

Fundamentals of Computer Sci 1 (201830: Spring 2018)

Instructor: **Derbinsky, Nathaniel**
 Subject: **CS**
 Catalog & Section: **2500 03**
 Course ID: **33845**
 Objectives:

Enrollment: **68**
 Responses Incl Declines: **45**
 Declines: **0**

Course Related Questions

Question	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
The syllabus helped me to learn.	45	66%	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
The textbook(s) helped me to learn.	45	66%	3.7	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.0
The materials posted online, including Blackboard, helped me to learn.	45	66%	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.0
The out-of-class assignments and fieldwork helped me to learn.	45	66%	4.6	4.2	4.2	5.0	4.0	4.0
The lectures helped me to learn.	45	66%	4.6	4.0	4.1	5.0	4.0	4.0
The in-class discussions and activities helped me to learn.	45	66%	4.3	3.9	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.0
The classroom technology helped me to learn.	45	66%	4.5	3.9	4.0	5.0	4.0	4.0
The required textbook(s) were important for my success in this course.	44	64%	3.6	3.6	3.7	4.0	4.0	4.0
I would recommend that the instructor continue requiring the textbook(s).	45	66%	3.8	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.0
The required digital and/or other supplemental materials were important for my success in this course.	45	66%	4.1	4.0	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.0
I would recommend the instructor continue requiring the digital and/or supplemental materials.	45	66%	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.0
I found this course intellectually challenging.	44	64%	4.6	4.2	4.1	5.0	4.0	4.0

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	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
I learned a lot in this course.	45	66%	4.7	4.2	4.3	5.0	4.0	4.0
I learned to apply course concepts and principles.	45	66%	4.8	4.2	4.3	5.0	4.0	4.0
I developed additional skills in expressing myself orally and in writing.	45	66%	3.9	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
I learned to analyze and evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.	45	66%	4.4	4.0	4.1	5.0	4.0	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	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
The instructor possessed the basic communication skills necessary to teach the course.	45	66%	4.8	4.4	4.4	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor clearly communicated ideas and information.	45	66%	4.9	4.2	4.3	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor clearly stated the objectives of the course.	45	66%	4.8	4.3	4.4	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor covered what was stated in the course objectives and syllabus.	45	66%	4.8	4.4	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor came to class prepared to teach.	45	66%	4.9	4.4	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor used class time effectively.	45	66%	4.9	4.2	4.3	5.0	4.0	5.0
The instructor provided sufficient feedback.	45	66%	4.5	4.0	4.2	5.0	4.0	4.0
The instructor fairly evaluated my performance.	44	64%	4.5	4.2	4.3	5.0	4.0	5.0
The instructor is someone I would recommend to other students.	44	64%	4.8	4.1	4.3	5.0	4.0	5.0
The instructor treated students with respect.	44	64%	4.9	4.5	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor acknowledged and took effective action when students did not understand the material.	44	64%	4.7	4.2	4.3	5.0	4.0	5.0
The instructor was available to assist students outside of class.	44	64%	4.7	4.3	4.4	5.0	4.0	5.0
The instructor displayed enthusiasm for the course.	44	64%	4.9	4.4	4.5	5.0	5.0	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	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
What is your overall rating of this instructor's teaching effectiveness?	45	66%	4.8	4.3	4.4	5.0	5.0	5.0

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

Course Related Questions (23 comments)

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

- 1 Textbook is great, easy to understand and useful.
- 2 The text book was nice, but I felt all my learning was reinforced with the lecture and homework
- 3 Good class
- 4 If you are not able to make the class, reading the textbook will help. But, I have not found much use for the textbook.
- 5 I did not personally use the textbook very much. I did the readings for the first few weeks, but they felt redundant with the lectures, so I stopped.
- 6 The readings weren't necessary for success but they were helpful.
- 7 Textbook was great
- 8 I did not use the required textbook and found it confusing to read. I also did not like the format of the online textbook, maybe a PDF would be easier to keep track off.
- 9 The textbook is confusing however the examples are very useful
- 10 A lot of stuff to read, but very useful. Hard to keep up

