

# Individual Report for William A. Masters (Sp23-NUTR-0238-01-Econ Food and Nutrition Policy)

Project Title: **Spring 2023 Course Evaluations - Friedman**

Courses Audience: **51**  
Responses Received: **28**  
Response Ratio: **54.90%**

## Summary of Results

### Course evaluation summary

Question	Course		School (Friedman School of Nutrition)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. This course met its defined objectives (as described in the course abstract and the syllabus).	1.71	0.76	1.46	0.69
2. The amount of material covered in the course was effective for my own learning.	2.43	1.32	1.65	0.87
3. The assigned readings for the course were instructive and relevant to the course objectives.	1.64	0.67	1.58	0.80
4. Information communicated by guest lectures was useful.	1.56	0.73	1.43	0.65
5. The workload for the course (readings, homework, papers, etc.) was effective for my own learning.	2.18	1.12	1.61	0.84
6. Audio/video media was relevant to the course objectives (if used in this course).	1.64	0.63	1.44	0.68
7. Experiential activities outside of the classroom were relevant to the course objectives (if used in this course).	1.45	0.69	1.32	0.56
8. Overall, how satisfied were you with this course?	2.54	1.23	1.69	0.92
Overall	1.89	1.08	1.52	-

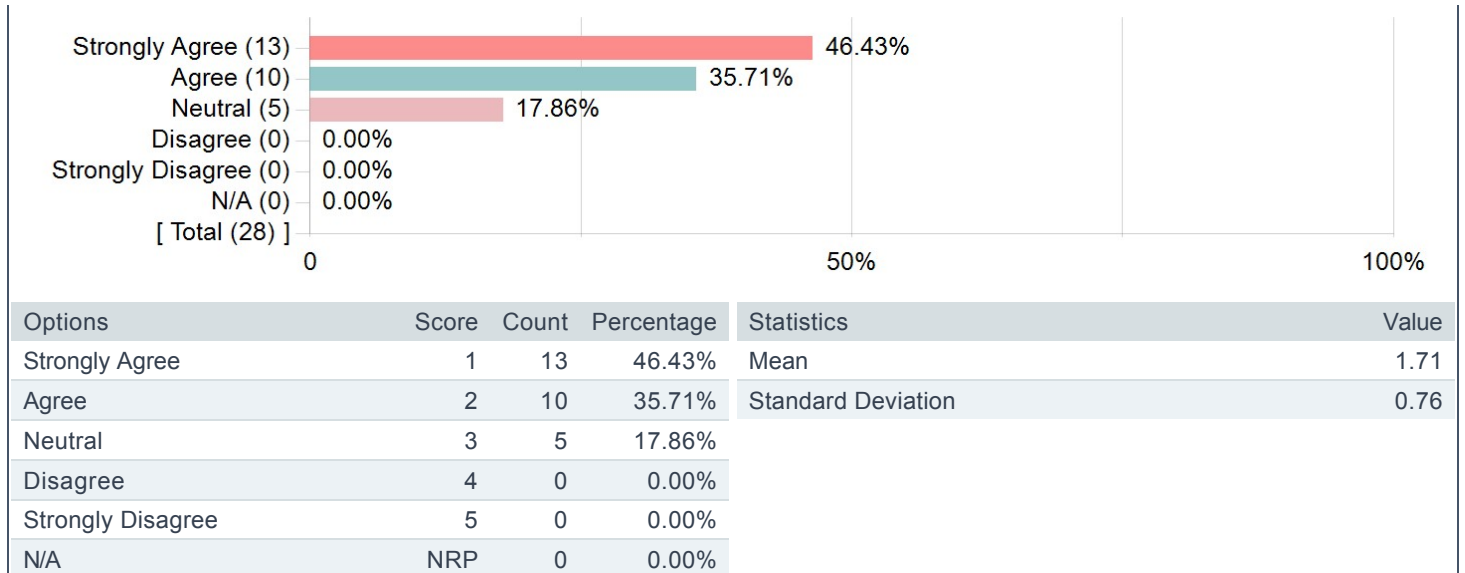
### Instructor evaluation summary

Question	Course		School (Friedman School of Nutrition)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
15. The instructor was prepared for class.	1.19	0.40	1.29	0.61
16. The instructor communicated the course concepts clearly.	2.12	1.21	1.47	0.84
17. The instructor responded clearly and completely to questions and/or feedback.	1.88	1.03	1.40	0.77
18. The instructor stimulated enthusiasm and interest in the subject.	1.77	1.31	1.34	0.72
19. The instructor was available for help outside of the class.	1.42	0.70	1.38	0.67
20. The instructor provided useful feedback on assignments and exams to date.	1.69	0.74	1.40	0.69
21. The instructor was sensitive to issues of diversity (e.g. race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation).	1.96	1.18	1.41	0.72
22. Overall, how satisfied were you with this instructor?	2.27	1.25	1.44	0.80
24. The course included relevant concepts of diversity and social justice.	1.96	0.82	1.71	0.95
Overall	1.81	1.04	1.43	-

