

Principles of Programming Lang (Spring 2023)

Instructor: **Barzilay, Eliyahu**

Subject: **CS**

Catalog & Section: **5400 01**

Course ID: **30700**

Objectives:

Enrollment: **102**

Responses Incl Declines: **29**

Declines: **3**

Instructor Related Questions: Eliyahu Barzilay (44 comments)

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

- 1 Very well-informed on material.
- 2 He really knew his stuff.
- 3 Eli is very passionate about PL and software in general, and it was interesting to hear his opinions on things. I think the first 4/5ths of lectures were very useful for my goals as a computer scientist, as I haven't really put time into learning how programming languages worked under the hood until now.
- 4 Knows material well.
- 5 This class has taught me more computer science than the past 2 years of college. Even when going on tangents, the classes really broadened what I knew about CS and programming.
- 6 Enthusiasm and wealth of knowledge.
- 7 Enthusiasm to teach and to facilitate an engaging learning environment
- 8 Eli (L.E.) is a great professor who knows the topics in this course inside and out. He is always willing to talk outside of class on the topics. Has many opinions about various languages and practices today in the computing community.
- 9 N/A
- 10 The course covers a lot of material. The instructor is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about it.
- 11 Eli is extremely passionate and entertaining, honestly, as a professor. Which was great because each lecture was 3 hours long. I think the work he assigned was very fair, and as long as you showed up and put in effort, it was not difficult to be successful in this class. The course website is very easy to use and intuitive, so that was a major strength.
- 12 Eli clearly knows a lot about programming languages. I think this could have been a really good experience if a few things had changed. I appreciated that he gave us breaks
- 13 This instructor definitely has passion and enthusiasm for this class. It's challenging, but you learn a lot. He likes to challenge his students.
- 14 Material was extremely well organized, course structure was succinctly laid. Seriously, well of the best class to go through, which shows years of teaching it and taking feedback seriously to better the experience.
- 15 Seems very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the course content
- 16 interesting topics

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

- 1 Instructor often went off-topic, it made it difficult to focus in a 3 and a half hour long class. Daily pop quizzes were based on things mentioned in the previous class, but were often trick questions. If you weren't paying attention to one part of the long lecture (which was common since class was interrupted by so many tangents) you'd get the question wrong.
- 2 He went on so many tangents that made it even harder to focus in a 3 hour class that is already very difficult. He would also waste time often on these irrelevant tangents. After quizzes he would complain that we wanted to go over answers and then call the questions easy and be shocked that we did not get them correct. That is a poor reflection on his teaching and his willingness to help students when they are clearly struggling.
- 3 The last 1/5th of lectures were a bit confusing, especially the lectures on web development. Although I stayed until the end for almost all of the lectures, I think attendance would be better if this was a twice a week lecture instead of once a week. I know this is probably unlikely though.
- 4 Not completely on professor but hard to focus during 3 hour period. Would be helpful to split class up into a few days. Professor is very hard to approach for students. Often disagrees/criticizes ideas of students.
- 5 Two classes a week would be great. It is very difficult to pay attention after 2 hours of lecture, especially late at night.
- 6 Cut down on the tangents during class, seriously. It's no one else's job to keep him in check regarding going off-course during lectures.
- 7 Stay on topic more lol he went on tangents quite a bit in the beginning of each class
- 8 While there is a lot of information about relative position in the class in terms of grading, I had no idea what letter grade that corresponded to during the semester. Perhaps map it to the previous semester's grade cutoff points as a historical prediction?
- 9 This course needs to be completely redesigned. Over half of the 90-person class leaves immediately after the daily quizzes, which is a clear indication that the way this class is currently being taught is an abject failure. In my opinion, the class would be much more valuable: if it focused more on concepts and much less on Racket (because 99% of the class will never use Racket again after this), if the professor was much less hostile towards students, and if the professor did not rant for over half the lecture period each week.
- 10 ungraded plqs at the end of a lecture or at the bottom of class notes- sometimes I had misunderstandings on topics that were brought out and resolved during plqs, seems like an opportunity to use them like practice problems in a textbook
- 11 I am not sure if this is in Eli's control, but if the class could be held in two sessions instead of one extremely long session, that would make it so much easier to retain the information. OR he could try implementing some sort of flipped classroom dynamic, so the entire 3 hours was not just lecturing.
- 12 PLQs: every week we have a quiz in class, where you get around 60 seconds for each question and there's a countdown clock on the screen. Not only were these incredibly stressful, every week there was at least one trick question. At multiple points there would be one answer choice that seemed correct based on the notes posted online, then he would say that that was wrong and you can't just rely on the posted notes to learn everything. This was a really frustrating way of being evaluated and the course would be way better if there were just homeworks or homeworks and take home quizzes.
- 13 The professor's manner of speaking can be intense and loud sometimes. I think it makes some students fearful of speaking up. He is definitely honest and straightforward, but there are more respectful ways of approaching students' questions and inquiries.

