Renfrcmnt Lrning/Seq Decsn Mkg (Fall 2023)

Instructor: **Platt, Robert**
Subject: **CS**
Catalog & Section: **5180 01**
Course ID: **13503**
Objectives:

Enrollment: **90**
Responses Incl Declines: **26**
Declines: **1**

Instructor Related Questions: Robert Platt (22 comments)

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

1	The course is closely related to Professor's field of research. I liked the professor's way of teaching and his ability to answer almost every question was amazing.
2	The instructor was passionate about the subject.
3	NA
4	I enjoyed his enthusiasm for the topic and I liked that he tried to teach us the mathematical foundations behind the algorithms.
5	The professor obviously has a great deal of interest and experience in the topic. The course material and applications of the topic are very interesting.
6	good knowledge of course and point to point explanation
7	Lectures were easy to follow and the slides were uploaded so I could just pay attention without taking notes. Most of the homeworks had great starter code.
8	the course is very interesting, the homework assignments are very time intensive if you have little to no previous experience with programming learning models
9	the content was interesting and well presented. time was taken to properly address questions. only class i found myself smiling in.
10	Knows a lot, gives also advices based on his experience

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

1	I think it is inexcusable to have a graduate level class without any true syllabus. There is literally no information uploaded to Canvas on how our grades will be calculated, just curious students on Piazza. On top of this, it should not take 4 students posting on Piazza to get a half-hearted guideline on the presentation outcomes. Overall, there needs to be significantly more transparency in the documentation of course expectations.
2	NA
3	I struggled a lot to translate the theoretical to code in the hw. I wish there was some part of the lecture devoted to how the pseudocode might translate to the actual code and maybe some nuances to look out for when implementing algorithms. I also feel that there were insufficient office hours for a course of this difficulty. It would be helpful to have office hours twice a day Mon-Fri, because many times I had class or work during the office hours and could not make it, but I needed help with the assignments.
4	Homeworks: - Homework exercises were often released some number of days after the previous assignment was due. I think making it so that the next assignment came out right when the previous assignment was due would allow some students to start sooner - Homework release days were often up in the air, and only announced the next class period. This resulted in me only finding out the assignment was release when there were 7 days left, rather than it being regularly released at the end of the previous assignment - 8-10 days for assignments. Personally, I think in a vacuum this is more than enough time for assignments, however I think a 2 week cycle would have been more standard. In most of my classes with hefty assignments we get 14 days to complete them. Not necessarily because they take 14 days on their own, but with assignments from other classes and other responsibilities, the extra ~5 or so days really makes a difference. It allows me to plan my work for all my classes much better. I consider myself a good time-manager but I found that often the assignment for this class would be announced with somewhere between 9-7 days remaining and I would often have to scramble to change my work plan to accommodate completing the assignment - Sometimes extensions came towards the very end of an assignment release. This means that while I scrambled as soon as the assignment released in order to complete it as quickly as possible to alleviate time to work on other classes, I would find out days later that I could've allocated sometimes 1-3 extra days for the assignment. I think having them on 2 week cycles would've cleared up this issue with less students asking for extensions as well Lecture: - Lecture most of the time was very engaging and interesting. I really appreciated examples and seeing modern applications of anything we were studying. However, I felt often there were many times when an explanation would be missed or brushed off with an answer to the effect of: "I'm not sure." While I think it is completely valid to not know the answer to every question, I felt this happened in two main cases. 1. The professor is explaining something that he has been talking about, and starts to explain a thought that he realizes he can't recall the reasoning for. Then it gets brushed off as unimportant. In this case, it leaves me a bit confused, because I feel like I was supposed to know whatever was forgotten, but never am told. 2. A student asks a question that the professor can't exactly answer. I think this is fine, as it makes sense this would happen. I felt like more often than not, this would be the last interaction, whereas the professor could make a note and instead come back to the next class with some answers or at least suggestions on where to look for the answer. - I'm aware this was a graduate level class for some, and we have resources at our disposal (textbooks, the web) to find answers to our own questions, but a professor should be a subject matter expert, and I think that with the rates of courses, it is not unreasonable to want some kind of followup on questions that couldn't be answered I will say, I never felt like this sort of thing affected the outcome of the course for me. I never felt like I was expected to know something for the class that was brushed off in lecture, but in terms of my enjoyment of lecture, that was somewhere I thought could be improved. I really did enjoy the course, though, and I thought in most cases lecture was without any fault.
5	everything was good
6	Much of the lecture time was spent repeating information, i.e., the first 30 mins of every lecture were basically a repeat of the last 30 mins of the previous lecture. This made me lose focus.
7	I think more time could have been spent on policy gradient and actor critic. I think we could've moved through bandits - MC faster. could use discovery cluster to ensure students have the compute needed to the longer runtime homeworks. I understand the importance of being able to build the environment that we're working on solving, but i felt that the car salesman one got in the way of focusing on ensuring i understood the algorithm we were learning about.
8	Nothing, the course was great Maybe spending 2 lectures on deep learning was too much - most ppl know this anyway. Maybe put that as a prerequisite?

