----------------------- REVIEW 1 ---------------------

PAPER: 297  
TITLE: Course Recommender System in a Liberal Arts Context   
AUTHORS: Raphael Morsomme and Sofia Vazquez  
  
Overall evaluation: 0 (borderline paper)  
Relevance: 3 (fair)  
Novelty: 3 (fair)  
Significance: 3 (fair)  
Related Work: 2 (poor)  
Technical Soundness: 4 (good)  
Presentation: 3 (fair)  
Reproducability: 2 (poor)  
Best Paper Nominee: no

----------- Review -----------  
I found this work somewhat interesting as the topic of helping students to choose courses and content using data mining and machine learning has been growing in recent years. I was surprised that this work did not mention some to that work, including work by Pardos (in both selecting courses see LAK 2019/2018) and content (Learning@Scale 2015 2016?). There were no real results at the time of submission, which makes it hard to see if this work is helpful or not.   
  
It was also unclear that this work fits into the industry track. The writing was mostly clear but there were a few items that could use clarification (example: ECTS seems to be the courses but it is not defined).  
  
  
----------------------- REVIEW 2 ---------------------

PAPER: 297  
TITLE: Course Recommender System in a Liberal Arts Context   
AUTHORS: Raphael Morsomme and Sofia Vazquez  
  
Overall evaluation: 1 (weak accept)  
Relevance: 5 (excellent)  
Novelty: 3 (fair)  
Significance: 3 (fair)  
Related Work: 2 (poor)  
Technical Soundness: 4 (good)  
Presentation: 3 (fair)  
Reproducability: 4 (good)  
Best Paper Nominee: no

----------- Review -----------  
This paper describes work to build a recommender system for a university course catalog, that will take into account students’ interests and past performance.  It will also flag courses for missing prerequisites.  The data used are student data (2526 students, with transcripts of courses, course order, and final grades) and course data (five most recent course catalogs, with both 1-page descriptions for each course; and one year’s worth of course manuals, which are up to 20 pages).  
  
The topic model for each course, using probabilistic modeling of term frequency to create “a probability distribution of topics [per course] and of words per topic.”  The alpha and beta parameters are still being evaluated by the authors for optimal value; however, the authors state it is already giving good recommendations.  Figure 1 is not very clear … labeled “Log Likelihood of Topic Models on Course Catalogues for different numbers of topics,” it does not say or indicate what is being evaluated or how.  What is the Y axis, for example?  
  
I wonder if courses that have more information in the catalog or manual are more likely to be recommended, simply because they have more “topics” for a potential match to students’ stated preference of topics.  Also, how do the students chose their preferences?  Are they given an exhaustive list to select from?  Or do they derive the terms / interest words themselves?  If the latter, are synonyms used to match the list of topic words?  It is also not clear why the prerequisites are derived in this way, rather than simply taken from the course catalog.  (Most courses with prerequisite requirements will simply state what those requirements are.)  
  
However, the results for the recommender do seem promising.  As a work-in-progress I think it will spark an interesting discussion and give the authors opportunity for valuable feedback.