## Detailed Results of Course Evaluation

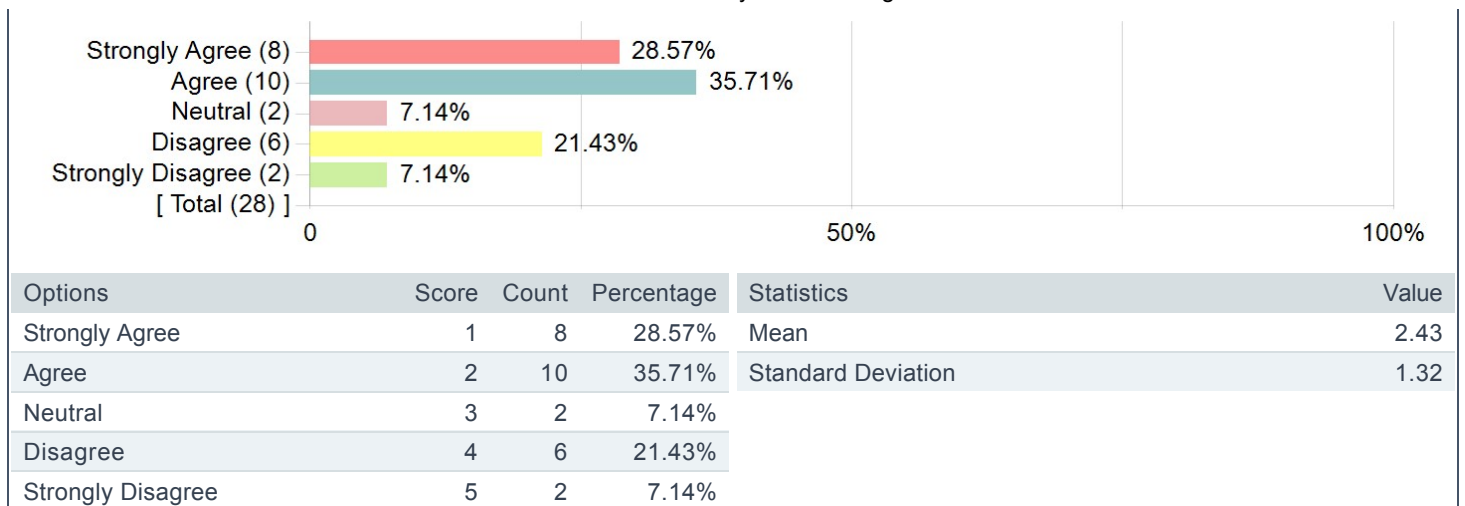
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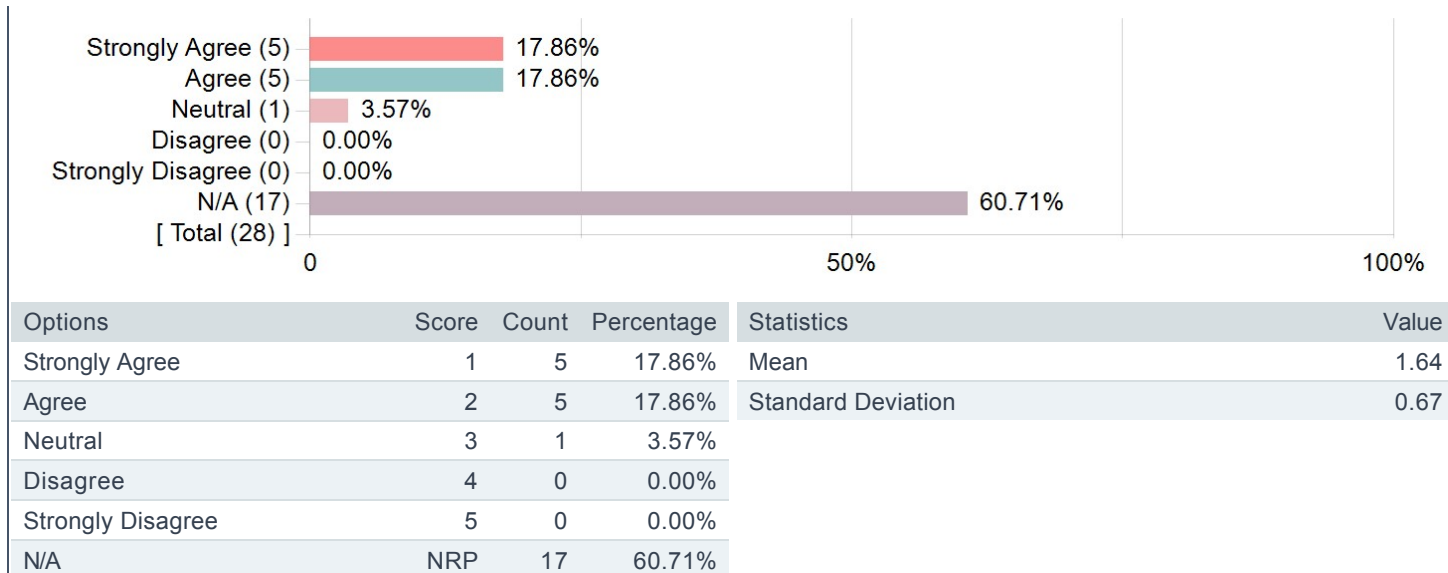
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