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

- 14 Tangents and student interactions. In terms of tangents, it's not bad at all! Tangents are good ways to get insights about the subject material (or related material) that goes beyond the scope of the class. However, it's good to know how to limit the time for a tangent. I will say, Eli is very good about getting back on track.

In terms of interactions - some students took too much of Eli's time. A student might not like a grade, how something is done, or disagree with a statement Eli made. These are all fine, but during the class isn't always the best time to do it. So, I think Eli needs to sometimes just "shutdown" a student train of "loud" thoughts, and hear them out after class. E.G., yes, we all have opinions about code formatters. However, we don't need to have a back and forth between a student with... minimal experience and Eli, a professor/professional with... not-minimal experience.

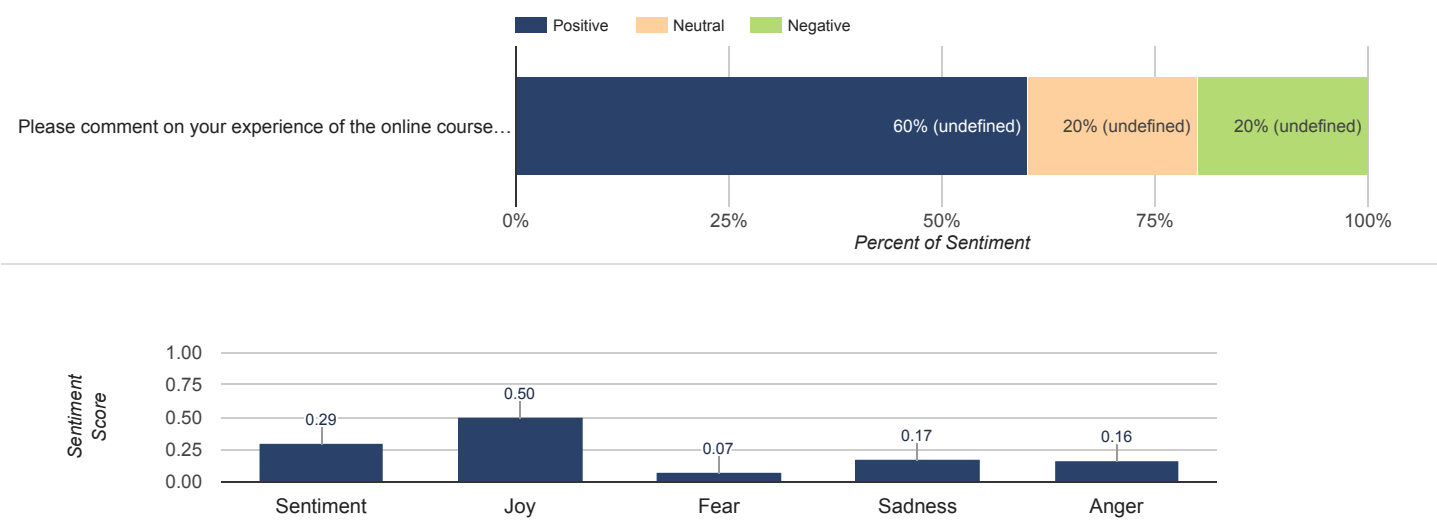
Lastly, yes, students *** about everything, and it's hard to please everyone. I love that Eli asks for suggestions on everything, but he doesn't need to ask for suggestions on everything. Somethings do need to be "this is the way."
- 15 Stop going off on tangents and have more control of the class
- 16 Nothing to do with the instructor, but the time the course was offered was detrimental to my learning because it was so late in the day
- 17 let us know what will be covered in the next lesson

