

## Fundamentals of Computer Sci 1 (Fall 2018)

Instructor: **Derbinsky, Nathaniel**  
 Section: **06**  
 Course Title: **Fundamentals of Computer Sci 1**  
 Course ID: **12869**  
 Subject: **CS**

Enrollment: **114**  
 Responses Incl Declines: **59**  
 Declines: **4**  
 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	48%	4.1	4.0
The textbook(s) helped me to learn.	55	48%	3.1	3.0
The materials posted online, including Blackboard, helped me to learn.	55	48%	4.2	4.0
The out-of-class assignments and fieldwork helped me to learn.	55	48%	4.6	5.0
The lectures helped me to learn.	55	48%	4.4	5.0
The in-class discussions and activities helped me to learn.	55	48%	4.3	5.0
The classroom technology helped me to learn.	55	48%	4.4	5.0
The required textbook(s) were important for my success in this course.	55	48%	2.8	3.0
I would recommend that the instructor continue requiring the textbook(s).	55	48%	3.2	3.0
The required digital and/or other supplemental materials were important for my success in this course.	55	48%	4.1	4.0
I would recommend the instructor continue requiring the digital and/or supplemental materials.	55	48%	4.0	4.0
I found this course intellectually challenging.	51	44%	4.5	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	48%	4.5	5.0
I learned to apply course concepts and principles.	55	48%	4.6	5.0
I developed additional skills in expressing myself orally and in writing.	54	47%	3.8	4.0
I learned to analyze and evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.	54	47%	3.9	4.0

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.	54	47%	4.9	5.0
The instructor clearly communicated ideas and information.	55	48%	4.9	5.0
The instructor clearly stated the objectives of the course.	55	48%	4.9	5.0
The instructor covered what was stated in the course objectives and syllabus.	55	48%	4.8	5.0
The instructor came to class prepared to teach.	55	48%	4.9	5.0
The instructor used class time effectively.	55	48%	4.8	5.0
The instructor provided sufficient feedback.	55	48%	4.5	5.0
The instructor fairly evaluated my performance.	55	48%	4.5	5.0
The instructor is someone I would recommend to other students.	55	48%	4.8	5.0
The instructor treated students with respect.	55	48%	4.9	5.0
The instructor acknowledged and took effective action when students did not understand the material.	55	48%	4.6	5.0
The instructor was available to assist students outside of class.	55	48%	4.5	5.0
The instructor displayed enthusiasm for the course.	55	48%	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	48%	4.8	5.0

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

### Course Related Questions (26 comments)

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

- 1 I learned enough through homework, lectures and lab so I didn't spend much time with the textbook. I did turn to it when I was confused about a couple topics though.
- 2 I know a lot of people use the textbook. But for me it just left me more confused as it's not written in a straight forward manner.
- 3 I never used the textbooks, I found other resources like office hours to be much more helpful.
- 4 The textbook often contained much extra material, and sometimes was incredibly complex and difficult to understand, and so lectures would need to be attended in order to clarify the material.
- 5 The racket manual and h2dp textbook are both very comprehensive and helpful
- 6 Textbook was decent, sometimes uses needlessly complicated language.
- 7 The textbook was unnecessary
- 8 Textbook was dense at times but still a good explanation of what is going on. The concepts that were taught in class mirrored the textbook as well as the homework beautifully.
- 9 The textbook made me more confused so I stopped reading it after a couple of lectures.
- 10 The textbook is useless. I didn't use it once after the first week, and did not need to use it. The homeworks were amazing and I would master the material while doing them. So, ditch the textbook and keep the homeworks.
- 11 I know the textbook is long and arduous but it literally helps you so much. It's incredibly effective at explaining what's going on! It's not that Derbinsky ever did a poor job of explaining something, but I was very new to the "coding mindset" coming into this class and sometimes being able to both read and hear conceptual information was incredible for my understanding.