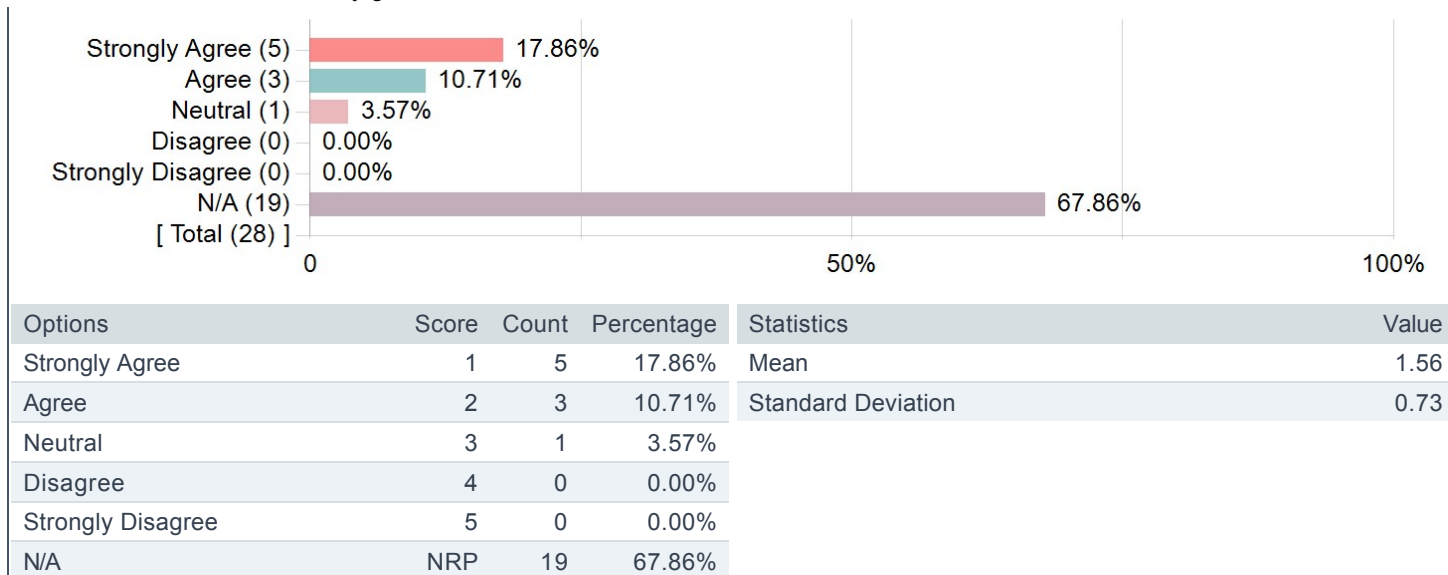
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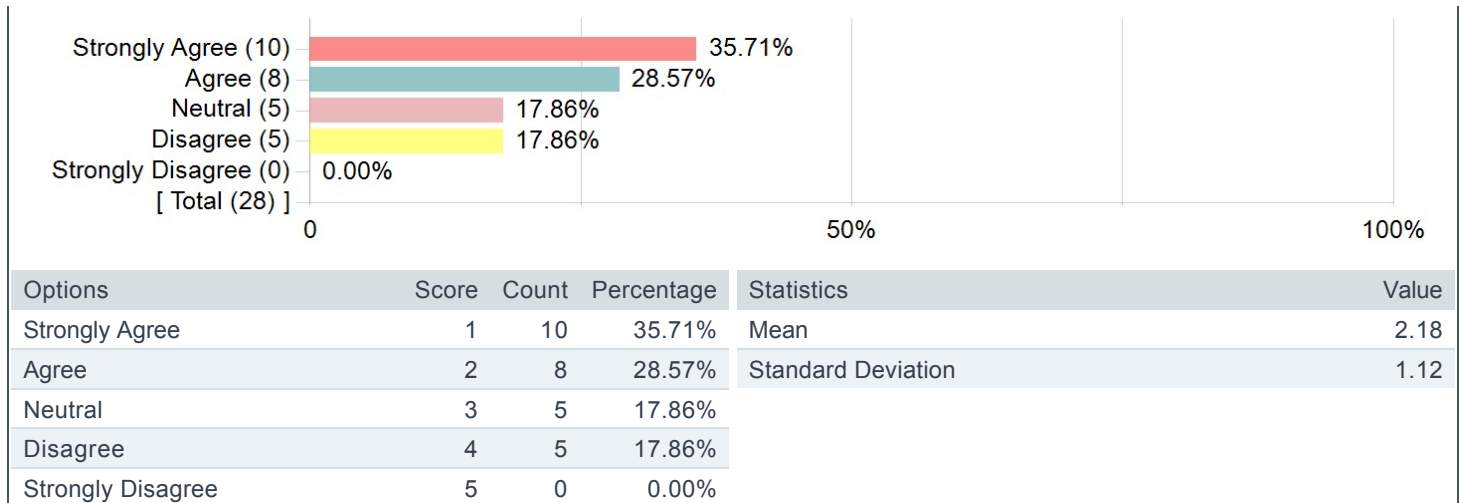
### 4. Information communicated by guest lecturers was useful.

