

Project Title: **Course and Teacher Evaluations CTEC Spring 2025**

Courses Audience: **58**

Responses Received: **36**

Response Ratio: **62.1%**

Report Comments

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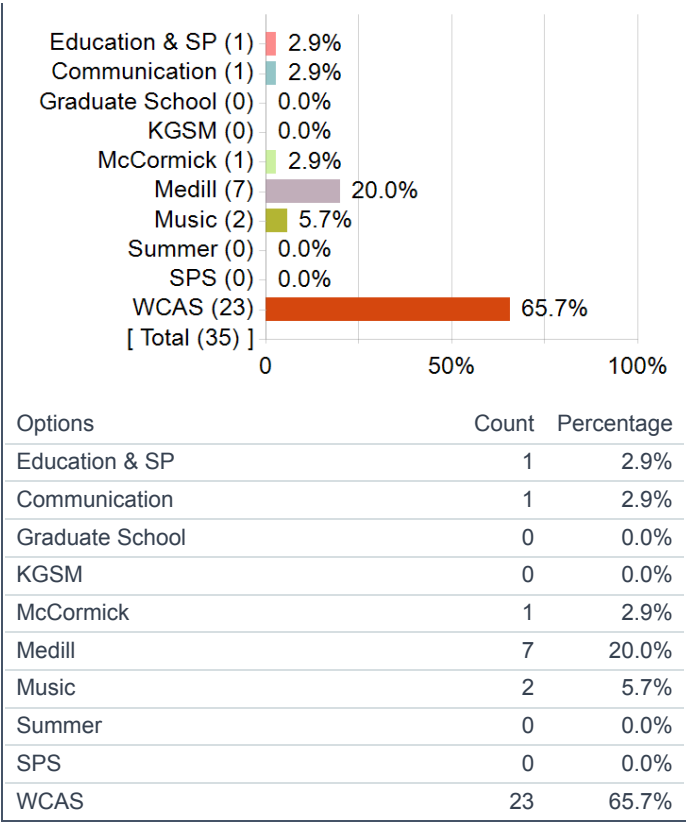
Course Evaluations

Instructor	Course
Gustavo Diaz	POLI_SCI_210-0_20: Intro to Empirical Methods

DEMOGRAPHICS

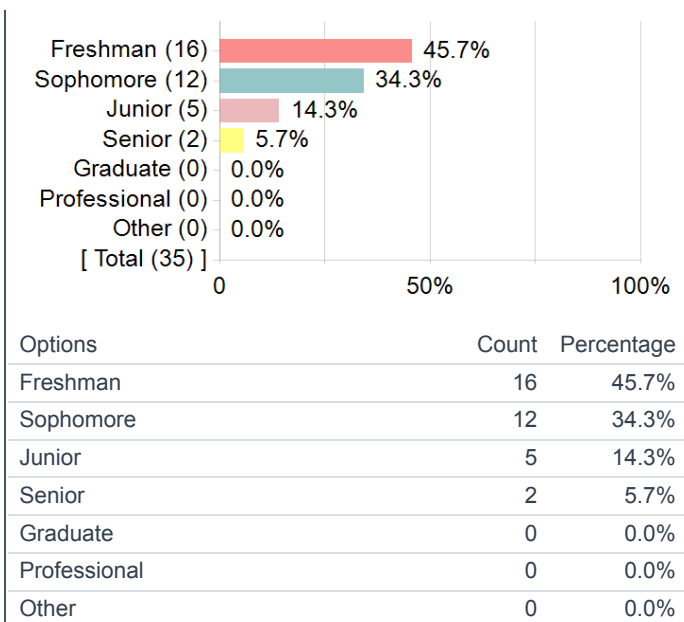
Your School

Your School

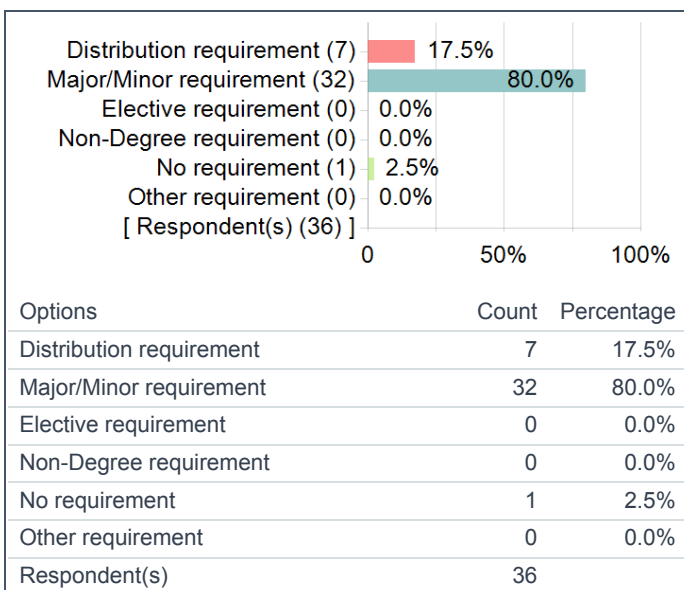


Your Class

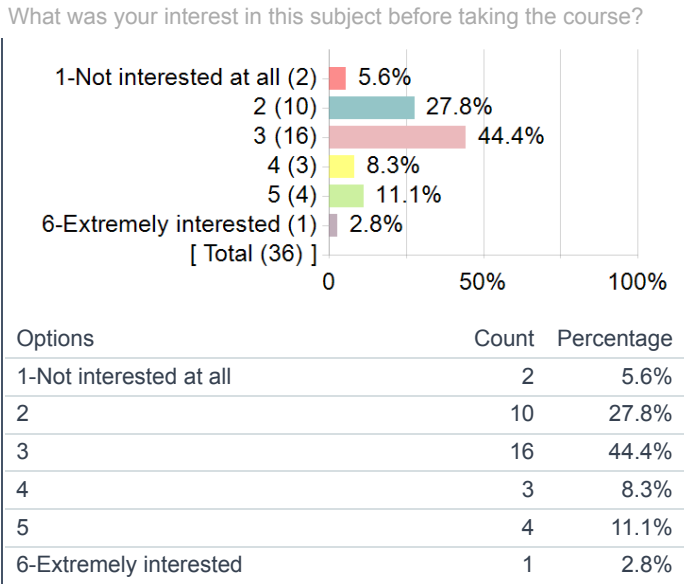
Your Class



What is your reason for taking the course? (mark all that apply)

