Question | Number of Responses | Response Rate | Course Mean | Course Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I learned a lot in this course. | 55 | 49% | 4.6 | 5.0 |
| I learned to apply course concepts and principles. | 55 | 49% | 4.5 | 5.0 |
| I developed additional skills in expressing myself orally and in writing. | 55 | 49% | 3.9 | 4.0 |
| I learned to analyze and evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view. | 55 | 49% | 4.4 | 5.0 |

Note: 5:Strongly Agree; 4:Agree; 3:Neutral; 2:Disagree; 1:Strongly Disagree; -1:Not applicable;

## Instructor Related Questions: Nathaniel Derbinsky

| Question | Number of Responses | Response Rate | Course Mean | Course Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The instructor possessed the basic communication skills necessary to teach the course. | 55 | 49% | 4.7 | 5.0 |
| The instructor clearly communicated ideas and information. | 55 | 49% | 4.7 | 5.0 |
| The instructor clearly stated the objectives of the course. | 55 | 49% | 4.6 | 5.0 |
| The instructor covered what was stated in the course objectives and syllabus. | 55 | 49% | 4.7 | 5.0 |
| The instructor came to class prepared to teach. | 55 | 49% | 4.8 | 5.0 |
| The instructor used class time effectively. | 55 | 49% | 4.7 | 5.0 |
| The instructor provided sufficient feedback. | 55 | 49% | 4.5 | 5.0 |
| The instructor fairly evaluated my performance. | 54 | 48% | 4.5 | 5.0 |
| The instructor is someone I would recommend to other students. | 55 | 49% | 4.5 | 5.0 |
| The instructor treated students with respect. | 55 | 49% | 4.7 | 5.0 |
| The instructor acknowledged and took effective action when students did not understand the material. | 55 | 49% | 4.5 | 5.0 |
| The instructor was available to assist students outside of class. | 55 | 49% | 4.5 | 5.0 |
| The instructor displayed enthusiasm for the course. | 55 | 49% | 4.9 | 5.0 |

Note: 5:Strongly Agree; 4:Agree; 3:Neutral; 2:Disagree; 1:Strongly Disagree; -1:Not applicable;

## Instructor Effectiveness: Nathaniel Derbinsky

| Question | Number of Responses | Response Rate | Course Mean | Course Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is your overall rating of this instructor's teaching effectiveness? | 55 | 49% | 4.8 | 5.0 |

Note: 5:Almost Always Effective; 4:Usually Effective; 3:Sometimes Effective; 2:Rarely Effective; 1:Never Effective;

## Course Related Questions (32 comments)

### Q: Please comment on the strength and/or weakness of the required textbook/course materials.

1   the online textbook provided for us was a great reference to understand parts of concepts that we didn't have time to learn in lectures, and should continue to be used since it is the only way students can read ahead and reference concepts

2   The textbook was a lot to read, and the code examples used were somewhat too trivial. I didn't have much time to use it, and did fairly well without reading it in depth.

3   The online textbook was very helpful however no physical textbook is required for the course

4   Textbook extremely helpful

5   The textbook would have been a lot more helpful if there were sample solutions to all of the exercises. I didn't do the finger exercises because I was frustrated that I didn't know if I was doing them right or cementing bad habits.

6   Textbooks were useful for the reading quizzes, although I found the lectures more helpful in understanding topics. However, the textbook was useful for the manuals on potentially helpful functions to use on the HW.

7   I did not read the textbook. I found it confusing and wordy and I was able to learn better from lecture. I would have been more inclined to use it more if the exercises had answers as I would do them and not know if I am doing them correctly and would usually have to wait over an hour to have them checked at office hours.

8   Sparsely used but free so useful when it was useful

9   While useful, I feel Nate did a fantastic job explaining the material making the textbook not be needed most of the time.

10  Textbook was typically not necessary as everything was covered in lecture. However it was a good resource to have if need be.

11  I think the textbook was good but it would be so helpful to have practice exams on worksheets with answers or something when preparing for the exams. maybe some fake exams could be made up in order to allow us to have answers?

12  Piazza was very helpful, but the textbook didn't really help that much.

13  The textbook works but can be verbose.

14  Course materials are super helpful

15  I didn't use the textbook much at all.

16  This was a challenging course and the textbook was very beneficial in understanding the content.

17  Textbook wasn't necessary to pass but I could see how it's useful for students who don't attend lecture

18  The textbook is nearly unreadable because they use out-of-date notation (symbols) that we don't learn. As with most CS textbooks, it's not helpful. You don't need to read to understand lecture. If you're confused, you can try reading the book, but you're better off going to office hours.