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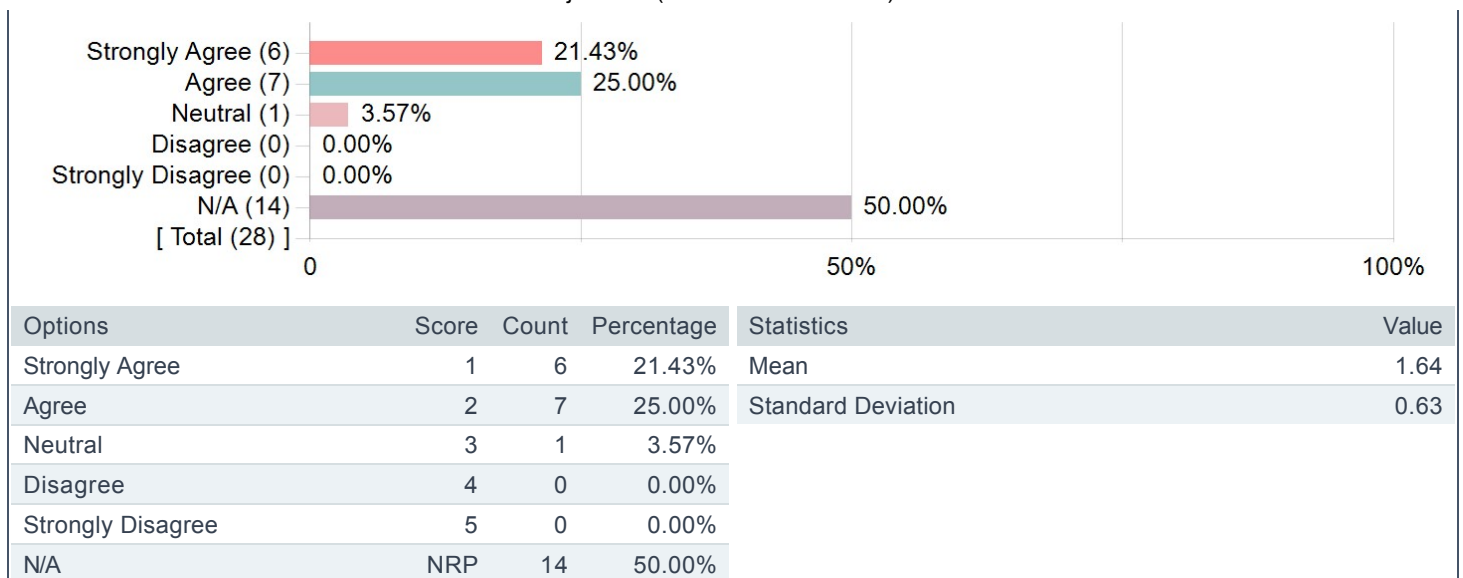
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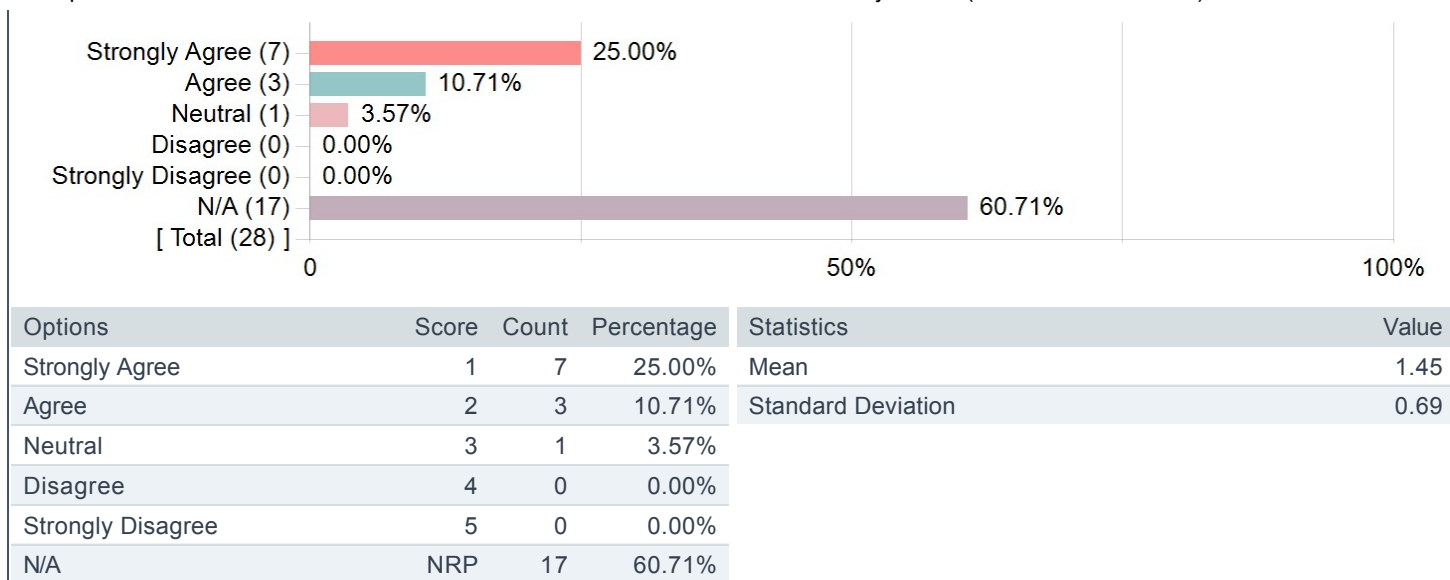
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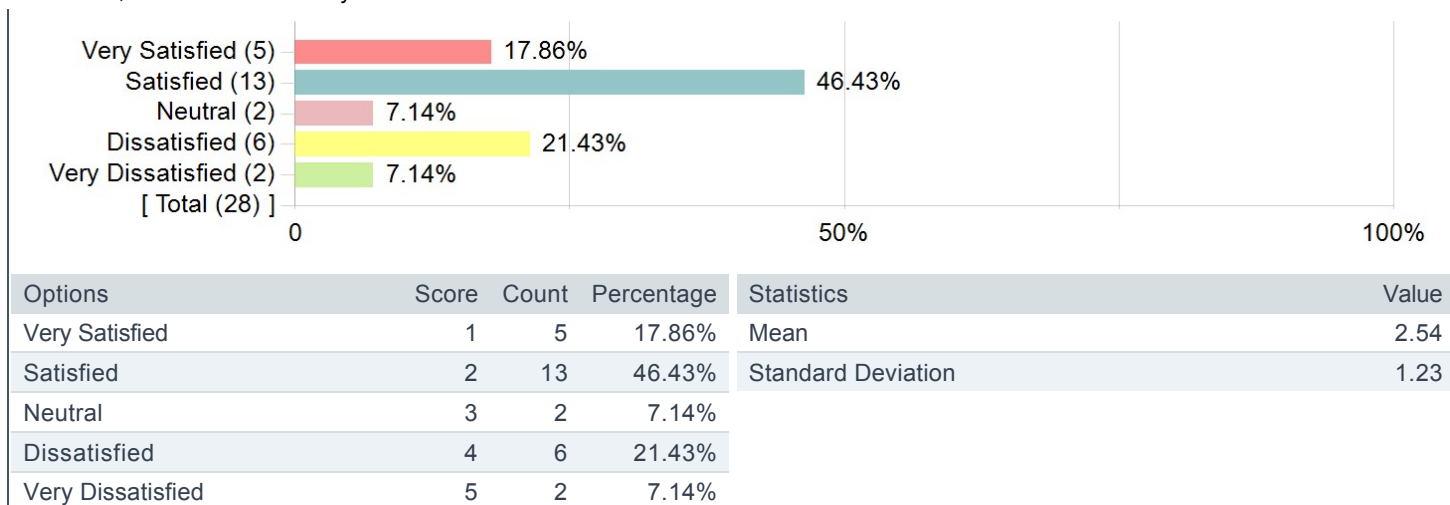
**7. Experiential activities outside of the classroom were relevant to the course objectives (if used in this course).**