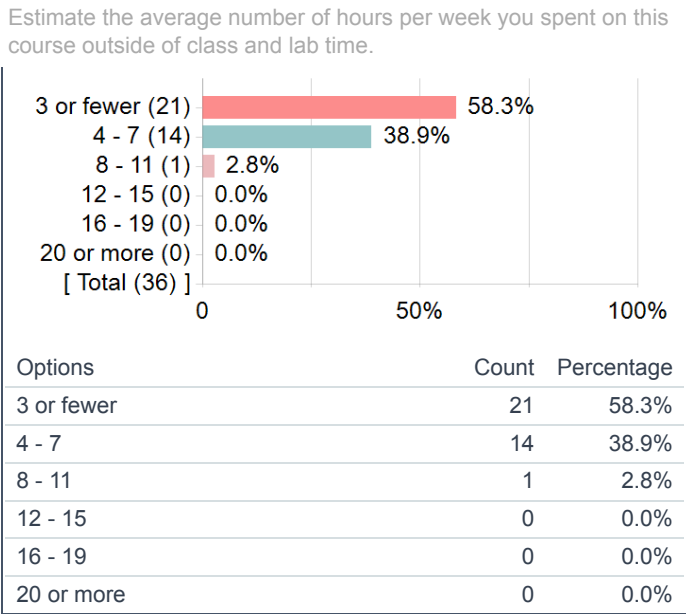


What was your Interest in this subject before taking the course?



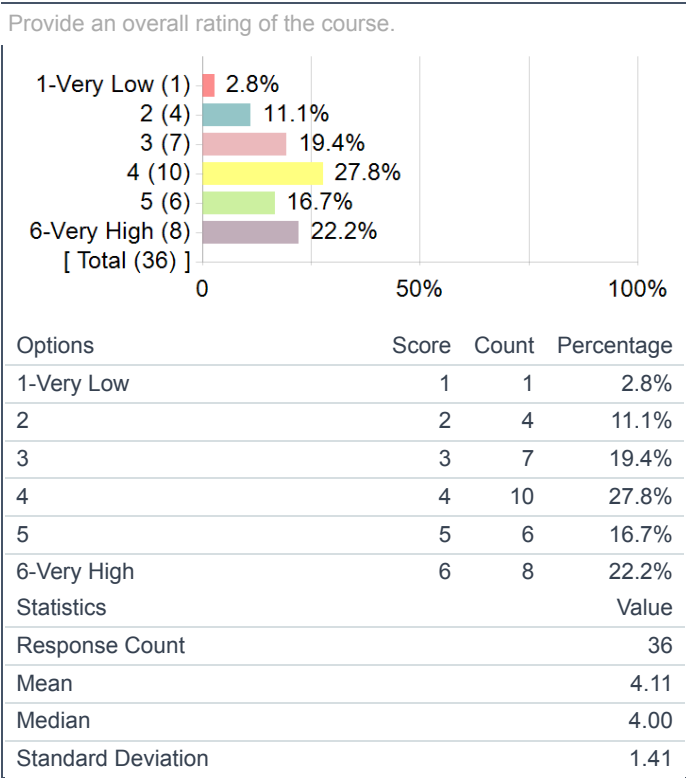
TIME-SURVEY QUESTION

Estimate the average number of hours per week you spent on this course outside of class and lab time.

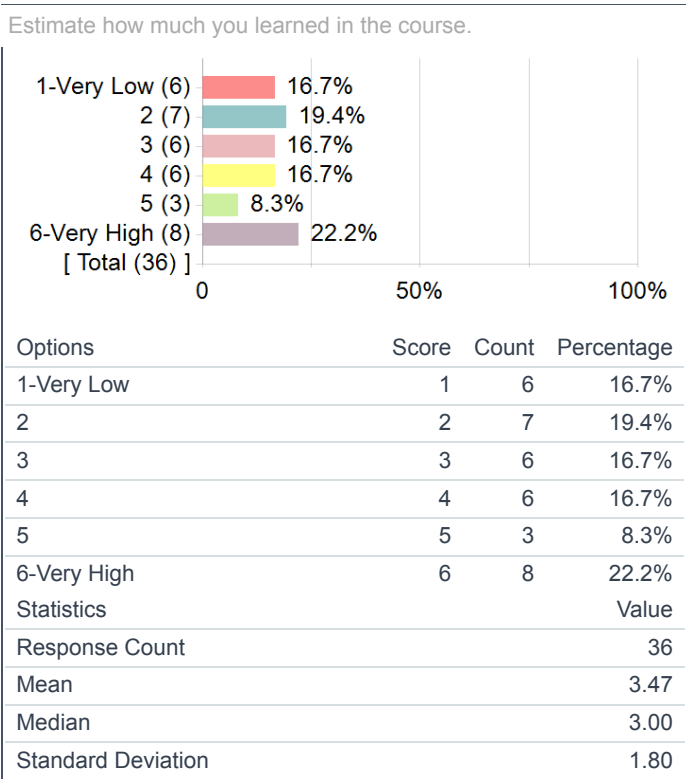


COURSE QUESTIONS

Provide an overall rating of the course.

