

Instructor: **Smith, David**Subject: **CS**Catalog & Section: **5100 01**Course ID: **39499**

Objectives:

Enrollment: **93**Responses Incl Declines: **35**Declines: **1**

Instructor Related Questions: David Smith (39 comments)

Q: What were the strengths of this course and/or this instructor?

- 1 Dr. Smith is clearly a very knowledgeable professor. He was slightly accommodating when students complained on piazza about insincere deadlines.
- 2 clear structure
- 3 The professor had a good knowledge of his powerpoint slides
- 4 Professor Smith took the time to answer questions asked in class. His vast and deep knowledge about the topics in this class were a plus because he was able to teach us well.
- 5 Understanding course material was incredibly easy, it was well explained and very step by step, even in complex subjects.
- 6 Prof. Smith is very nice and the course is very coherent and progresses in a logical way.
- 7 Prof has good knowledge but course structure felt bad also timings
- 8
 - Online lecture materials, loved having access to the slides after each lecture
 - Midterm reviews were very, very helpful
 - I liked the problem sets and programming assignments
- 9 Overall I liked the problem sets and the programming assignments, I thought they gave me useful practice. I also thought the exams were fair and gauged my effort well.
- 10 I think they always came to lecture prepared to teach. Also, going over examples of different types of problems during lecture were extremely helpful for problem sets and review
- 11 The course is very comprehensive of a lot of basic topics in AI.
- 12 Professor Smith gave the best introduction to the transformer that I have had the pleasure of watching. He is really good at tying abstract concepts to concrete implementation which works really well for how I learn
- 13 The instructor was fully prepared and was aware of the syllabus. Also he was taking efforts in dealing with out of curriculum topics to make it more interactive.
- 14 He was quite helpful in explaining the concepts
- 15 He teaches the concepts at a high level and never really goes through example problems in lecture which makes it difficult to do the assignments at times. And getting help in this course was virtually impossible - the TAs never knew the answer and the professor was completely unaccessible. He didn't respond to 99% of piazza posts and never responded to his email. We were never given a clear outline of what the semester would look like in terms of content and assignments despite asking multiple times. It was incredibly frustrating to never receive help or answers/explanations. The entire course lecture and assignments are just copied from Berkeley and the professor doesn't teach it well. We just had to teach everything to ourselves and hope for the best. I don't feel I received a good foundation of AI at all.
- 16 I think the material was fairly clear, and it's an interesting subject/topic
- 17 The instructor was very kind and accommodating. He also answered every single question to the best that he could.

Q: What could the instructor do to make this course better?