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**8. Overall, how satisfied were you with this course?**

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## Open-Ended Feedback

### 9. Comments regarding the assigned readings:

Comments
There were no assigned readings in this class.
N/A
The course does not have specific assigned readings, but the topics discussed every week, and the richness of Prof Master's slides usually spurs me to read randomly online. The news article analysis assignments also made sure I had to read at least two food economics related news articles every week.
We had no assigned readings. Will provided very detailed homework instructions that may have included some background about the topic, but he assigned no articles or book chapters.
N/A
The course didn't have assigned readings
Because the readings were not required, I opted not to read them.

### 10. Comments regarding guest lecturers/speakers:

Comments
N/A
N/A
N/A
NA
N/A
N/A

### 11. Comments regarding the Teaching Assistant(s) involved with the course (if applicable).

Comments
The TAs provided prompt feedback on homeworks.
Becket and Ingrid was nice but not utilized for office hours, which I found strange. That being said, Will's office hours were great. they were very helpful
N/A
Ingrid and Becket were as helpful as they could be. Anytime I emailed all three of them, Will would usually be the one to answer, presumably because my questions were too complicated for a TA to answer. However, they usually couldn't answer my very simple questions about homework during office hours either. They provided great feedback on my homework and handed grades back in a very timely manner.
N/A
I hope I do not have Ingrid as my TA again, she does not communicate
Ingrid was very helpful outside of class.
Good work TAs!
TAs were very helpful and quick to respond to questions
Beckett and Ingrid were great and easy to reach out to.
I did not interact with the TAs much, but they were prompt with their grading and left uplifting comments on assignments.
The TAs were incredibly helpful and efficient with grading! It was amazing how quickly they graded our assignments each week!
I felt that the TAs in this course had realistic expectations for the work submitted based on the varying levels of prior engagement with this kind of material students brought to the course, and also provided helpful feedback.

**12. Name at least one thing that should definitely not be changed about this course:**

Comments
The news analysis assignments, these were the best learning practice and I really was able to solidify the topics and diagrams drawn in class to outside and current examples. The zoom chat function. The flow of the topics and how the instructor used the first few minutes of the class to summarize how all of the diagrams up to the current topic are intertwined together.
The professor is incredibly knowledgeable and an excellent teacher.
The format of assignments should never change. It was good to work with theoretical models, using real life news articles as a guide.
I think some of the homeworks are really helpful to my understanding of economic diagrams. I'm not sure that I was fully prepared to actually do the homework and often it would take me multiple days to finish.
Assignments were very informative, and helpful for the real world! Having examples of the last years is very helpful
giving us the previous midterms and finals to view
The option for project or exam
Engagement in class/online
I liked the homework assignments and thought they were very helpful to learn the lecture material. The assignment descriptions sometimes felt a little overwhelming, but it was really nice having a previous student's example.
I think the hybrid setup of this course offers some nice flexibility for students, and I like the news analysis exercise because it makes the concepts feel more accessible and applicable.
class recordings
The project. The only thing I enjoyed. The only thing I found helpful.
I liked the news analysis and data assignments themselves
Having it recorded so you can go back and re watch lectures.
The broad scope of topics covered as it relates to our food system, nutrition, and ag
The homework assignments felt incredibly useful and relevant. I enjoyed getting to peer into the mind of our very smart economics professor and learn how he goes about answering some of the biggest questions related to food and agriculture data. His framework, which he spent a lot of time on, made it easy to mimic his really important and cutting-edge work in a short time frame and understand the basics of how he did it.
The weekly assignments helped solidify the topics we covered each week and were useful to look back on when studying for the midterm and final.
I appreciated that there was no outside reading in this course, and that students were given the opportunity to look at real world examples of how these concepts play out in each assignment.

**13. Name at least one thing that should be improved about this course:**

Comments
I feel like after the midterm this class kind of dropped off in engagement, if there was a way to still integrate the analytical diagrams into the broader topics because I feel that I have lost a lot of my comfortability with the diagrams.
This course needs to be more focused. It feels like there are too many concepts covered at once and that that is limiting learning. If more time was spent on individual, students would be able to understand more. Specifically, the content after the midterm felt unrelated to the content before. If there was more focus, we could spend more time in class drawing diagrams and discussing in small groups and that would improve learning and lead to less stress on the midterm.
I think that the concepts we learned pre-midterm should be explicitly tied directly to the concept post-midterm. I think you lost some folks who could really use this course to better their understanding.
I think the weekly assignments are too time-consuming (instructions are unclear and confusing which made me spend a ton of time just figuring out what to do precisely – especially for the data analyses exercises) Though they are helpful in applying learnings, I think they could be slightly simplified to get the same learning in a more time-efficient manner. The work load felt almost like 2 courses instead of 1
The time of the class is at 4pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and is not the best option for an economics class which can quickly go from very exciting to very boring if the student is not paying attention.
The second half of the semester. We spent 6 weeks talking about analyzing data and none of this content will be on the final exam. All of the content we will be tested on was in the first half of the semester and I am finding myself stressed only about this class because I feel that all of my skills have atrophied. I haven't even been able to practice outside of class due to the amount of homework we are assigned. While I appreciate the analysis skills, I feel like these assignments could be staggered every other