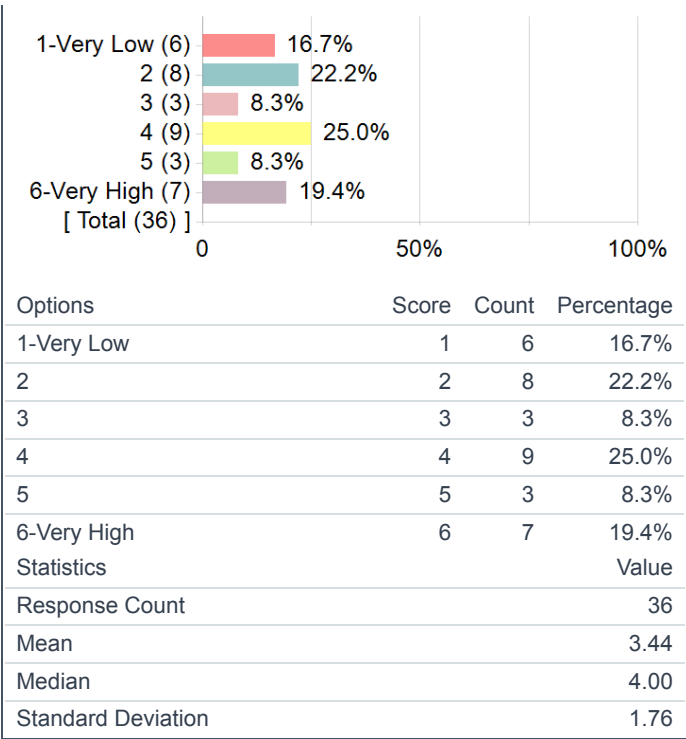


Estimate how much you learned in the course.



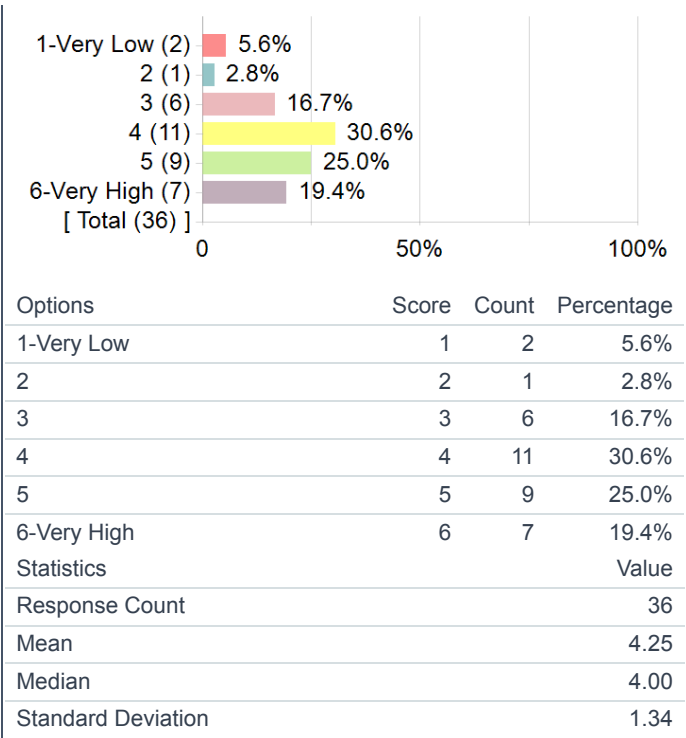
Rate the effectiveness of the course in challenging you intellectually.

Rate the effectiveness of the course in challenging you intellectually.



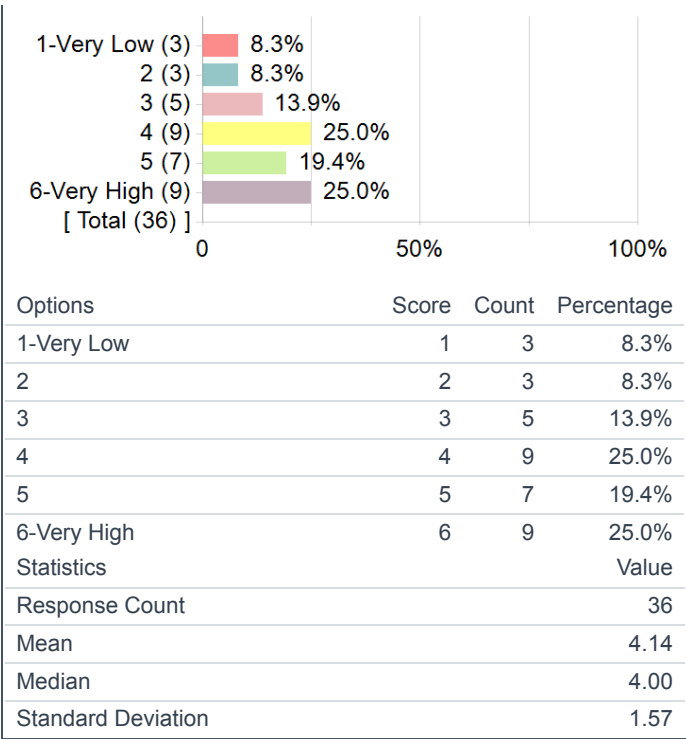
Rate the instructional materials (texts, audiovisual materials, etc.) used in this course.

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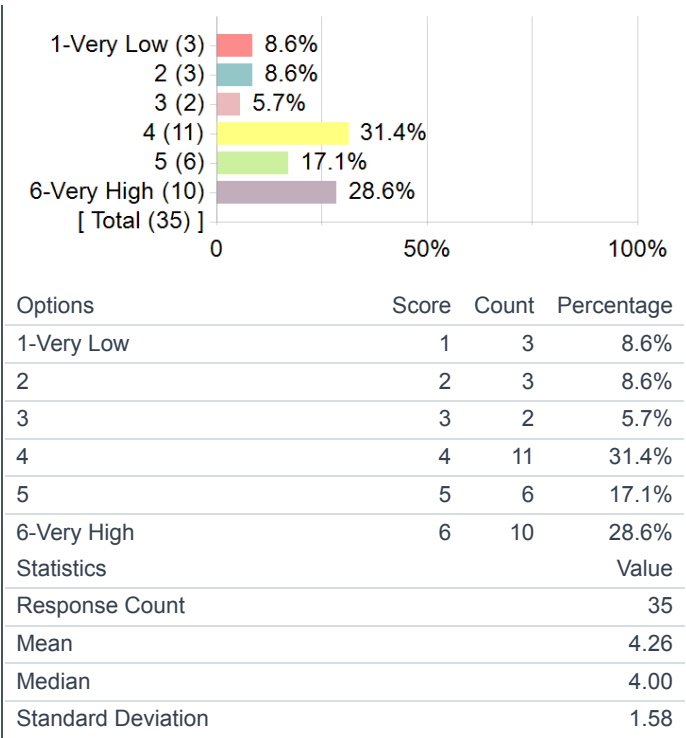
Rate how well the overall organization of the course facilitated learning.

