Compilers (201730: Spring 2017)

Instructor: **Lerner, Benjamin**
Subject: **CS**
Catalog & Section: **6410 01**
Course ID: **35586**
Objectives:

Enrollment: **10**
Responses Incl Declines: **7**
Declines: **0**

Learning Related Questions (5 comments)

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

1 I took this course when it was using an "experimental" new curriculum, so things got a bit hectic at points. Even with the occasional chaos, it was the most engaging class I've taken at NU, *especially* compared to other CS classes. The main learning in this course comes through the homework assignments, which consistently took me 15-30 hours to complete. For the most part, lectures dovetail really well with the homework, often telling you exactly what to do in the assignment but at a high enough level of design that it's still a lot of meaningful work to dig in and implement it. I had very little interest in compilers when I signed up for the course (took it as an elective), and now I'd be really interested in continuing to do this sort of work moving forward.

2 The design and organization of the course helped me learn a lot. It was taught in a very different manner compared to what you would expect from a traditional compilers course.
Each week (almost) we had a programming assignment which aimed at different aspects of the compiler and taught us to rationale about different features of the compiler. The assignments were thought provoking and interesting to solve.
The written assignments involved some research on our own, and reasoning about design choices which was thoroughly enjoyable.
The final project was open ended and enabled me to use the skills I learned in this course to apply in enhancing our compiler.
The best part of the course is that by the end of it I had a full-fledged language and a compiler of my own. It also leaves me with the right set of tools to enhance it further.
I have previously taken a Compilers course during my undergrads in my home country, but this way of learning makes Compilers fun and enjoyable. Thank you for such an amazing course. Thoroughly enjoyed every bit of it. I easily and enjoyingly spent a lot more than 20 hours per week in this course. Each and every assignment was truly enjoyable to do. I have always been somewhat passionate about Compilers and this course made me much more passionate about it. :)

The course was an experimental one as said by the instructor, and considering that, this course was exceptionally well-driven. Some improvements which can be made in the future versions of the course would be the following:
1. The written assignments can be increased in number and decreased in score weight. In this way, we can learn and think about more things beyond the classroom, but aligned with the course.
2. Providing grades of an assignment before we start the next one will help in not propagating the mistakes of the previous assignment to the next. If there is an automated test suite in place, then the grading would become faster.
3. Each lecture was very interesting and important. I did take notes for every lecture, but providing official notes helps a lot. The professor did provide us notes for half of the course.
4. The starter code for assignments could have a template from the beginning, and a set of fixed APIs. This would help in providing standard starter code for each assignment.
5. I don't think Principles of Programming Language is needed as a prerequisite for this course. Though, I would recommend a course on Computer Systems before taking this course.

3 It's a good course, just needs to work out its kinks.

4 I would say that I've learned more from this course than any other one I've taken, just by sheer quantity of information. The projects REALLY contributed to that. The lectures were really interesting and informative, but I always internalize more by actually doing the things we talk about.

5 Course structured in a very effective manner which allow a very useful and helpful hands on approach. None of the classes before taken in other institutions gave a comparable level of clarity and details

Instructor Related Questions: Benjamin Lerner (6 comments)

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

1 10/10 would recommend. He got a bit drained towards the end of the semester but still put more effort into answering Piazza questions / prowling the lab for people in need of help than any other professor I've had.

2 This is my first course with Prof. Lerner and it has been the best course I have taken in Northeastern University. The professor has always made the class interesting and enjoyable.
The classes have not been a one way lecture by the professor, but instigated discussions from the entire class, which was truly full of learning. The professor never deviated from what he had to cover in the lecture and ensured we have the right tools for each and every aspect of Compilers he covered in that class.
I truly enjoyed every lecture/ assignment/ project of this course and would love to take a higher version of this course (by the same professor). I would highly recommend anyone interested in Compilers to take this course under Prof. Lerner. I am fortunate I got to experience his lectures before I graduate. I had some expectations form this course, and I got much much more than I expected. Thank you Prof. Lerner.

3 More concrete examples are needed in lecture and fewer tangents would be better, but overall Ben did a great job for a first time class. It was painful but everyone learned a lot.

4 Lerner was a fantastic person to lead this course. It was clear that he really understood the material, and his stories about the learning experiences making pyret added a lot to the course. I would recommend Lerner to anyone, I've had him for a couple of courses now, and he does a fantastic job.

5 One of the best instructor I ever had in my student career.

6 Awsome Professor... Coolest professor i have studied under..!!