Comments
week (1 week news analysis then 1 data analysis and switch off). I think that this would allow us to learn visualization skills as well as practice drawing diagrams while talking about the topics at hand. I also think this would make the midterm exam more digestible as I barely finished the midterm in the allotted time and justify a cumulative final exam on just diagraming. This would keep our diagraming skills fresh while also learning these helpful data analysis skills.
Mid-Term was very long and little time.
everything else. this course is not made for beginner econ students nor is it paced well. it is way too much information way too fast and by the time we finish one homework and somewhat understand the concept by teaching ourselves, its already time for the next topic. there is no time for digestion. another thing is that the midterm and finals are horrific. they are 4 hour exams that we are expected to do in 2 hours. there is no learning what so ever, just word vomit and making up graphs that we don't even understand. terrible class structure.
Including a brief step-by-step for the assignments during class would be amazing. We spend more time figuring out how to do the assignment rather than actually doing it and learning the material along the way.
I would like the course to have assigned readings that pose different perspectives and give us a way to think critically about the things we are learning, which would spark more interesting discussions.
Slides and coverage of topics
I would have preferred if the second half of the semester had tied in more of what we had learned during the first half – or had some way of reviewing the graphs.
There are a few components of the class structure that I struggled with. First, it is puzzling and frustrating to me that the actually "meat" of the course—the analytical diagrams—that we were actually being tested on was squeezed into the first half of the course. This meant that a) we sped through the explanation of how to draw and interpret these graphs in a way that seemed to cause stress for nearly the entire class (as shown in the mid-course eval) and b) the second half of the class was spent interpreting graphs in a way that felt a bit patronizing—speaking about how the classes themselves were taught, not the individual assignments with graphs, which I did find useful.. This second half of the semester felt a bit like a missed opportunity because we could have either taken the analytical diagram content more slowly so that students could actually master it or done some deep dives into some of the "mind-blowing" economic content that gets Will fired up (and us too!) like the application of behavioral economics to food choice and trends, or looking at certain moments in U.S. history and how economic factors shaped food trends.—instead of brushing through a multitude of individual diagrams that tell a piece of the picture but are shown too quickly to really grasp. I also think more small group discussion would have created a more engaging classroom environment and allow course concepts to stick more.
Providing key economic theories/principles used in this course would be helpful if the instructor has key concepts and short video recordings for self-study materials.
A little more guidance on the data analysis assignments would be helpful. Also, the timing of the units, I feel that there should be at least one news analysis after spring break because that is what will be on the final.
The organization of information being taught and provided for homework assignments should be improved. Most of the time "less is more" and by throwing too much information in lectures and in the instructions for assignments and exams actually causes a lot of confusion and misunderstanding.
I did not find the news analysis exercises to be an effective tool for grasping the breadth of this course, and would have benefitted from assignments with more practice sketching diagrams for multiple different scenarios that cover all the diagrams we covered in class. Also, I know you say that it is intentionally too much too fast, but just a slight reduction in speed would increase my learning greatly (high marginal rate of return!). Taking a few more minutes and building the diagrams piece by piece in real time would make a huge difference in my learning. Finally, the delivery of the second half of the course has been disappointing. All of the concepts are fascinating to me, but you have to know that putting up a single graph and pointing to it for half an hour is not an engaging or effective way to communicate information. It's very hard to stay engaged with these lectures, and I think you can do better!
Slower walk through of the specific graphs and data visualization tools needed to complete the weekly assignments. Graphs were covered very quickly. For data visualization, I didn't feel as if I had the skills to complete the excel/graphing assignments so they took me a long time to complete. Would've been helpful to go over that in class beforehand.
It was hard to stay engaged during lecture because a major focus of the lecture was simply on interpreting graphs. But interpreting charts and graphs is actually not hard at all...its the skills about how to actually make those graphs that is helpful. And while the information in the charts and graphs was sometimes surprising, it sometimes wasn't all that surprising, and it felt like we spent a lot of time just looking at the graphs. If my assumptions were challenged, I wouldn't know, because I was never asked what my assumptions were prior to seeing the graph. I think it would be great to use the Zoom chat feature more to find out what the people in the class THINK the graph will look like before showing the actual data.
There was a lot of talk /about/ the material presented in this course, the tools available to us as students, and abstract external ideas that ate up class time that could– and should– have been used to actually /explain/ the material and how to use those tools at hand. As a student who chose the project option, I could appreciate the inclusion of the data analysis exercises, but as most students are encouraged to choose the analytical diagram based exam option, the last few weeks seemingly distract from what will appear on

Comments
<p>the final exam. Perhaps there could be a reworking of the syllabus to correct this timing.</p> <p>Additionally, when it comes to the data analysis, rather than examining pre-made charts for weeks, it would be helpful to create charts interactively as a class and then explain what we are seeing so we have practice with creating the data visuals. This could be helpful with the creation of the analytical diagrams as well, having students work together to put each one together working it out logically piece by piece.</p> <p>There were an awful lot of slides for each week's lectures and I feel like pacing of the lectures could be done better so that all of the material could actually get explained before students are turned loose to complete assignments.</p>