19  The textbook gave us a nice outline on how to process through certain topics

20  Textbook should have more examples

21  The textbook was very helpful to prepare for class and helped to make the understanding much better.

22  Without a computer you couldn't take this course, but that's expected if you take a computer science course.

23  It is always helpful to do the reading, but it is not necessary.

24  The reading quizzes from the textbook are not necessary. Most students just do it for completion and do not learn from it. The best way to learn is through practice, which we get from the homeworks.

25  The textbook was sometimes hard to understand without first seeing the material applied, but it did help supplement the lectures

26  I don't know anybody who actually read the textbook. The reading assessments are very easy to guess-and-check. Maybe the textbook would have helped some students, but otherwise the lectures and homework assignments were enough for me to learn the material.

27  we barely even used the textbook

28  The textbook took a much deeper theoretical look into what we were learning in class and as such was a good supplement to the course.

29  The only use of the textbook in the course was for the reading quizzes. Other than, most of the material could be understood through lecture.

30  It was helpful in knowing the material prior to learning it in class

31  The textbook was confusing to understand but did give you an idea about the topics before going to class.

32  I rarely read the textbook but it has some good stuff in there

## Learning Related Questions (35 comments)

**Q: Please comment on the strengths of this course and/or ways to improve this course.**

1  very intellectually challenging but it's not for everyone

2  The course is very well designed. Most people who are genuinely complaining about the curriculum and course load often are the ones who have very poor work ethic. The work load is very consistent (weekly homework assignments always due at the same time) and the midterms are very straightforward (they literally give you three hours to take a one hour test as well)

3  The main problem with this course is that 90% of students spend most of their time doing the weekly homework. It is extremely intense, especially for students that have never coded before. From the beginning of the semester it is full throttle and if you don't keep up, you will do poorly. There is not time to breathe. The homework problems are at many times purposefully over-complicated. I honestly did not learn from the homework problems and instead learned most concepts through labs and lectures. And I can say I am not the only one. Every Thursday and Friday there are tons of students in ISEC 142 waiting to receive help from T.A's. Many times I've gone to office hours and I've waited over 2 hours without receiving any help. I propose that either more T.A's are hired or that the homework is made less challenging if there is not going to be sufficient help available to guide students. This also applied to the midterm exams. I don't think that teachers should be providing practice exams without providing answers to questions. The staff tells students to contact staff about any questions regarding the test problems, but when you try to go to office hours you have to wait hours to ask any question. This course has a lot of potential, but if the staff truly wants students to learn they should make sure that the course load aligns with the available resources.

4  This course was hell on people who are beginning programs. Having annotated coding examples for things like big-bang, recursion, helper-functions, the design recipe etc. would be helpful for people entering the class that are beginner programmers.

5  The course is great but more time needs to be spent covering some of the more difficult topics such as graphs

6  No improvements I can think of

7  Having the textbook readings align with the lectures would be helpful in reiterating the material. I always forgot the details of what was in the textbook by the time the topic rolled around again in lecture.

8  More visibility in terms of how the HWs are graded (some form of rubric). More clarity on acceptable responses for the practice exams. However, the lab, HW, and lecture sample solutions on Piazza were very useful and reliable.

9  I felt this course was very challenging and more support would have been nice as office hours were typically extremely crowded and the textbook did not help me much.

10  Majority of homework problems helped be develop great programming problem solving skills.

11  I feel the course is very well put together and really ties things together well.

12  The peer programming model could be considerably improved. The expectation for two people to do all the work while sitting together is not realistic a lot of the time. Would recommend using something similar to what cornerstone of eng uses to make groups where everyone fills out a form for their availability and groups are made based off of that. Also would recommend running a test for plagiarism before people are placed into groups to help avoid one group mate being screwed over by the other committing plagiarism without their knowledge. Also to that point, there probably would have been significantly less plagiarism if it were more clear from the start of the semester that it wouldn't be possible to get away with and that it would be better to submit an unfinished homework than a plagiarized one. Also, back to the issue of peer programming, maybe just don't implement it until towards the end of the semester. While peer programming can be very useful at times, I feel that it is only useful when both partners are at the same level of understanding of the material, otherwise one of the partners will inevitably just be dead weight. Also, I understand that peer programming is an industry standard and that is why its implemented, but at the same time this is a college class and most people will naturally find other people to work through homework together without it being forced. Also speaking from experience of having done entire homeworks on my own, they are not so difficult or time consuming that they require partners in order for them to be completed. Really liked the machine learning project though. That was cool.