Rate how well the overall organization of the course facilitated learning.



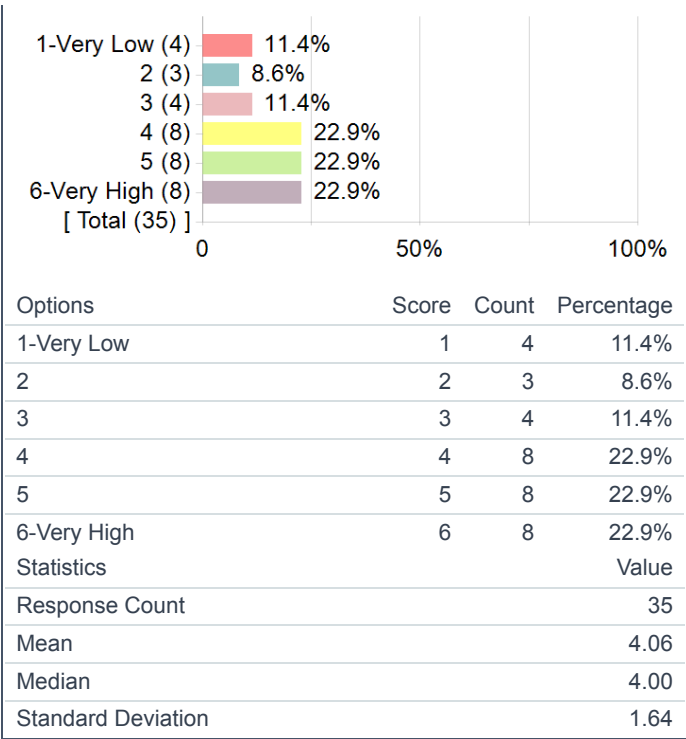
Rate how well this course helped you improve your ability to read critically.

Rate how well this course helped you improve your ability to read critically.



Rate how well the examinations accurately measured your achievement in this course.

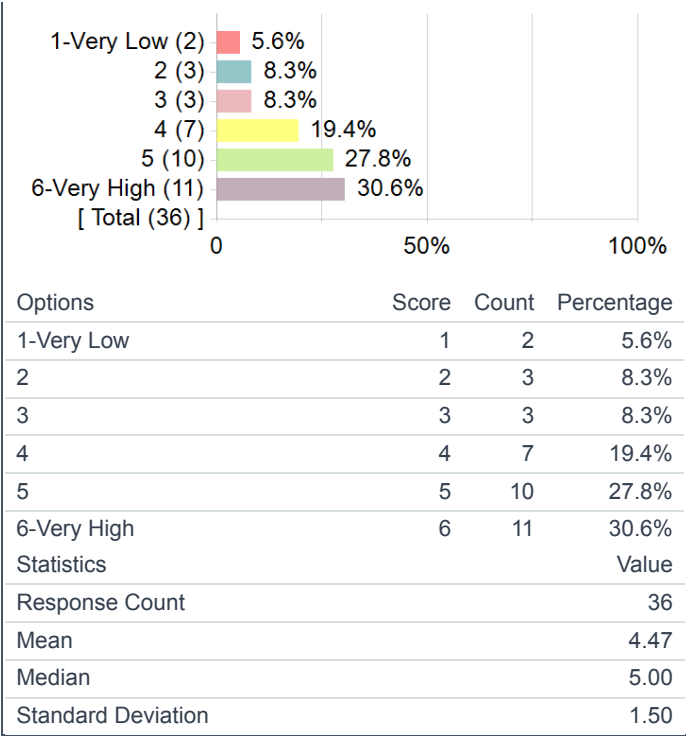
Rate how well the examinations accurately measured your achievement in this course.



INSTRUCTOR QUESTIONS

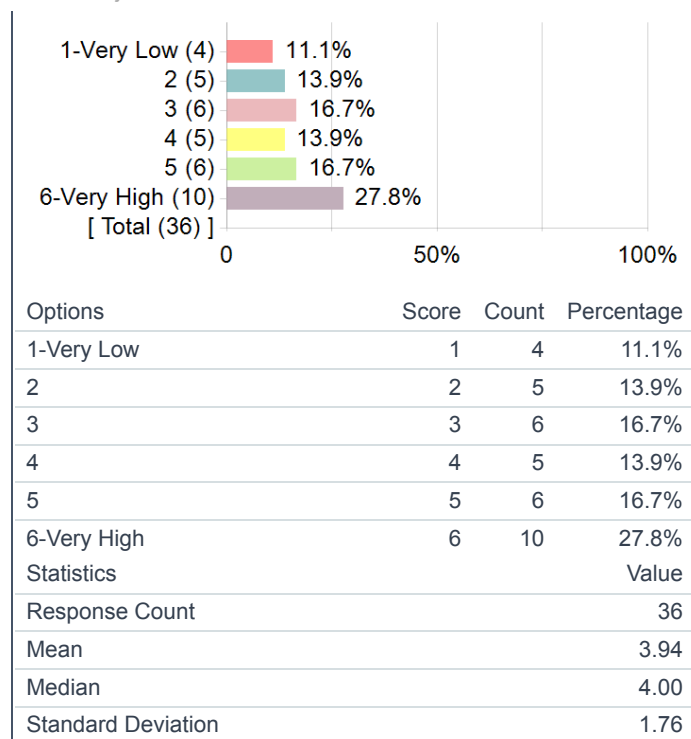
Provide an overall rating of the instruction.

Provide an overall rating of the instruction.