- 1 This course was unorganized. There was barely a syllabus. Assignments just came out of nowhere, especially towards the end of the semester - he assigned a problem set the day before the last day of classes that is due during finals week. We were supposed to have 4 programming assignments but only ended up having two which was confusing.
 - 2 release slides before class, its hard to keep up and make notes.
 - 3 I feel most of the course has been adapted from UC Berkeley's CS188 artificial intelligence course including the slides, problem sets and the pac man programming assignments. This could have been a more in depth study on the foundations of ai and ml rather than a complete adaptation. I was mostly sticking to Berkeley's youtube videos for this course and that did the trick of helping me out with the course material better than the professors own slides.
 - 4 Professor Smith could have been more activate on Piazza and more responsive with emails. I asked questions using both of these platforms, but he mostly only answered in-person. He also could have given more concrete examples in class. Without these examples, doing the homework was like having to teach myself the content all over again with concrete examples. This resulted in taking longer than needed to complete the homework. The TA's in this course were mostly unhelpful. During TA office hours, they were not able to answer questions and gave very general, abstract directions. Additionally, they also did not respond on Piazza which made it difficult to learn.
 - 5 Give more problem sets for homework, I felt much less prepared for the 2nd exam compared to the first, because I did not have as much practice.
 - 6 Lectures slides are really terrible like a lot of text and often bullet points on the slides get skipped and also there is a huge difficulty gap between programming assignments and lecture content. Also I think too much of the class is spent on reviewing simple probability and basic algorithms.
 - 7 Nothing change structure of course. have more problem set rather than python program (dfs, bfs implementation is too easy)
 - 8 This course was very disorganized. We were supposed to have four programming assignments and we only ended up getting two assigned. Students had to ask for constant updates from the professor on what the schedule changes were going to be. He was very understanding but I wish we had stuck to the plan a little more. There were some weeks where we had no work and others where we had three assignments to work on. There was little feedback on milestones for the final project and at times, expectations could have been made clearer.
 - 9 This was one of the least organized courses I've taken at Northeastern, which was disappointing for my capstone experience. The main problems were:
 - There was a severe communication problem between the instructor and other teaching staff. TAs would directly contradict what the instructor would say and give out incorrect approaches to solving problems. This made most of the TA office hours unhelpful.
 - There was a lack of planning in terms of the assignments. Half (2 of 4) of the coding-based programming assignments were removed from the course plan due to lack of time. Often the problem sets (non-coding based assignments) felt thrown together, and answer keys for them were corrected by students more than once.
 - In terms of the lecture there needs to be better slides. There would sometimes be complex equations on one slide, and after a handwavey explanation of the equation, and pointing out some typos within it, the professor would move on. There needed to be more examples with real numbers plugged into these equations, and generally the slides needed a once over for typos and formatting.
- Overall these factors added up for me and made me less and less enthusiastic about the course, which I had been excited for as a capstone to my khoury experience.

Q: What could the instructor do to make this course better?

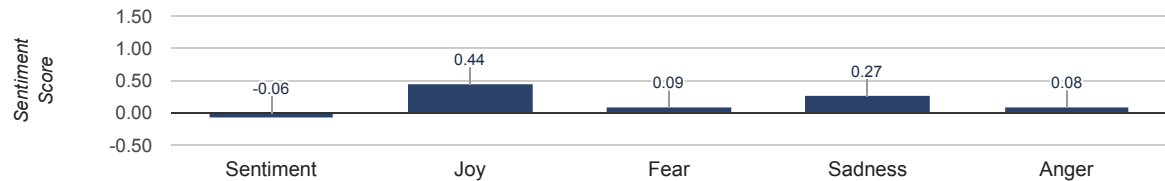
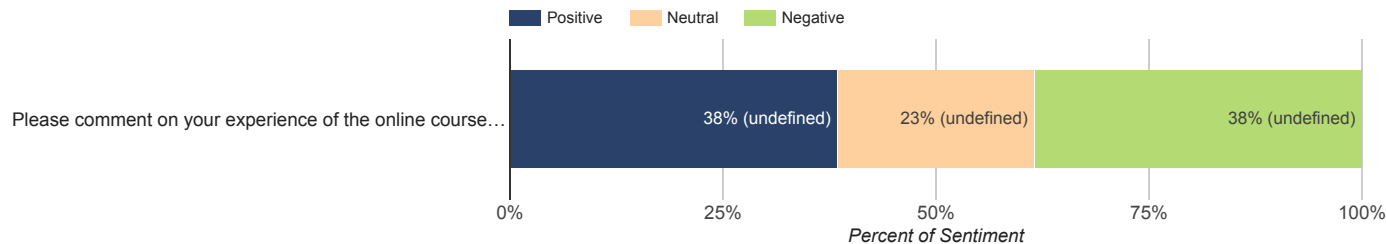
- 10 Honestly, I think the balance between problem sets and homework assignments was a little weird. The problem sets did feel consistent for when they were assigned, but I think homework assignments had a little bit of a lag. But it makes sense since it becomes harder to manage time when both homeworks and psets are due. I think maybe figuring a consistent schedule that balances these two assignments could improve the overall course experience
- 11 I feel there were a few more homeworks that we skipped that could have made us understand the materials better. We didn't get to finish the pacman assignments and that was sad.
- 12 Reply when people send you personal emails or piazza questions!
I had sent a question on piazza and by email to the professor about an upcoming assignment privately. He never responded. I am trying to reach out to him again. It is a question not applicable to the rest of the class, and I would hope he responds even if it is to direct me to another channel for asking this type of question.
- 13 Nothing as such, it was a great show.
- 14 the topic of CSP was not very clear. He could have explained it better.
- 15 He needs to actually teach instead of just reading from slides and be accessible. Never responding should not be a quality of a professor.
- 16 Lots of room for improvement in terms of course organization -- there was no schedule for when assignments were going to be released/due (information that one would usually expect to be found in the syllabus), and due dates seemed to shift and new problem sets would be posted at the end of the week and due early the next week with no warning. There was also pretty insufficient exam preparation and general lack of resources.
- 17 At the very end of the material, they lectures became very confusing. We weren't tested on this material however.