- 11 The textbook is very helpful and they give it to you online so I recommend that teachers continue to encourage students to read the textbook
- 12 The textbook is very helpful and relevant to the material.
- 13 I think that the textbook is very helpful but it was not necessary to succeed in the class.
- 14 good
- 15 n/a
- 16 I liked having the textbook be a free e-book, since it was much easier to find what I needed to find. The class itself was nice and I liked how consistent each professor was with using the same examples.
- 17 There's an online textbook with assigned readings per week. I never read from the textbook, even before exams, because it was difficult to read (dry, not interesting). I did use the finger exercises in the textbook as practice though. You can be successful without reading the textbook as long as you understand the assignments and finger exercises.
- 18 Textbook and documentation was useful when the understanding of the subject was limited. It seemed like you could skip the readings and show up to lecture and understand the topics, but the readings did come in handy occasionally.
- 19 It helped me tremendously
- 20 I did not use the textbook
- 21 I did not use it after the first week
- 22 Course readings need to be more consolidated.
- 23 Free required textbook is a huge plus.

Learning Related Questions (19 comments)

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

- 1 TAs are very poor instructors and shouldn't have as much responsibility grading and teaching as they do. Over semester had to "appeal" multiple homework assignments due to sloppy TA grading.
- 2 The homeworks were definitely challenging and required you to think through the problems with what you know. However, I would argue that some of the harder assignments should be worth a bit more than the easier ones.
- 3 better TA help
- 4 I learned how to code!
- 5 I really appreciate the course's use of Piazza to facilitate student questions about the class. This course was challenging and required a lot of time and effort to complete the homework assignments and to understand the material. I liked how we worked with partners for homework, although when we received partners who weren't willing to work collaboratively it was a bit frustrating. However, on the whole, working with a partner was an excellent way to learn to design programs as a beginner.
- 6 A key thing about this course is meeting with buddies, but given differences in schedules, often this can't happen. Matching at least the randomly assigned partners based on when they want to work on the homework would be extremely helpful, and cause more partners to work together, instead of just one person doing it or it having to be emailed back and forth.
- 7 This course is challenging but if you go to class and pay attention it will be easy.
- 8 I think there should be more TA in office hours, especially on Tuesdays when the assignment is due. Sometimes I had to wait for 2 hours to ask one question
- 9 Criteria for assignment can be vague at times.
- 10 I think the combination of the lectures, labs, problem sets, and office hours is a major strength of this course. I think one thing to improve on is being a little more clear on what exactly we are being graded on for homework. There were times where we got all of the code right but got off for check-expects, comments, indentations.
- 11 good
- 12 great lectures
- 13 I would maybe have more of an incentive to come to class, potentially top hat questions to give a little buffer with attendance. I liked the games
- 14 The Fundies I course is a weed out course. Simple as that. However, it is more difficult than it needs to be. The way the faculty go about grading, responding to questions, communicating, etc is generally ineffective.
 - Piazza. It's a great resource (usually) but certain TAs respond to questions in a demeaning manner or fail to answer your question. I

saw a question once that was answered with "I don't know, what does it say?". This is condescending and simply not an acceptable way to respond to a question.

- Grading transparency. It's the end of the semester now. No one knows their grade in this course. The homeworks still need to be weighted properly. No one has been told how the lab quiz grades will be graded. Will there be a different grade scale? No one knows! None of the TAs or instructors can tell us. It's anxiety inducing because I'm on the edge of an A- and A and I want to know what my grade is.

15 Make the exams on the computer versus on paper

16 great class to get a basic feel for learning a coding language! Well structured and nicely paced

17 Not really a related field

18 Love the way this course is taught functionally to allow students to develop recursion intuition very early on in their careers. The problem sets were terrific! However, I believe the immense conformity to template based coding can be reformed and left a little more open ended. Moreover, the course should also require us to use GitHub to introduce us to git, a skilled required of all software devs. I would also enjoy more time and problem sets spent on graphs. But in general,
((lamda (course)
(string-append course
(foldr string-append "" (list " was" " great")))) "Fundies")

19 I learned a lot about how to approach programming challenges. My main criticism would be that the tests felt like they were testing on racket as opposed to the design recipe or creative thinking. There was not a huge progression between exams 1 and 2.

An additional suggestion I have is to make homeworks closer to each other in length, as a couple of the homeworks took me 20 hours to complete vs 3-4 hours (or less) for others.