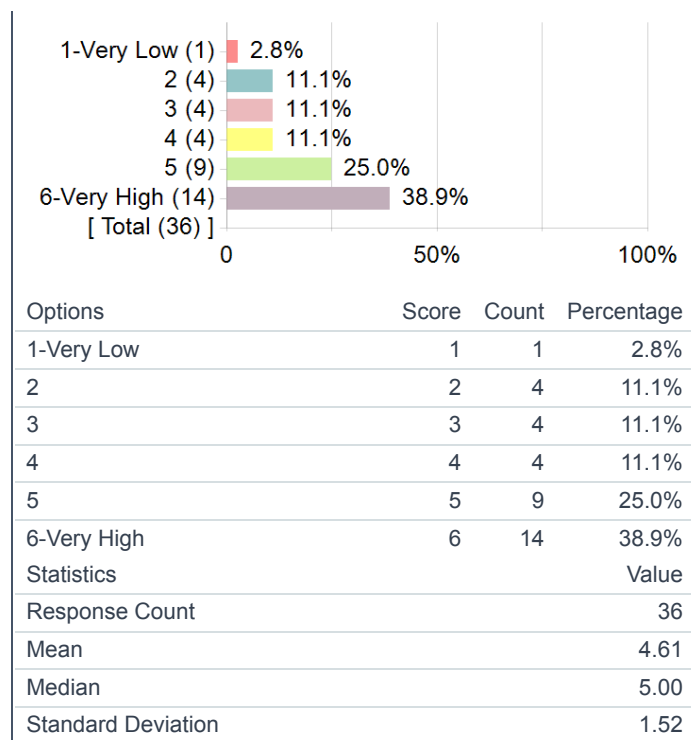
Rate the effectiveness of the instructor in stimulating your interest in the subject.

Rate the effectiveness of the instructor in stimulating your interest in the subject.



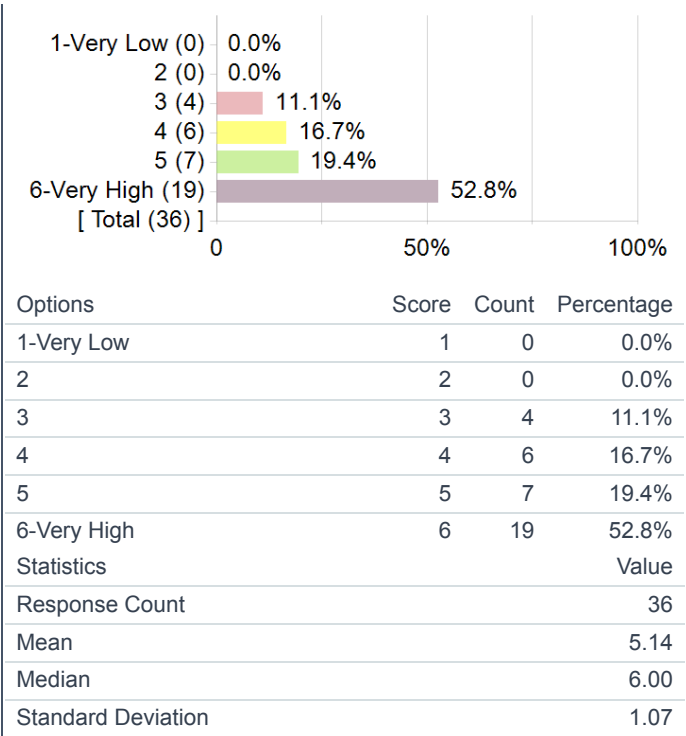
Rate how well the instructor identified the important concepts in the course.

Rate how well the instructor identified the important concepts in the course.



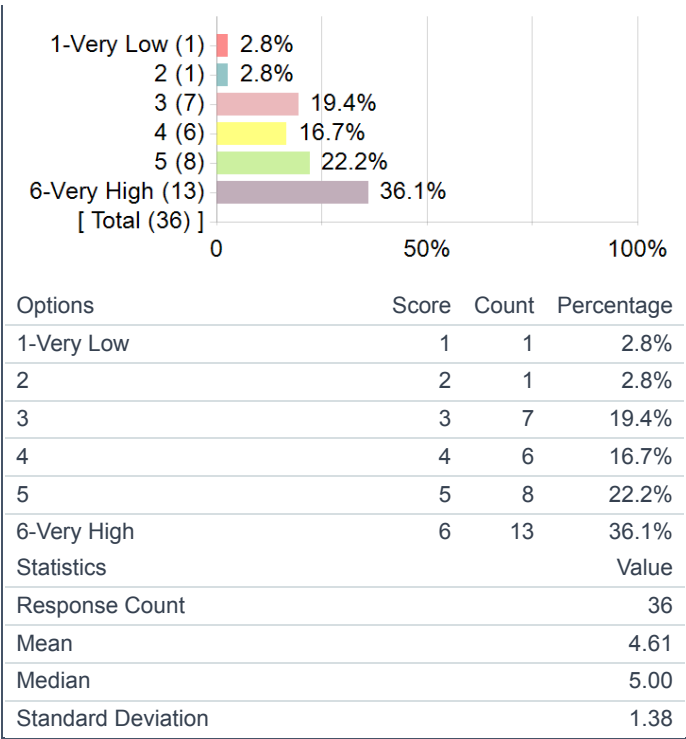
Rate how well prepared the instructor was for the class.

Rate how well prepared the instructor was for the class.



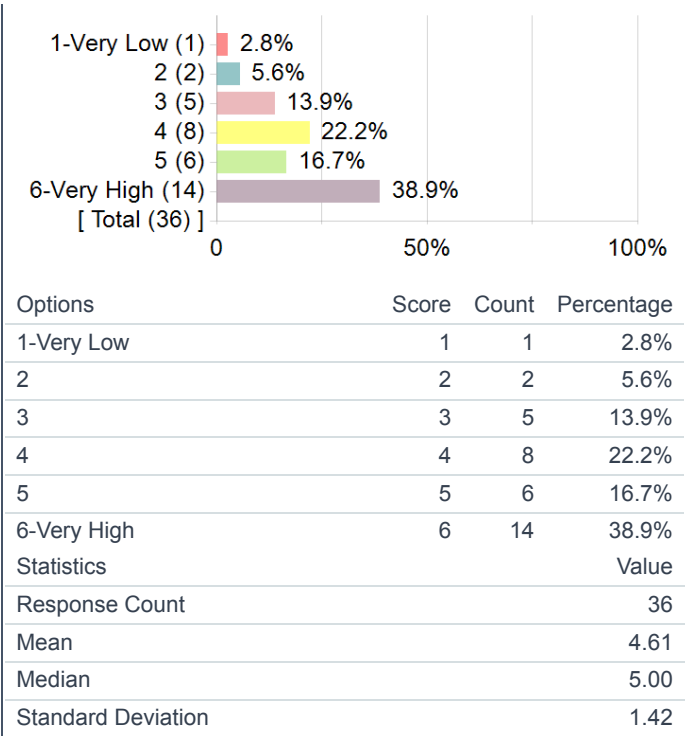
Rate the effectiveness with which the instructor communicated course content and ideas.