13  The course was really intense and fast-paced -- I think a lot of time in lecture was more dedicated to examples, which are obviously important, but not enough was dedicated to actually explaining the concept. I realize that's what the textbook is for, but it would have helped to have that in class.

14  I loved this course, it is one of the more intellectually challenging courses I have ever taken. This class is consistent and thorough, however, I feel its weakest point is the pair programming. For me, I spent a lot of time on the homeworks, probably 10-15 hours on each homework. These homeworks were VERY HELPFUL in teaching me to learn and I would not change them, however, it was incredibly difficult to coordinate with a randomized partner. I feel like this class would be so much more effective if pairs were not randomized, but instead, you were paired with someone who has a similar schedule to you (not your class schedule, but a student submitted schedule so that students can plan out the times they wish to work on fundies). This way, pairs have more time to work with each other. A partner I had just had a totally opposite schedule to me and while we eventually worked it out, I feel very lucky that my partner isn't a cheater, because there was not enough time we could work together, so we did work separately on different parts of the same question. Also, I appreciate how responsive TA's are to changing partners, I never felt trapped. This course was a positive experience for me overall, but I feel there are ways, such as the one I mentioned above about pair partnering, that it could be improved.

15  Homework was very difficult, but a great way to learn the material. I feel very prepared to take future CS classes after taking this one.

16  I think that the purpose of the course should be stated more heavily than it is.

17  I love this class. very methodically put together. Very well organized and many resources. Only suggestion: more TAs at office hours especially for the midterm project

18  n/a

19  Record lectures and post online bc professors go too fast; more space for office hours/1 on 1 tutoring - office hours are almost always full

20  My only improvement for this course involves the grading: because a large amount of time (~14 hours a week) is spent on Fundies homework, I think it would be beneficial for the homework to count for a higher percentage of the grade and the exams to count for less. Exam 2 in particular was a very, very challenging exam and I don't think it was ideal to have one exam count for more than hours of work over the course of a semester.

21  This course was more difficult than I expected but I never felt overwhelmed by the difficulty from one week to the next

22  I found that the homework really helped reinforce what I learned in lecture, particularly HW11 with graphs. They weren't on the second midterm, but I felt that I really understood them. Reading quizzes are not particularly helpful, I would do away with them.

23  More TAs

24  This was a very helpful course and I was able to learn a lot through it!

25  I loved this class and the curriculum.

26  This course is quite challenging, even for those who took AP Computer science. It is smart to have this class in Racket, because it requires students to think differently.

27  Course could be better if we use a more applicible coding language like Java or Python. The course would build for the future better

28  The course made me learn more than I realized I could in such a short amount of time.

29  Many will complain that the "design recipe" is stupid, but honestly I think it helped me to more efficiently solve programming problems in the class. Plus, everyone I knew who complained about the "design recipe" also all did poorly in the class, so obviously it helps in

some way.

Only thing I could say to improve the class is to focus less on the language and more on the programming process. Not that this isn't already done. Just do it more!

30  n/a

31  The course material was really interesting and different compared to programming I had done in the past.

32  None.

33  This course required a lot of problem solving but, at times, was a bit overwhelming

34  This course was really difficult, especially for someone without any prior computer science knowledge. I found the pace to be way too fast and the in class material sometimes made sense but other times went way over my head. Also, the homeworks were very time consuming every week and were sometimes graded unfairly.

35  The rigor of the course makes it so even people with a lot of experience in programming learns a ton

## Instructor Related Questions: Nathaniel Derbinsky (36 comments)

**Q: Describe instructor's strengths, areas for improvement, and any additional comments.**

1  he was very lighthearted and fun as a speaker and worked through problems at a good pace

2  Nate Derbinsky is by far one of the best teachers I have ever had. He does a very, very good job in getting through the lecture material every day and making sure ideas and concepts are being communicated clearly. If he was teaching fundies 2, I would pick him again with no hesitation. He is also very helpful and encourages people to ask questions.