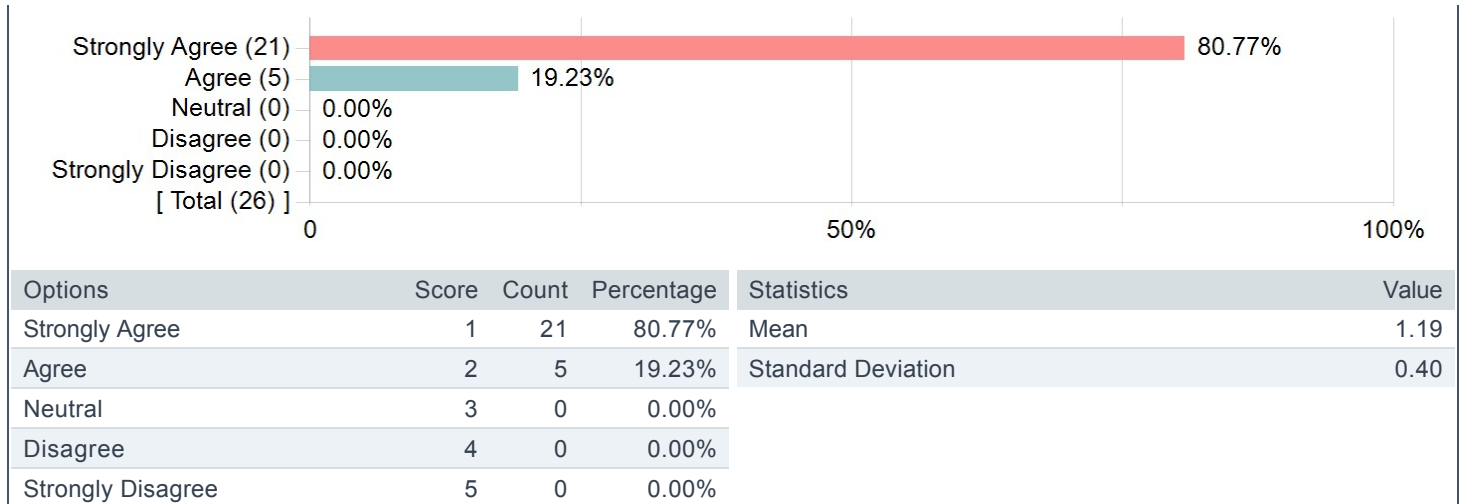
**14. Additional comments regarding any other aspect of the course:**

Comments
<p>I provided feedback on the mid-course evaluation from the instructor, but felt it was not addressed. The wordiness of the slides and the amount of content covered in this course is very offputting and confusing. I feel like it impairs my learning substantially.</p>
<p>Only what I have written above.</p>
<p>Personally, I felt that the questions on the exam had so much content that wasn't pertinent to what we actually had to produce, which required us to fish out what was being asked of us and therefore caused a time crunch. I can see why in general using the "storytelling" approach could help students feel more engaged or excited about econ, but in a stressful test-taking environment where students are already limited on time, I think it would be helpful if each individual question was more concise and made it easy for students to see exactly what was being asked.</p>
<p>N/A</p>
<p>I talked with my course mates and many of them seemed equally confused about the course as me. It was hard to enjoy the subject and as the course ends, I almost (just a few steps ahead maybe) find myself in the same spot as I was before the course</p>
<p>There are so many instructions given, but they are not always clear. Could be helpful to be more concise in the instructions. The same could be said for the PowerPoints.</p>
<p>Most of us haven't taken an Econ course before, I think it would be helpful to explain the figures (or tables, etc) before talking about the concepts or information. This would clearly explain what everything means and then how to apply the concepts to it.</p>
<p>Include more Global South perspectives in the class</p>
<p>Sometimes class time seemed to turn toward theorizing about the causes of the patterns in the charts, but we were also taught that economists don't do that...they just show and interpret the data. I'm left feeling a little bit confused about whether or not economists are supposed to explain the data or just present the data.</p>

## Detailed Results of Instructor Evaluation

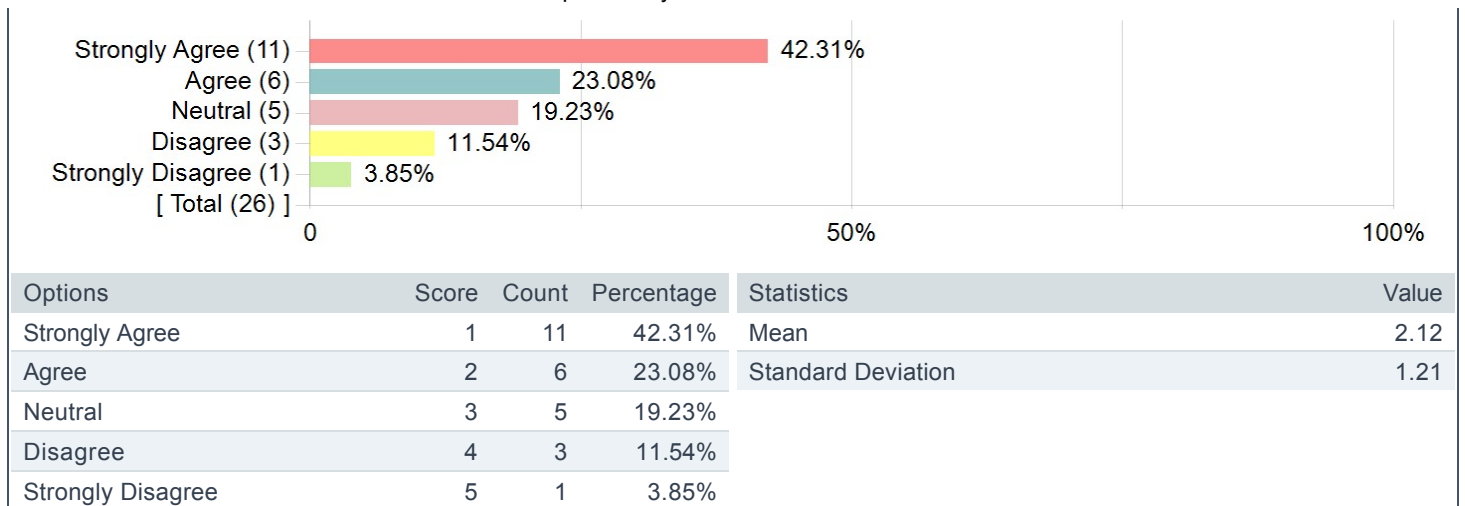
### 15. The instructor was prepared for class.

