

Instructor: **Wong, Lok Sang**Subject: **CS**Catalog & Section: **5180 01**Course ID: **15756**

Objectives:

Enrollment: **46**Responses Incl Declines: **34**Declines: **1**

## Instructor Related Questions: Lok Sang Wong (32 comments)

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

- 1 I really like this course because of the way the instructor teaches it and his well-prepared lectures. I enjoyed this course mostly out of any other course in my masters since it made me learn new practical skills with deep understanding.
- 2 I like the courses offered by Dr. Wong, he is very passionate, enthusiastic and helpful. And in no way you would feel that you do not belong in class. He creates an environment where having doubts and questions is healthy and inclusive. Really enjoyed the interactions throughout the course
- 3 The lectures were organized in an easy to understand way. Even the complex concepts were explained well.
- 4 Understanding and Approachable with a love for the material
- 5 Overall structure is good.
- 6 Professor Wong's enthusiasm and passion for RL makes the class very engaging and thought provoking. I enjoyed my time in this class a lot, and it was quite valuable. I would recommend anyone to take this class with him. One thing that stands out in particular is professor Wong's precise and clear explanations that helped me understand concepts of the textbook much better.
- 7 The instructor is really enthusiasm about the course
- 8 Overall, I really enjoyed this course, and I would love to take an advanced-level reinforcement learning course with Professor Wong if he teaches one in the future!

One of the best qualities of Professor Wong is his eager openness to feedback. There were times during the semester where students raised time-management concerns regarding the assignments: maybe a deadline collided with another course, or the assignments were too difficult, or we had not sufficiently covered the material on an upcoming assignment, etc. Whenever one of these concerns was raised, Prof. Wong was very accommodating and often made adjustments to help us balance our other responsibilities (like research). Sometimes, he let the class vote on Piazza for how to best handle the issue. This type of flexibility is nearly unprecedented in my experience, and it shows that Prof. Wong really cares about his students.

Although the assignments tended to be somewhat lengthy given the weekly due dates, overall they struck a great balance between challenging and feasible. They were very educational and grading was fair.

Finally, the course project was extremely enjoyable; Professor Wong offered almost unlimited creativity when we were choosing ideas, and helped us stay on track along the way with ungraded milestones and occasional personal interviews. His constant feedback made the project very approachable.

- 9 I think Professor Wong is a wonderful instructor and teaches very well.  
  
The class materials were very well organized and conducted.
- 10 Lawson has a great feedback system where we can tell him what we like and dislike about his lectures and assignments, and he modifies the rest of the course accordingly. He really cares about doing his best to help us learn.
- 11 Great organization and thinking from a student's perspective
- 12 Prof. Wong was very responsive
- 13 Very good at introducing and explaining new concepts and helping us to understand them. Everything was very organized. Open-minded and humble instructor. 20 out of 10 instructor. Would strongly recommend.

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

- 1 None
- 2 I think the course went as per my expectation, but there is no substitute to in person class interactions :)
- 3 Some of the assignments felt a bit tedious. Load could possibly be reduced without diminishing impactfulness
- 4 Easier assignments
- 5 The assignment level and length can be improved.
- 6 N/A
- 7 please produce some detailed feedback on homework, how we can make it better.
- 8 While I generally approved of the homework assignments, they sometimes took too much time to complete to be reasonable for the weekly frequency. This was partially because Professor Wong did not provide coding templates for the software assignments, in stark contrast to most reinforcement learning course. While I ideologically agree with this decision (implementing experiments from scratch proved to be a valuable educational exercise), it needed some calibration in the beginning half of the course. A complete newcomer to reinforcement learning might have had some difficulty keeping up with these assignments initially. Although they were advertised to take around 15 hours, this estimate usually didn't seem to account for the time spent actually studying the material or debugging the code. Fortunately, Prof. Wong was receptive to our feedback and toned down the intensity in the latter half, which was greatly appreciated. My recommendation for future iterations of this course would be to continue to balance the length of these assignments; however, I did like the content of these assignments very much, and they often sprinkled in some creative aspects that made them enjoyable.
- 9 I felt that the class had a lot of focus on programming and while I enjoyed it, I think we didn't cover the harder theoretical aspects in assignments and I think that was missing in the course. I did learn a lot though - I feel like we could have gone deeper conceptually.
- 10 I think the beginning learning curve of this class is quite high. It assumes we know a lot of python and math.
- 11 Manage the pace of the course a bit better
- 12 Maybe shorten the assignments
- 13 Maybe find a way to share solutions to homework?

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

- 1 Giving the assignments to build from scratch.
- 2 no
- 3 Lawson is very respectful of all students.
- 4 I think sometimes some lectures were very involved with mathematics and the instructor can focus a little bit more on the initial introduction or motivation to learn although he really makes an effort for it but for some parts I felt I just drowned in the sea of knowledge. Overall I like how he explains pseudocode algorithms part by part.
- 5 Follows syllabus and gives the course a strong sense of structure, which I love. Not only very open and willing to listen to different opinions from students, but also actively willing to make changes to improve our learning experiences without sacrificing the challenges of the course.
- 6 N/A

**Questions to Assess Students' Online Experience** (12 comments)

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

- 1 The online environment was a bit hard to follow. This course could have been better with on-ground classes.
- 2 the homework is overwhelmed
- 3 The Piazza discussions helped me stay connected and the other students despite the online learning. Professor Wong also encouraged in-class participation for students who were tuning in remotely, which made the class more interactive and enjoyable.
- 4 I think it was very well managed. Professor Wong is a skilled instructor.
- 5 Lawson effectively combined the in-person and virtual crowds to create one inclusive classroom experience.
- 6 Enjoyed having access to recorded lectures that would not normally be available
- 7 Prof. Wong and TAs tried their best and made great efforts to ensure the quality of online learning
- 8 I got the chance to visit the classroom few times so I would say the overall experience of hybrid mode was good given the best we can do in the current times, sometimes some issues were there in online mode like the mic not working for students to ask direct question but that too was very rare and in this event professor was very accommodating of all the queries via chat. so overall enjoyed the course!
- 9 It was sufficient enough to learn the material. Professor was also very interactive
- 10 I hate online learning, nothing replaces the classroom
- 11 I really like that the professor took feedback after each class (regarding both lectures and assignments) and adjusted the course dynamically in response to our feedback.
- 12 Professor Wong has been great and has adapted the needs of this class to online very effectively.

**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 Assignments could have been made less tough.
- 2 None
- 3 I don't know, I mean, I spent a lot of time on this course, but the output is not obviously
- 4 Start the homework assignments earlier, they often took longer than expected to code/debug.
- 5 I wish it was more theoretical, other than that it was really good and helped me learn
- 6 Not much, honestly.
- 7 It was great in all aspects
- 8 Read more papers and materials in this area
- 9 Less amount of assignment loads