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

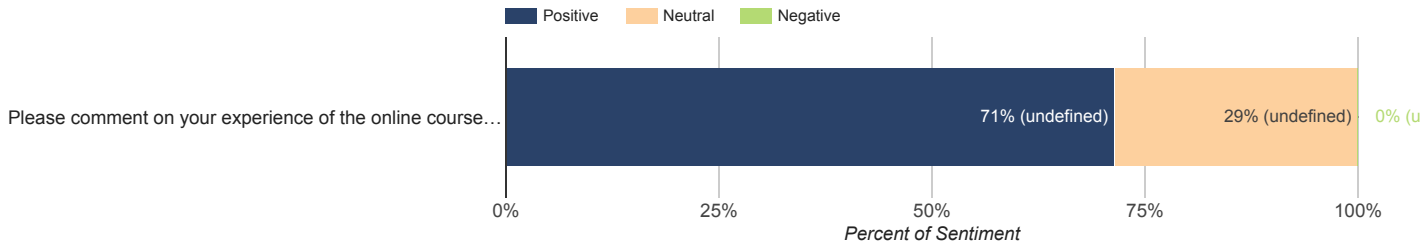
1	Ask questions randomly to students

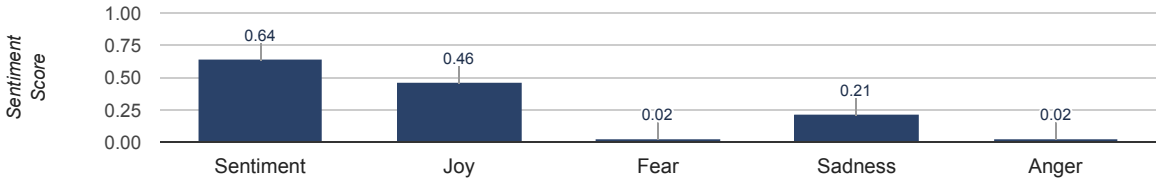
Q: Please expand on the instructor's strengths and/or areas for improvement in facilitating inclusive learning.

2	NA
3	n/a
4	Outside of repeating information, the lectures were fine and generally good. The professor is clearly knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject.

Questions to Assess Students' Online Experience (7 comments)

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





1	The course was amazing, the assignments were challenging but engaging, which taught me a lot about basic concepts to how it's being applied in the real world. ★★★★★
2	The course was very well structured on Canvas ★★★★★
3	NA ★★★☆☆
4	n/a ★★★☆☆
5	We used Piazza for all questions and announcements, which worked fine. ★★★★★
6	Best course material ★★★★★
7	Good ★★★★★

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	I could have spent more time studying the materials on YouTube.
2	NA
3	Had better programming skills before the class
4	If want to a re-evaluation of grades in some homework then the procedure should be explained to the student.
5	I don't feel that I could've done anything differently
6	I watched youtube videos
7	Take notes for the parts of lecture that were done on whiteboard. (Most of the lectures were just reading off of slides which were uploaded to canvas, so note-taking was usually not necessary.)
8	talk to more classmates
9	Read the book "Sutton" more.