

03/24/22

Dear Dean Staton,

I believe academia is at its best when we engage in rigorous discussion, build community, and learn from each other. I'm a current TA, and last Spring I TAed two classes at the Media Lab. It has been my goal as a TA and lecturer to facilitate open, supportive environments where we can cooperatively engage in challenging conversations.

Over IAP, I created MAS.S73 to build that supportive ecosystem around a deeply important, yet largely neglected topic at our lab— the replication and generalizability crisis facing social science. This issue has inspired large-scale investment at peer institutions like Stanford and UPenn, and I saw a need to formally address at MIT as well. In MAS.S73, we discussed the most important failures of methodology, statistics, and philosophy in our discipline. Our work frequently fails to capture useful insights about people and situations outside of the narrow slice that we study. It is a delicate and high-stakes topic; one which we tackled openly, honestly, and with humility.

Though I was the course's sole administrator and primary designer/lecturer, my advisors and fellow graduate students were instrumental in its success. Matt Groh and Noah Jones—two graduate students— also delivered lectures. It brought us together as we supported each other's development as educators and researchers. Our effort was rewarded with a class full of engaged, inquisitive, and hard-working students. I was gratified that our attendees consistently stayed late to continue the discussion despite our long course lectures. We built a strong community in the classroom that had an impact on everyone involved.

I'm also encouraged that our course—in the face of a pandemic— brought together such a diverse set of students. IAP this year was difficult; we faced a last-minute administrative decision to dissuade a return to campus in the face of omicron's surge. Despite these complications, we averaged ten students per class. Moreover, we opened the class such that anyone could participate, including an unaffiliated student from Mexico. Our students ranged from freshmen undergraduates to late-stage PhD candidates, from disciplines spanning engineering, design, and cognitive science. It was wonderful to engage with students from such a range of ages, levels, backgrounds, and expertise in one setting. They all commented on the value they took away from the experience.

Over the course of my PhD, I've discovered that I have a passion for teaching. I've volunteered for these responsibilities because I feel enriched when I connect with others through learning. I'm honored that others have appreciated my work— the kind words from colleagues, students, and mentors in the wake of my nomination are humbling and inspiring. Next year, I hope to find an academic placement so that I can continue teaching. The Goodwin Award would make me a more competitive candidate. I'm deeply grateful for this nomination, and I would be honored to have the chance to continue teaching as a representative of MIT and the Goodwin Award in my post-PhD career.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Ramsay", with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

David Ramsay

TA Responsibilities

Spring 2021 to Spring 2022

Spring '21

MAS.S61 – AI and Mental Health

Roz Picard's class; served as the primary TA alongside Yuanbo Liu. Responsibilities included:

- Help in design and updating website, reviewing course homework, assisting with grades.
- Consulting with groups on group projects; mentoring groups through IRB process for their projects.
- In charge of all hybrid A/V setup, as the only hybrid class running at the media lab during the semester. Early every class with personal equipment to create an effective hybrid classroom environment.
- Delivered one of the thirteen main course lectures; two hours on loneliness and tech-mediated connection.

David's Instructor Rating: **7.0 / 7.0 / 7.0** (3 ratings, 7.0 out of 7.0 overall)

Avg For Other Course Instructors: 6.6 / 7.0 / 6.8

Anonymous Comments for David:

"Best professor I have had in a long time"

MAS.S76 – Adventures in Sensing

Joe Paradiso's class; served as a TA alongside several other RA's in Joe's group. Responsibilities included:

- Recruiting and organizing two visiting lecturers—Bunnie Huang and Shoshanna Zuboff.
- MCing and introducing these lectures.
- Organizing reading lists, designing an assignment, and running class discussions on relevant topics.

David's Instructor Rating: **7.0 / 7.0 / 7.0** (2 ratings, 7.0 out of 7.0 overall)

Avg For Other Course Instructors: 7.0 / 7.0 / 7.0

Anonymous Comments for David: --

IAP '22

MAS.S73 – Moving Beyond the Replication Crisis

Originator and creator of the class, a 3-credit hour IAP class consisting of 5, 2-hour sessions and a major project on the replication crisis. This class was geared towards a real, unmet need in the media lab to address fundamental challenges in methodology and insight from social science research, and to chart a path forward for any research that seeks to quantify human experience and behavior.

It is such an important topic that no resources until this class at MIT have addressed adequately. Other top tier research institutions are creating huge initiatives to address this topic; there are major replicability initiatives at UPenn (<https://credlab.wharton.upenn.edu/>), UCBerkeley (<https://www.bitss.org/>), and Stanford (<https://metrics.stanford.edu/>), with many more universities signing up for similar initiatives (The Center for Open Science shows buy-in from UMichigan, UCL, USC, Oxford, and Queensland for their pre-registration efforts).

Responsibilities included:

- Created a syllabus and course summary; scaffolded course content.
- Created course marketing material and website; publicized/marketed the course.
- Registered the class and graded students.
- Handled all administrative tasks; course communication, room reservations, and zoom setup.
- Provided a hybrid classroom and recorded lectures using personal A/V equipment due to pandemic surge over IAP.
- Delivered two main 1.5 hour lectures (the first and last) as well as a final short lecture before student presentations.
- Designed the course homework.
- Oversaw student presentations; answered questions about the homework and graded.
- Led discussions in each class.

- Recruited and worked with two other graduate students to provide an additional two lectures that fit the course outline. It was their first lectures delivered as part of a for-credit MIT course.
- Archived course material for other students to access at <http://replication.media.mit.edu>.

Spring '22

MAS.836 – Sensor Technologies for Interactive Environments

Joe Paradiso's class; served as a TA alongside several other RA's in Joe's group. David has TAed this class four times, once as the lead TA.

- Delivering one of the thirteen main two-hour course lectures (typically on chemical/particulate sensing; tentative, but this has been true for the last two versions of the course)
- Leading recitation sections with ~1 hour lectures on basic electronics
- Hosting office hours and helping students with problem sets and lab work
- Grading problem sets
- Evaluating final projects and helping with grade assignments
- In the past, responsibilities have included redesigning the homework and labs, reorganizing course material, and delivering multiple additional recitation lectures

Class In progress; previous feedback as lead TA of MAS.836 (2015):

David's Instructor Rating: **6.0 / 7.0 / 7.0** (5 ratings, 6.8 out of 7.0 overall)

Avg For Other Course Instructors: 6.2 / 6.65 / 6.35

Anonymous Comments for David:

"Best TA ever!"

"David organized recitations and made himself available for help. He knows the subject well and he is also very good at explaining the concepts. He has been extremely patient and helpful to answer my questions on the homework and labs."

"Helped us immensely on the labs & recitations, excellent TA"