Algorithms (Spring 2024)

Instructor: **Mwaura, Jonathan**
Subject: **CS**
Catalog & Section: **5800 04**
Course ID: **35075**
Objectives:

Enrollment: **15**
Responses Incl Declines: **11**
Declines: **0**

Instructor Related Questions: Jonathan Mwaura (17 comments)

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

1	The professor really makes an effort to engage with his students. He uses literally every second of our allotted time together as effectively as possible. He's very knowledgeable about the subject, willing to answer questions, and encourages discussion. He provides a lot of supplementary materials.
2	Professor M. is fantastic! He knows his subject, and he genuinely cares about his students learning, not just checking a box for doing the class. He will help as much as you need him to.
3	Professor clearly loves the material and his excitement is contagious. He knows it all very well.
4	Instructor is extremely knowledgable in the subject of algorithms. Very cordial and professional.
5	Clarity in his lectures
6	Prof Jonathan passion is reflected in his teaching, he is usually quite well versed with all the material. His assignments were extremely challenging but lot of learnings to gain, plus with a lot of theory there were good leetcode problems too

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

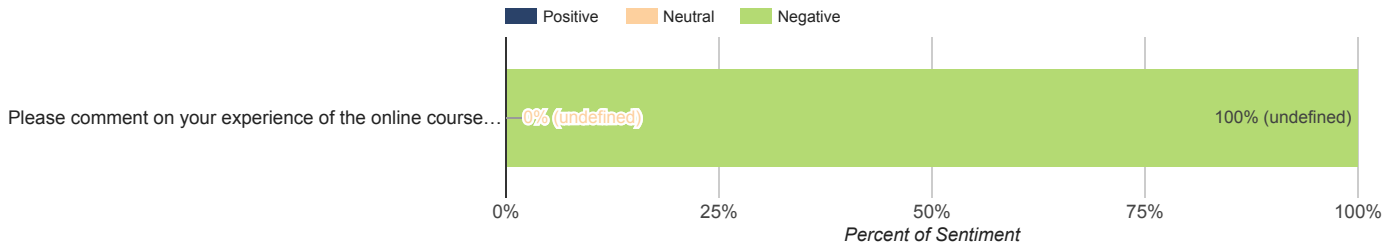
1	Better organization. The lectures did not line up with homework assignments or modules, which made the course hard to follow. Additionally, while I appreciate the Professor's use of technology to provide a better class experience, the use of Teams made the course more confusing than necessary. It was hard to find the course information, materials, and supplementary materials, and because I do not receive notifications from Teams through the web application, I often missed announcements/discourse. Additionally, it seemed that office hours were more accommodating to students who did not work during the day.
2	The only thing I found a little challenging was navigating teams Gradescope Canvas. I was always worried I would miss something.
3	It's a LOT of material to cover in a short time. I have seen these algorithms twice now from undergraduate. In a graduate level course I would have expected to see more focus on fewer algorithms and techniques with deeper analysis of each one. This could just be my ignorance of 5000 level, or it could be that NE is catering to students in the align program.
4	Please update the syllabus to state the expected hours students need to dedicate to this class. I spent on average 30 hours per week for the this class. It would helpful to advise students the expectation for this class is well above the mandatory 10-16 hours graduate classes. The textbook Introduction to Algorithms by Thomas Cormen, Charles Leiserson, Ronald Rivest, and Clifford Stein was fantastic. The other textbook Algorithm design by Jon Kleinberg and Eva Taros was not useful. In parallel, most of the Northeastern module videos were not useful and unpractical. A suggestion would be to update those module videos for this class.
5	Improve assignments and quizzes. The topic in the problem set is always ahead of what we learned in the class as a result students struggle to catch up on assignments. Don't release all quizzes at the end of the semester. Grade assignments on time not after weeks. Reply to students' messages and don't ignore them. Publish assignment grading rubrics that's why students know how to write answers to assignment questions.
6	He rushed towards those end topics which I feel need more time, He should cut down on talking so much about asymptomatic notations and Data structures maybe and spend more time on DP and NP

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

1	A true teacher.
2	The learning was inclusive. Prof did a great job including the students who phoned in each week. This material is just hard.
3	Give more practical questions (like solving questions and then uploading source code) for assignments. There are only 10% of questions are leet code practical questions others are theory questions. Give feedback for a final project proposal. I never received feedback for my final project proposal even though I requested to review my project but the professor ignored my messages.
4	More focus on dynamic programming in class.
5	IT was a exhausting but a great course, he is one of the best Profs in Roux atleast

Questions to Assess Students' Online Experience (4 comments)

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



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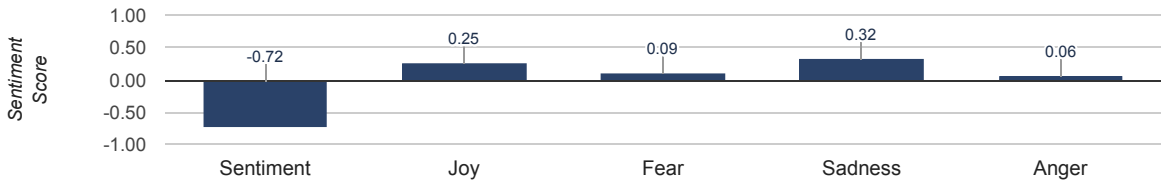

1	The professor made a huge effort to connect with students and help the students connect with each other. Unfortunately, I just don't feel the experience in Teams was very impactful or organized. It was difficult to find class materials and keep track of conversations, and I did not consistently receive notifications for activity in Teams. ★☆☆☆☆
2	The hardest part of attending virtually is that many of the students in the class had very heavy accents and it was difficult to hear their contributions to the class. Prof. M. did his best to recap what they said usually, but I wonder if there's a way to get better mics in some of the class rooms? ★☆☆☆☆
3	Course materials didn't seem to correlate to the class lectures or homework in an easy-to-understand way. I found the online recorded lectures largely unhelpful. They seem to essentially be someone reading from a textbook. Most of the algorithms we covered are taught in a much more understandable manner by Abdul Bari on youtube. I gave up on the online videos about halfway through the semester. ★☆☆☆☆
4	Course assignments are disorganized. Syllabus and canvas grading criteria are different . ★☆☆☆☆

Student Self-Assessment of their Effort to Achieve Course Outcomes (5 comments)

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

1	Being more proactive about starting assignments sooner. Attending lectures in person and engaging more with classes. Asking more questions.
2	DId the best I could. THis subject is very hard and I always seem to spend 20 hours a week on homework and reading.
3	Asked more questions, do more prep work prior to lectures.
4	Improve communication skills. I had been waiting for a reply for weeks when I sent a message to the professor.
5	Attend office hours for clarifications in problem sets