Instructor Related Questions: Nathaniel Derbinsky (26 comments)

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

- 1 Prof Derbinsky is a hilarious and down to earth guy - and an excellent professor to boot. Best teacher I've ever had - made Fundies enjoyable and exciting. Highly recommend.
- 2 I absolutely loved being in Prof. Derbinski's class. Don't worry, most of the 80's / 90's jokes were not entirely lost on me, but he really made the class something to look forward to. The style of typing on the screen as opposed to lecturing was also a very good choice in communicating the programming styles. $6 \times 9 = 42$
- 3 Funny and explains well
- 4 Instructor is clear and has a good sense of humor. He teaches well.
- 5 Derbinsky was one of the most revolutionary professors I've had at Northeastern so far, and as a third year, that's kinda big. The grasp he has of the material is comforting, as well as his ability to answer any specific question thrown his way. The only small criticism I would have, is that sometimes he does move a little fast, but he covers a lot of supplementary material so it's still appreciated. My one recommendation is providing students preliminary code before lecture, to curb any "stressful" typing. But seriously, god bless this professor. I've learned so much in 4 months, and I attribute a lot of that to him.
- 6 The professor made sure everyone understood the topics before moving on. Would stay after class in case any students had questions relating to the course or not. Was friendly and kind, treated all the students with respect and clearly explained topics.
- 7 Derbinsky is great at making interesting and informative lectures. He answers questions well and is always willing to stay after class to help with individual problems and questions. One of the best teachers for fundies this semester. The class was always full from other students joining his class.
- 8 amazing, funny, good at teaching, 11/10 would recommend
- 9 Simply amazing
- 10 He's the best lecturer out of the Fundies I lecturers this semester. He's funny, straightforward. However, most of the class is spent scrambling to copy his pre-typed code. I suggest posting the bare basics of the code (check-expects, signature, purpose statement) so the focus can be on the code and not copying down.
- 11 Great resume and very interesting professor. He always had an obscure reference ready to keep the class light and had an extremely well versed knowledge of the course material. I would recommend him to any student.
- 12 Excellent instructor. I managed to learn and understand the course material incredibly well by his teaching patterns. As well has a fun sense of humor and shows passion for the course.
- 13 Strengths:
does really well explaining concepts
helps walk students through the process meticulously and the thinking that goes into coding

Weakness:

please make more jokes about the 90s

14 Nate is a wonderful professor.

15 Derbinsky was an extremely engaging professor. He was very personable and funny. His lectures were very clear and he offered many salient programming examples to the class during the semester. The class is very focused on teaching through application; it is not very theory heavy.

16 The BEST professor I have had thus far. Really good at taking abstract ideas and making them more concrete. Super helpful for learning programming

17 The instructor was very passionate about course

18 This is a Feedback for the Tutors/TAs:

For homework, I have gone to office hours and met with the TAs/Tutors and for some reason, a lot of TAs have an attitude problem. They would help, but first, they will ask you to "follow the design recipe." So if I go with a small problem such as asking how to go about a program, a lot of the times they have looked at other parts of the code and asked me to write check-expects for those even though that specific assignment question has nothing to do with my question. Tutors have been really helpful in office hours and I just want to mention their names for the good job they have done.

Jack Warren, Michael Sarfary, Melina Young and Nupur Neogi.

Another thing I wanted to mention: I once met a tutor (I'm guessing it was Mark Murphy not really sure) who was roaming with a notepad. If you asked him for help, he would ask you various questions about the problem and write all those answers down to show how to go about the assignment without giving out any additional hints. At the end of this session, he would hand all the notes so that the person can use it for future reference. I feel that is a really good way to teach and all tutors should follow that if possible.

19 I think Professor Derbinsky was an amazing professor. He answered all of the classes questions and really taught computer science in a way that students could learn. From talking to other students and attending other professor's lectures, he presents the material in the most organized way and over all is a better professor for this course no question.

20 Clear and helpful lectures. Funny too!

21 I really enjoyed having Nate as a teacher. He was engaging and I liked his jokes.

22 He was very informative

23 Great at explaining the topics and keeping the class interesting! Very nice overall and made me feel welcome to computer science even though it's not my major

24 I could not recommend him enough. We had a substitute one day and it only made me appreciate his teaching style and mannerisms more

25 Professor Derbinsky was certainly one of the best professors I have had yet. He portrayed contagious excitement for the course and CS in general. He was always super willing to talk about subjects that were beyond this course after class. Derbinsky knows very well how to introduce CS to a non-experienced coder. I sure hope to have further classes with him in the future.

26 Professor Derbinsky is an excellent lecturer, every lecture was engaging and useful.

I never needed supplemental information (except documentation/syntax issues) to succeed on homeworks/quizzes/tests.