Rate the effectiveness with which the instructor communicated course content and ideas.



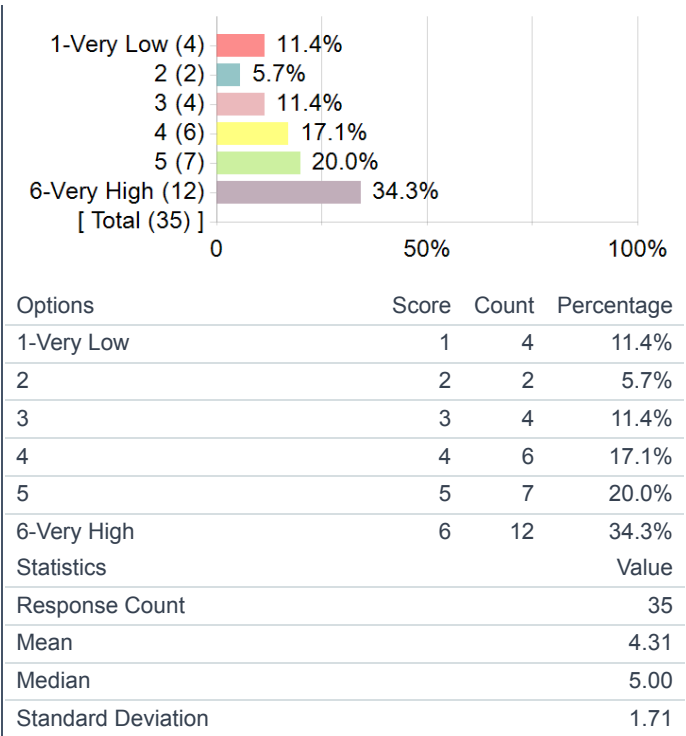
Rate the instructor's enthusiasm in teaching this class.

Rate the instructor's enthusiasm in teaching this class.



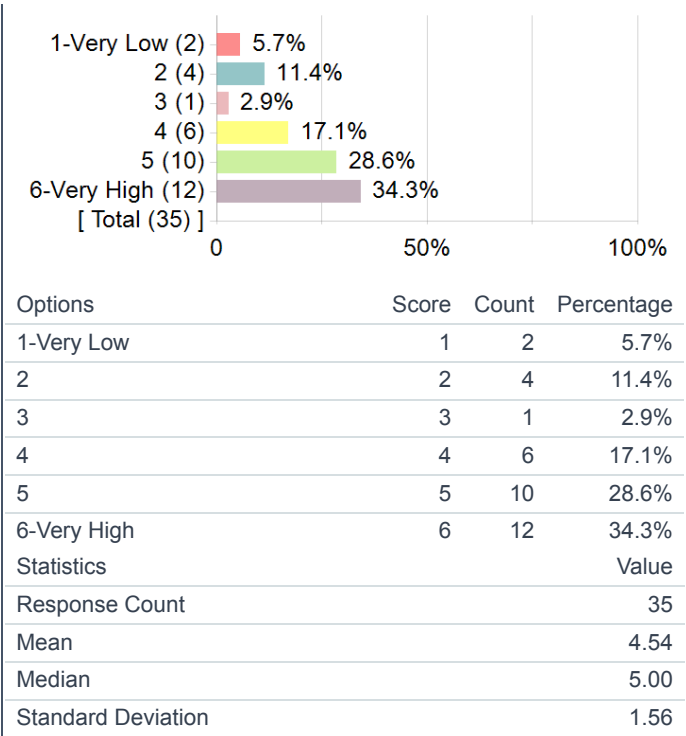
Rate how well the instructor motivated you to do your best work.

Rate how well the instructor motivated you to do your best work.



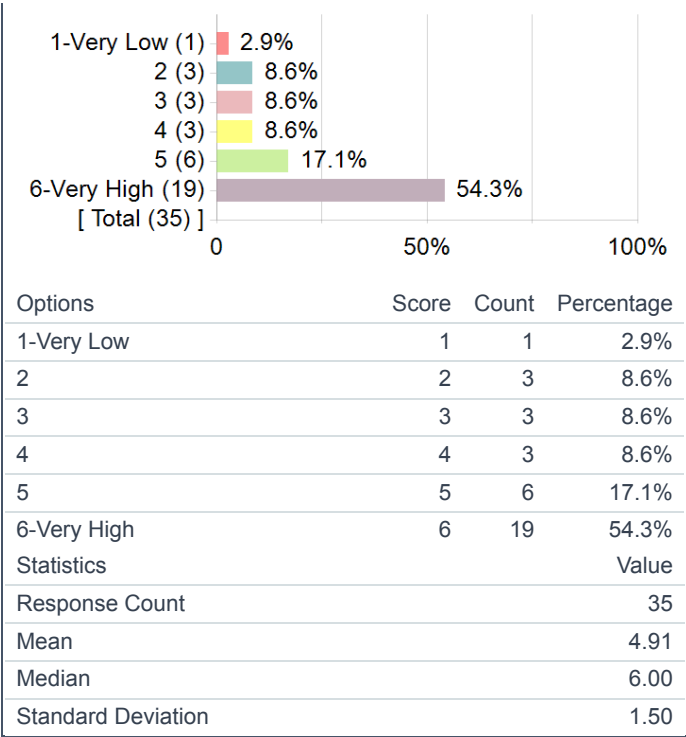
Rate how well the instructor encouraged you to think for yourself.

Rate how well the instructor encouraged you to think for yourself.