3  I liked him. He was fairly humorous and explained class material effectively. He moved a bit fast (especially for me, a beginner in programming) but I was able to catch up to his speed eventually.

4  Nate is a great instructor. He is very cleared and does a great job at answering questions in class

5  Fantastic instructor

6  Derbinsky was clearly knowledgeable about what he was teaching, he explained things clearly (although sometimes a little too quickly). I learned a lot through then lectures, and it was nice to see some of the tricky concepts in the textbook explained. The balance of do-it-yourself and examples that we went through together was just about right.

7  Funny, engaging, interactive, thorough and always on task. Coming from a non-computer science major, he was game-changing in helping me learn and understand. Works quickly, but at a reasonable pace for anyone to understand. His style of teaching is easy to follow, even if you don't have any background in CS. Best professor and very helpful in answering questions and providing assistance to ensure all students do their best.

8  I really enjoyed my time with Professor Derbinsky. He was my favorite professor this semester and I would highly recommend him to other students. He was always prepared for lectures and covered a lot of material and in a way that I could follow mostly. Sometimes he would move very fast and it was difficult to keep up but I really liked when he gave us starter code to copy so we could follow.

9  Prof. Derbinsky (affectionately known as Derbinator to some) was a great professor for this class. Always came to class ready to teach and made class enjoyable.

10  Nate is the best professor I have had at this University thus far and think that if he keeps up what he is doing now with the same amount of enthusiasm towards what he teaches he will continue to be an amazing professor.

11  Absolutely amazing professor, the only time I didn't understand something in the class was when I couldn't attend lecture. Great understanding of the material and ability to explain things to the class in a way that made sense

12  I think it was definitely an engaging lecture but it would have helped to go slower instead of just trying to cover a huge list of examples.

13  Nate is a very good professor. Lots of fun, lectures never boring, a genuinely interesting human being. He is thoughtful about trying to get students to pay attention and really helped me understand a subject I felt so unconfident in.

14  Great guy and effective teacher, but the majority of the help I received was from the TAs simply because there are too many people in the class for the professor to give individualized attention.

15  I think he could better focus on the actual design recipe rather than just focusing on how to code.

16  The Derbinator is machine. But like, in a good way. You know?

17  Great teacher, moved a little too quickly at times.

18  Types very fast and moves on before people in the class are finished/should leave the info up on screen long enough

19  Professor Derbinsky is an excellent professor and is one of the best professors I have ever had. His passion for the subject is evident and he genuinely cares about each and every student's mastery of the material.

20 Prof Derbinsky was an amazing professor and kind person. He was able to teach effectively all semesters and his teaching made me look forward to coming to lecture and I look forward to any future opportunities to taking higher level courses with him.

21 Professor Derbinsky is great. Engaging in lecture, and is very knowledgeable in the course material. Students have to advocate for themselves, because he will not slow down unless you show that you don't understand. Very approachable, though, and I would definitely recommend him to anyone taking Fundies 1.

22 Very Helpful and open to questions, asks the class for participation as a way for us to comprehend the information

23 Could explain things slower, it's hard to listen and try to type at the same time

24 He makes classes really fun and interesting and his communication is well. The class is also very involving and encouraging.

25 Nate Derbinsky was an awesome teacher who really knew his stuff. Would love to have him again.

26 Instructor is obviously extremely knowledgeable about this course and the subject of computer science as a whole.

27 He is extremely enthusiastic, this motivated me a lot.

28 Needs to go through material slightly slower, or at least go through in class exercises slower

29 The instructor was vital to my understanding of the course. The lectures were engaging and very beneficial. I was often excited to come to the lectures.

30 Nate is very fun! Allows everyone to participate, teaches concepts in a very approachable manner, and is just in general a very friendly guy.

31 nate derbinsky was a great lecturer! had a lot of fun in his class

32 Prof. Derbinksy came to class excited to teach and took all the intimidation out of learning a completely new language and style of programming. He was a great and very amicable professor.

33 No areas for improvement. Professor Derbinsky was great at his job!

34 The instructor made learning the material a little more fun and was very enthusiastic in his lectures

35 The professor was definitely enthusiastic about computer science, but he taught way too quickly and left a lot of kids in the dust.

36 Nate Derbinsky is an awesome professor who makes class really entertaining and also cares about his students a lot. The only issue I had was sometimes it was hard to keep up with all the notes and code in lecture, so it would be useful if they were posted beforehand in some capacity. Overall I loved this class and the professor.