

Course Reflection

To begin my reflection on the CSC431 course at University of Miami, Spring 2025 semester under Dr. Nguyen, I'll start with why enrolled in the course and what I desired from it. As a computer science major, CSC431 is one of the major requirements and to graduate I needed to take this course; that being said, I came into this class wanting and willing to learn Software Engineering terminology and theory. This course was successful in that regard – I learned major concepts and paradigms such as the scrum software development framework and computer architecture design – but still this course was not perfect, and I felt it could be improved in the following ways:

1. This is my biggest critique of how the course was taught: I felt that the professor made the course too much about himself and not enough about the student. The professor would include in most lectures long discusses about the professor's life story including his story as an immigrant from Vietnam, and his tenure at other south Florida universities. While his story is inspiring and worth telling, it was reiterated too frequently and became distracting: there would be some lectures where I learned more about the professor's life than the subject of the course which I feel is not appropriate and hurt the students learning.
2. Quizzes were exclusively memorization based. Normally in computer science courses that I have taken quizzes and exams are usually not entirely memorization based: critical thinking would be required. I do not think that these quizzes made me think critically, they required me to memorize words and concepts. Perhaps this was by design, but it made me unmotivated to study for quizzes since it simply would boil down to me making flash cards and attempting to remember vocabulary to recite.
3. Oftentimes I felt the professor's critiques of my work or that of other students wouldn't be very helpful. While it is fair to point out mistakes in UML diagrams, many times the professor would make a very big deal out of small things such as typos and a lack of page numbers which did not have the desired effect in my opinion: the student would focus more on the non-software engineering related details such as presentation design over the actual content of the course, it felt as if the professor emphasized meeting some arbitrary standard of quality and not whether or not the student was actually learning.

This course taught me fundamental concepts of software engineering that will likely help me later in my professional career which I am very grateful for. However, I feel if the professor addresses my critiques, he could improve the course significantly and make it a much better learning experience.