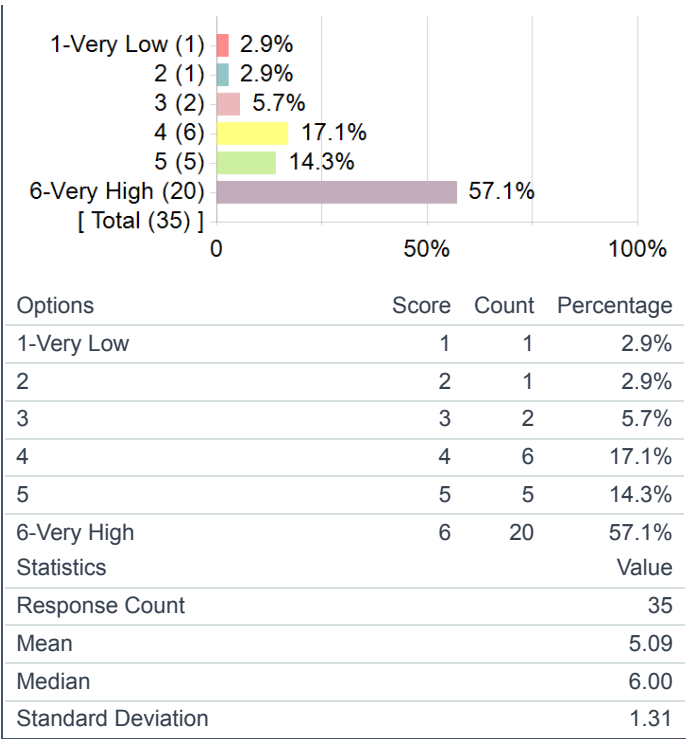
Rate how well the instructor taught you how to recognize good arguments in this field.

Rate how well the instructor taught you how to recognize good arguments in this field.



Rate how well the instructor presented class lectures in an organized fashion.

Rate how well the instructor presented class lectures in an organized fashion.



OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Did the course help you learn? Why or why not?

Comments
This course did not help me learn much because there was a lack of connection between lectures and readings and some of the assignments were not helpful at all.
I mean, in some senses I feel more prepared to evaluate the validity of research articles. But I'm not sure I'm taking away anything more profound than that.
Yes, because I learned new information and also how to write consistently.
mainly from the work outside of class rather than lecture
The structure of the course, which involved no formal exams and instead opted for a quantity over quality approach, was not conducive to learning. While it certainly made the course stress-free, it dissuaded any motivation to want to learn the course content.
This course did not really help me learn. It was effort-based grading, which I appreciate a lot. However, there was no incentive to actually retain the information I learned.
Not at all. This course is so fundamentally broken.
The contract grading system makes the class significantly easier, but the flipside is that it doesn't incentivize putting in effort at all.
Yes.
Yes, I learned about many methods in political science I didn't think of before.
This course helped me learn the basic concepts necessary, but didn't require too much in-depth analysis
It did! I think Prof Diaz is engaging and the lectures were interesting and well-organized
I did not learn too much in this course because it covered things that I was familiar with in high school. Lectures were also difficult to follow at times.
Yes. The lectures were very organized, and the assigned readings introduced me to many of the real-world applications of research methods in political science.
No, the course felt like busy work without many chances for actual engagement with the concepts.
The course helped me learn through our writing assignments each week, which were essentially reflections on the content we covered that week.

Please summarize your reaction to this course focusing on the aspects that were most important to you.

Comments

Professor Diaz is really kind and thoughtful and you can tell he genuinely cares about his students. But I did not like this course at all.

Probably the most painless political science methods course. Still, this class is a lot of busy work.

The course was fine. Assignments were easy. Easy A.

Very easy class. Do the quizzes and AI memos and go to section you'll do fine. Easy A

I really like how this course was point based. This really helped me to actually grasp and take the time to fully understand the material.

Great course for anyone that needs a math/science distro. Not a lot of work (all busy work) and easy material if you've ever taken a stats class in high school or at NU. Every week, there's a 500 word AI memo (ask AI about the class material and summarize what it got right and wrong), a 750 word critique of the reading for discussion (you go over the answers in discussion section before you submit it) and a 10 question open-note, unlimited retakes quiz. You get 10 points for each of those assignments, alongside 10 points for participating in section. You need 250 points for an A (essentially going to discussion section or doing the assignments 25 times for the quarter).

*Grading Structure (250 or more points for an A): every week (8 total weeks) you can earn — 10 points for AI memo + 10 points for critique + 10 points for quiz + 10 points for discussion section

contract grading, lots of busy work outside of class but nothing too difficult — all pass fail

I took the course for a Formal Studies distro requirement, and this was an easy A! I learned valuable things about data analytics and got some context on how to read research papers! Would definitely recommend!

Absolutely awesome poli sci class, easiest A ever.

As a POLI SCI gateway, it is fine and maybe one of the easier ones. I will say that lectures are kind of boring to sit through, but the 50% attendance rule makes it worthwhile.

Super easy yet uninteresting class. Grading is correlated with the amount of assignments you complete and involves no exams, so essentially quantity over quality, but lectures are entirely unnecessary and the class content honestly could not be more boring. Worth it if you simply want an easy class but generally would not recommend to non poli sci majors.

I liked this class; it was very easy. There was collective attendance points which were stressful! Don't rely on your classmates. Other than that it was an easy class.

This class is very interesting to me as a political science major (mostly only poli sci majors will take this) – really was a lift in my schedule that made my quarter a lot easier since you can pace yourself week by week. I chose to do every assignment every week to be done quickly but we also got bonus points but I wouldn't rely on it every quarter. The discussion sections were really helpful learning how to read studies and analyze what to critique and what should've been done differently – very interesting class done in a way that was honestly so nice.

Super super easy, the grading is based on how much work you do, not how well you do it, so it's essentially up to you to do enough to get an A. However, I found this to be very counterproductive to actual learning because I was more focused on doing enough assignments to hit the point goal for an A, rather than studying for an exam and making sure I understood the material.

This course is super easy as long as you put in the work. Prof. Diaz is very kind and is always there if you want to chat! The assignments can be pretty repetitive but the labor grading system is great!

This course was so pitiful and underwhelming. Every time I stepped foot in it, I couldn't believe money was being spent on it. There's absolutely no incentive to learn, the instruction is dry, and the homework is purely busy work. The contract grading model is so flawed within this course. The discussions were, however, great because the TA did such an extraordinary job guiding the conversation.