Q: Please expand on the instructor's strengths and/or areas for improvement in facilitating inclusive learning.

- 1 online option should share screen instead of using the camera
- 2 Nothing as such, it was great.
- 3 Felt very included, the class size was fairly large, so its understandable there was a little less one-on-one, but felt very welcome in class
- 4 The instructor strength was making complicated ideas make more sense through various helpful examples.
- 5 No

Questions to Assess Students' Online Experience (13 comments)

Q: Please comment on your experience of the online course environment in the open-ended text box.



- 1 attend in person mostly, the online option is not optimal since lecture slides are not posted before class and the camera record more frame than needed making the shared screen small. ★☆☆☆☆
- 2 The online Experience could have been better in regards to the quality of the online sessions (audio predominantly). ★★★★★
- 3 The materials posted online, on Canvas, were helpful for learning and practicing topics taught in class. However, the Piazza was very underutilized. Students would ask questions on Piazza but responses were scarce and questions often went unanswered. Neither TA's nor the professor were active on Piazza which was frustrating because questions were only answered twice a week, during class. ★★★★★
- 4 Going back over zoom recordings before exams was quite helpful. ★★★★★
- 5 I wish lecture notes were posted earlier so I could follow along as we went. ★★★★★
- 6 The online organization for this course began wonderfully, but as the semester changed and the course itself seemed to fall apart, the online resources were not updated to reflect in class changes. ★★☆☆☆
- 7 Teaching had no relation with the exams. ★★★★★
- 8 There was very little online communication between classes (Piazza, Canvas, email, etc) which made it very confusing to navigate expectations as we only met twice a week. ★★☆☆☆
- 9 You had the option to either attend in-person or through Zoom. I think in either case, the lectures were pretty decent. Having the Zoom option is just always helpful to review recordings, which I did often to understand sampling types, constraint satisfaction problems, MDPs, etc. ★★★★★

Q: Please comment on your experience of the online course environment in the open-ended text box.

- 10 The online environment are based on the zoom classrooms and office hour interactions which were sufficing to get through the course. ★★☆☆☆
- 11 Wasn't an online course. ★☆☆☆☆
- 12 Both instructor and TAs were very unresponsive on piazza despite the large class size, and instructions were vague and poorly organized. ★☆☆☆☆
- 13 It was fine. There wasn't many online materials needed so this wasn't a problem. ★★☆☆☆

Student Self-Assessment of their Effort to Achieve Course Outcomes (9 comments)

Q: What I could have done to make this course better for myself.

- 1 Attend class in-person more, I definitely could have done that.
- 2 I think lectures didn't solidify concepts 100% for me immediately and I often had to revisit recordings or read the textbook to understand how to solve some of the problem sets. So, before or right after each lecture, really try to review the concepts and understand how to solve problems with them by looking at examples
- 3 study more after the first midterm.
- 4 I feel that the efforts were sufficing to get me through the course and also I had outside knowledge of getting through the course.
- 5 Started working on final project earlier
- 6 Read additional readings
- 7 ask more questions to the TAs
- 8 I should have started the homework assignments earlier so that I wasn't pressed for time before the deadline.
- 9 More numerical homework & decent time for midterm 2. It felt like we had no time to study for midterm two with minimal resource of problem set.