

# Trend 4: Final Writing Assignment

Write a short (500-1000 word) essay summarizing what you learned in this course. Include a paragraph (100-words) suggesting specific improvements to future offerings.

Overall we learned a lot throughout the semester. Coming from a GIS background, a lot of what was covered in class were new topics for me, however we found the content of the course to be interesting and well presented. We specifically learned a lot about spatial databases and SQL. We think the unit where we learned the most was the query processing and optimization unit. We have used a SQL database before but we had never considered what was going on in the background. This unit will help to format my queries better and understand the results more completely. It was also interesting to see the comparison of how the computer science world thinks about spatial concepts and executes them as opposed to our own understanding (field/object model vs. raster/vector model).

We have a few suggested improvements for the course. While the content and delivery of the course were great, we think there were a few organizational issues that made it difficult for us as students to understand what was going on. Turning in homework proved to be difficult. There are a lot of parts to the homeworks and each part was supposed to be turned in a different way (hard copy, emailed to the TA, group website, etc.). This made it really confusing and easy to forget a small part of the homework. It would be better if the homework was turned in as one document or folder to one location. Even with this Final Writing Assignment - it was not clearly stated on the course website anywhere how the homework should be turned in. Using something like Moodle (which the University has a license to) would be really helpful. Additionally, when TA announcements or Instructor announcements were posted on the class website, the students in the class were not informed that a new post had been made because the website does not send a digest to all participants. As a result, we missed several announcements and only saw them weeks after they had been posted. Some of them would have been helpful to us when doing the homework. Again, using Moodle for the course could solve this problem as it automatically emails all participants when an instructor or TA makes a post - or simply making these announcements in class would be much more beneficial to the class.

Lastly, the course syllabus changed numerous times throughout the semester. While we understand that certain circumstances come up and last minute changes need to be made, we felt that the amount of changes and shuffling of the schedule exceeded any other class we have taken. The dates of the student presentations were changed several times and two assignment due dates we also shifted up, however the homeworks were not uploaded to the website in a timely manner to account for this shift in the schedule. Having jobs and taking several other courses it's difficult for us to adjust our schedules last minute and we like having a long term vision and plan. A more firm syllabus would definitely have been helpful for us.

For the most part, we really enjoyed this course and felt that we learned a great deal. Taking CSCI 5715 has made both of us more interested in computer science/spatial data topics and has encouraged us to each take additional CSCI courses in the future. Thanks!