- 12 Racket is pretty good, textbook not needed and not well integrated. Thats okay assuming it doesn't affect grades that much. Piazza is a little confusing at times as well. The assignments were also often not well written and ambiguous.
- 13 HTDP is a great textbook.
- 14 The textbook was generally unnecessary to understanding the lectures.
- 15 The textbook was helpful in reinforcing material learned in class and lectures, but was not a requirement. I think it was helpful to have to reference material and see the processes behind some code.
- 16 The textbook was not completely necessary
- 17 The textbook is extremely helpful in learning, as well as very a entertaining and interesting read.
- 18 The textbook was nice for memory refreshing and reinforcing ideas, but I feel like it isn't a necessity to read it to do very well.
- 19 Textbook was dense, help desk was great
- 20 Textbook can be helpful, but was often not needed to understand the material.
- 21 Very helpful textbook but not as condensed as online notes
- 22 I almost never had to look at the textbook.
- 23 The textbook was sometimes helpful, but not necessary to be successful in the course.
- 24 The textbook is difficult to read/understand.
- 25 I barely used the textbook at all, but I still did well regardless of this.
- 26 I didn't really find the need for the textbook. Lectures were already good enough for relaying the info.

#### Learning Related Questions (28 comments)

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

- 1 I can tell that the course has been taught for a while because the class follows a template (no pun intended). For the most part is fine, and there is a lot of help and resources for the class. I'd probably improve the lab sessions as the quizzes are way too short and not intellectually challenging either.
- 2 I don't like racket. I wish we were programming in a language that's used in industry.
- 3 Fundamentals was great in allowing me to learn to program while having no experience, and did seem to level the playing field for those who did or didn't have prior CS experience.
- 4 I enjoyed the overall flow of the lectures
- 5 n/a
- 6 word assignments better i feel like an archaeologist trying to decipher misspelled hieroglyphs
- 7 the language no matter how much it hurt me really enforced good coding habits
- 8 The course was very good at making me learn.
- 9 Learned so much in this course that I thought I already knew how to do. It taught me the importance of good design in programming.
- 10 I think this course is structured in a great way.
- 11 It would be helpful if we spent more time in class going over questions about the homework problems.
- 12 Reinforced the fundamentals of computer science I already knew while focusing on often overlooked topics (such as recursion). I think there was too much time spent on a rigid documentation/outlines. There should be more flexibility in how to document, instead of following a formula. However, this is a fairly minor complaint.
- 13 Difficult but incredibly worth it. I learned so much and honestly feel academically empowered after this semester.
- 14 One of the most well-run courses I've ever taken. The coordination between all the staff is flawless.
- 15 Very challenging but satisfying. Teaches you how to design like a pro
- 16 This course was very helpful in establishing the basis of CS. I like how the course was taught based off of what was the logical thing to do, and how homeworks and labs generally followed lectures.
- 17 The course effectively showed me how to code in Racket
- 18 This class is a large time commitment. Even so though, it is an extremely helpful class, and I am very glad that I decided to take it. This class has helped me to work with a partner to solve problems, even if we initially have very different ways of going about the problems.

- 19 Use a more relevant language

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- 20 This course was extremely effective in helping me adapt to the Racket language and style, reiterating things I had already known and teaching brand new material.

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- 21 This course requests a lot of time from students for effectively no return, assuming the student already has ample prior programming experience. Some sort of test should be available for students to opt-out of this class and advance into more complex programming classes.

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- 22 Homework wasn't too challenging overall just took a lot of time, we had 5 assignments with 1st partner and 10 with second so maybe balance that

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- 23 This course seemed very well structured and went at a good pace.

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- 24 No obvious flaws

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- 25 I felt like a different language would have been more helpful because though I understand that Racket is meant to teach us how to think and that it is supposed to even the field, we could learn how to think in another program and those who already took a programming course would already know how to think, so the playing field isn't really leveled anyway.

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- 26 N/A

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- 27 I took AP CS in high school and already knew how to program, so I didn't really learn much in this class at all. I didn't go to most of the lectures, just read through the lecture notes they'd post online occasionally, and I'm still excelling in the course work for this. If you've already learned to code I'd recommend taking the accelerated section or else you'll end up like me and learn next to nothing.

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- 28 Generative recursion is still sort of confusing compared to structural.