This course was exceptionally dull, without any reason to focus on the material itself unless it was an interest of yours. However, this was rare given the course's status as a Political Science major requirement, and nearly all students were simply able to skate through it by doing the bare minimum.

Freest course I've taken at this school. Take it! The class has a contract grading system, which basically means that there's a certain number of points on the table and you need to reach a specific threshold to earn an A (370 total, 250 for an A I believe). The assignments were not demanding, just quizzes, section participation, and 500–1000 word responses, etc. Would highly recommend.

The structure of the course was good

Great class for the empirical methods requirement! Gustavo is a great professor who really wants his students to succeed and the labor-based grading contract allows to focus on learning instead of worrying about exams. 10/10!!!

This course is certainly the most unique I've taken at Northwestern. Contract grading means there are no tests and no attendance requirement (at least there wasn't this year), although a "collective attendance" goal gave everyone a significant grade boost at the end of the quarter. If enough people show up to class, this goal being hit makes the work extremely manageable, and even if they don't come, you can still budget your time effectively to earn an A without too much effort. The content itself was pretty dry, but this is definitely a good class to take for a distro or major requirement in terms of workload.

If you are looking for a relatively easy class to satisfy the Political Science major or another discipline, you should definitely take this class. However, if you are looking to actually learn about this topic, I would recommend looking elsewhere. The course is based on contract grading, meaning your grade is entirely determined on how much effort you put into the class. However, I learned very little in this class and was rarely engaged during lectures, and I am still ending with an A. I'm sure if I had been more engaged, I would have come out of this class having learned more, but it became difficult to pay attention in lecture, knowing that I wouldn't be tested on the material.

This is a great class if you want to get an easy A without doing virtually any work. The lectures are optional and the grading is based on completion of assignments. The professor does give everyone an additional 50 points (which adds up to around 5 assignments) if a

collective attendance requirement of 50% is met, but our last class only had 20 out of around 100 students and he still gave us the additional points. However, I didn't go to the lectures and I didn't rely on the extra points, and I still found the workload supremely easy. Keep in mind I'm not someone to skip lectures, but the professor isn't the most engaging lecturer, and if you've taken any form of statistics or psychology class, you'll likely know most of the material already. Overall, did I love this class? No. Was it the easiest A I've ever gotten at Northwestern? One of them for sure.
This was a pretty easy class since the professor does contract grading, if you stay on top of your work getting an A is basically guaranteed. However, this class wasn't that engaging.
As somebody who had never taken a stats class, the contract grading was amazing. I learned a lot and was able to take the stress off of myself for not having a strong foundation in stats.
Would recommend this course to political science majors looking to fulfill the empirical and deductive reasoning FD. Class is contract grading, so once you complete 25 assignments (including participation in section), you are at an A. Also, Professor Diaz has a policy where, if 50% of the class is present in every lecture, he will add 50 points to your grade. He is a bit lenient with it, but IT was a good incentive to go to lecture, and we ended up getting the 50 points. The coursework is fairly easy, so I would recommend taking this if you have a heavier course load one quarter.
Great course if you need to fulfill the methodology requirement for political science. Contract-based grading, and if you plan out your assignments well, you can get all the points you need a few weeks before the end of the quarter. Professor Diaz was organized, and I enjoyed the articles he chose for us to read.
Probably the easiest class to take for the Poli Sci quant methods requirement, but everything about it (the lecture style, lack of mandatory attendance) seems like it is actively designed to make you bored and disengaged from the material. The points grading system was good in theory, however, it made the class feel a race to finish all four tedious assignments every week until you hit 250. The material will probably not feel particularly new or educational if you took AP Stats (or the equivalent) in high school.
Super easy polisci distro, you have to take this one or 312 but I would suggest this as it is a very light load. No exams, just weekly assignments graded for participation.
Professor Diaz is great! The course uses contract grading which made it way less stressful, letting you just learn and reflect on the content without having to worry about memorizing anything for an exam.

What are the primary teaching strengths of the instructor?

Comments
—organized, understanding
Professor Diaz was somewhat self-aware of the tediousness involved in this class, so he was able to adjust when able.
Very nice and explains everything thoroughly.
He is funny
Very clear and knowledgeable about the course content, and teaching/grading style made the course very straightforward.
Professor Diaz was so kind and communicated the content in a way that was easy to understand. He is very organized and intelligent. I appreciate his teaching a lot!
kind
The professor was quite organized.
His passion
Supports his students and really wants them to succeed!
Organization, enthusiasm, knowledge
The lecture slides and other resources provided were helpful for completing assignments.
Organized lectures, knowledgeable about the subject.
Professor Diaz is very knowledgeable in this field, and it shows through his lectures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Organized – Knowledgeable about quant methods – Gave us attendance credit at the end
Classes were organized and he taught the concepts in a very comprehensible way.

What are the primary weaknesses, if any, of the instruction?

Comments
–cant keep class engaged
It was pretty clear that this was Professor Diaz's first time teaching this course. There were some lessons that he seemed unprepared for.
Maybe provide more incentive to come to class?
Grading style made lectures basically useless and teaching style was extremely boring and repetitive.
none
disinterested in the topic
There was little apparent effort to make the already–dull material any more interesting, resulting in a class without any reason to participate or engage.
No
N/A
I thought lectures could have been more engaging.
N/A
At times, it felt as though Professor Diaz did not care all too much about the class or us actually learning, and instead just making it easy for us so that we could get a good grade.
– Assignments felt tedious – Points–based method discouraged engagement
Lectures were sometimes less interesting.

Can you offer suggestions for improvement?

Comments
–no more ai memos please
I don't really know. This course is pretty bleak. I get why it is necessary, but maybe there is a more innovative way to teach this material?
n/a
Offer more opportunities for class engagement in an effort to make the course content more interesting for students.
I like the effort–based grading of this class but I think it could benefit from greater structure.
Get rid of the contract grading model and give students an incentive to learn outside of just learning. This class was so underwhelming.
Tying the lessons of the material more to other aspects of the field would be better. Given the course's status as a major requirement, you cannot assume most students actually care about the material itself.
No
N/A
If there was a way to make lectures more interesting, that would be helpful.
N/A
Try to make lecture more engaging.