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

- 1 N/A
- 2 3 hour long late night classes aren't great for learning
- 3 I think Eli has a lot of passion for the material, and at times he can be a bit blunt with students when they ask questions that indicate the student is severely confused with the material. Regardless, he is never rude or mean. Like I said before, Eli makes this class easy to succeed in if you put in the effort. I think the students that have an issue with him are typically those students who expect to have everything handed to them, and are quick to blame the instructor for their lack of understanding when in reality if they just read the lecture notes they would be fine. Overall I enjoyed this class and Eli's teaching style. He definitely knows what he is talking about and I learned a lot.
- 4 Knows his stuff but could be more patient/gentle with students. Hard to approach.
- 5 Overall, the environment in the class was not very inclusive. Eli will sometimes react to questions by saying that they are nonsensical or the answer is obvious, so I did not feel comfortable asking questions in class. He would also reference technologies or concepts I'd never heard of before without explaining, and discuss them with the students who knew about them already. There seemed to be a "tech bro" environment in the class, and the conversation was incredibly male dominated. This was probably the most unwelcoming class I've taken at Northeastern
- 6 tl;dr - best organized class, Eli knows his ***, is responsive to feedback. Needs to make sure class time is not taking up with too much back-and-forth with a student.
- 7 Very aggressive in teaching, but quite open for communication. Felt like I was always wanted in class.
- 8 Some systems, such as asking for more time on PLQs or even the PLQ system itself, don't work that well. Points for talking in class and on Piazza are stupid.
- 9 Don't get into full-blown arguments with students regarding quiz answers. I know it's tempting, and I know there are some real idiots out there, but just tell them you'll take a look at it and move on.
- 10 Very good at asking for feedback throughout the semester and handling criticism well - clearly wants the best for students' learning
- 11 knows a lot.

Questions to Assess Students' Online Experience (10 comments)

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



- 1 Mostly in person. Only ~3 classes online. But met once a week for ~3 hours, which was a little hard to sit through. ★★☆☆☆
- 2 the online materials are more thorough and in depth than probably any other class★★★★★
- 3 Piazza questions often went unanswered for days. ★★☆☆☆
- 4 The class was in person, so I am not sure this is completely applicable. Eli was good at getting students to participate in person. ★★★★★
- 5 every time the class was on Zoom Eli seemed to struggle with it a bit★★★★☆
- 6 Even more so than almost any online class I've taken, the materials provided online (primarily through the professor's website) are better than any other I've taken. ★★★★★

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

- 7 I wish more classes had a website like this one, was incredibly useful throughout the course ★★★★★
- 8 The professor expects a lot and gives very little. ★☆☆☆☆
- 9 Instructor was very short/ineffective/borderline rude in most piazza interactions. ★★★★★
- 10 good ★★★★★

Student Self-Assessment of their Effort to Achieve Course Outcomes (10 comments)

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

- 1 Reviewed course notes a little more often. Sometimes forgot what material we had just covered, and that impacted the mini quizzes we had each class.
- 2 Treated the lecture notes like the bible.
- 3 This class was held once a week for 3 hours, and it is very difficult for me to focus that long in one sitting. Regardless, I could have done a better job at trying to focus the whole time, because I did miss a lot of valuable information when I did happen to zone out.
- 4 Although it was difficult, I should have taken more notes in class
- 5 Stayed for whole lecture.
- 6 Attended more office hours and sign up for the tutor program (but who has the time :{)
- 7 Start reading through lecture notes even when attending class, they really helped understanding the material, but I only did this halfway through the course.
- 8 Nothing.
- 9 Do a full read of the notes before class starts instead of a skim. And voice record previous classes.
- 10 read the material in advance