#### Instructor Related Questions: Nathaniel Derbinsky (31 comments)

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

- 1 I have never had a teacher/professor have as much charisma and enthusiasm for the course they were teaching. He is obviously an expert in his craft but is still able to teach and explain things that may be simple to the students who have never had any experience.

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- 2 Very respectful, funny and a knowledgeable person who can communicate topics in a very digestible way. Probably one of the best professors on the fundies course staff.

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- 3 Mr. Derbinski did a good job bringing some personality to the material while still staying very focused and getting through everything we needed to cover. I'd definitely recommend him.

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- 4 Professor Derbinsky has an excellent personality and was an exceptional instructor.

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- 5 Prof. Derbinsky's teaching style is logical and easy to follow.

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- 6 Great teacher, helped me to greatly improve my basic understanding of computer science, and made everything very understandable. Would take another class with this teacher.

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- 7 great professor knowledgeable and a thorough explainer

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- 8 He is very fun and interesting! made going to class a fun time

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- 9 The Professor seemed to care a lot about the course and the success of students.

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- 10 Professor Derbinsky is the best! He makes the material so fun and is a super cool and interesting guy to talk to. Loved this class.

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- 11 Nate is awesome, legit probably the best professor I've had at Northeastern so far. As a non-CS major, I learned a ton in his class. His teaching style is extremely engaging, he's funny, he's very smart, he commands a large classroom very well. Definitely take his class if you have the opportunity.

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- 12 Nate is great (look what I did)! Within a few minutes of listening to his lectures, it's obvious that Nate knows what he's doing and does it well. He keeps students engaged, listens to their questions, provides extra examples when something is unclear, and puts out a lot of good energy. Maybe the only semi-harmful thing he did was type too fast at times, but he always managed to achieve learning objectives and produce useful notes.

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- 13 Professor Derbinsky was great. My only (minor) complaint was that he went a bit fast. However, he made up for this by always posting lecture notes, making the material fun and engaging, and always cracking jokes. Thumbs up!

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- 14 Nate was amazing! He was funny, dressed up as Matt Smith for Halloween which was 10/10, smart, rarely if ever made a mistake, and did a great job of explaining concepts to us. I loved him giving different sides of the class the same problem and different solutions of finding the answer, and I loved him giving us time to code and encouraging the class to participate. It was wonderful to have a teacher that I completely trusted wouldn't lead me astray. Learned so much from his lectures, one of the only classes where paying attention was never hard to do.

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- 15 I really liked professor Derbinsky. I would recommend him to anyone. He was very engaging and knowledgeable.

- 16 Professor Derbinsky is fantastic. However overall course office hours could use some work.

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- 17 Simply a great professor. Helpful, understanding, kind, incredibly smart.

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- 18 Overall, Professor Derbinsky was a very good professor. He was able to teach concepts in an easy to understand way while still making sure we knew everything for homeworks and exams.

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- 19 The instructor was very good at explaining concept in an easy-to-understand way.

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- 20 Professor Derbinsky was a very helpful and entertaining teacher. He is very genuine, and really cares about conveying information to his students in the most effective way possible. It is easy to stay engaged in his class, and he works to make the lectures accessible.

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- 21 Extremely enthusiastic and made programming fun

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- 22 Very strong grasp of all things code, and was very fun to be taught from :)

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- 23 Derbinsky teaches the material thoroughly, answers any misunderstandings and has a nice personality to top it all off, but he sometimes likes to ignore parts of the Design Recipe to speed up the lectures. I'd say that should be changed because it gives us the impression that we should do that same or it makes it so that we forget to do it ourselves when it isn't emphasized that much anymore. Very small compliant though compared to his strengths.

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- 24 Derbinsky is great, makes lecture fun, highly recommend

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- 25 The instructor was amazing and explained everything very clearly.

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- 26 Big derb is a beast

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- 27 I thought he was great.

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- 28 This instructor has a lot of enthusiasm for this course and is clearly very knowledgeable about computer science. He makes lectures fun while walking through the processes we are learning.

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- 29 N/A

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- 30 Derbinsky is a good professor who puts in genuine effort to make the class interesting. He explains concepts well and makes good use of class time.

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- 31 He's cool.