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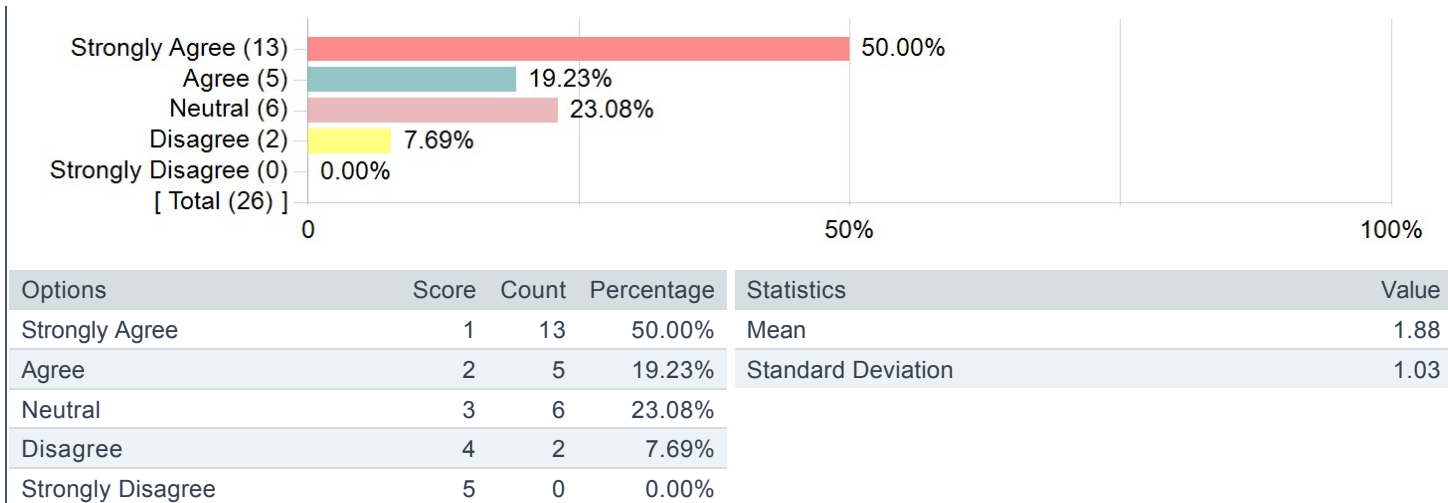
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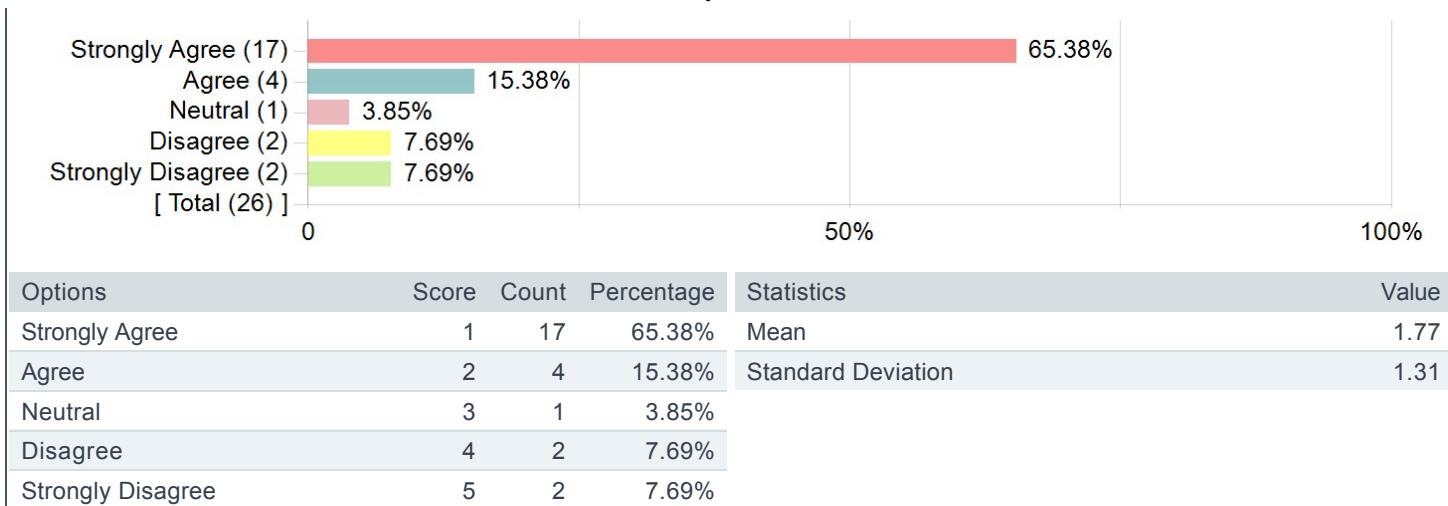
**17. The instructor responded clearly and completely to questions and/or feedback.**

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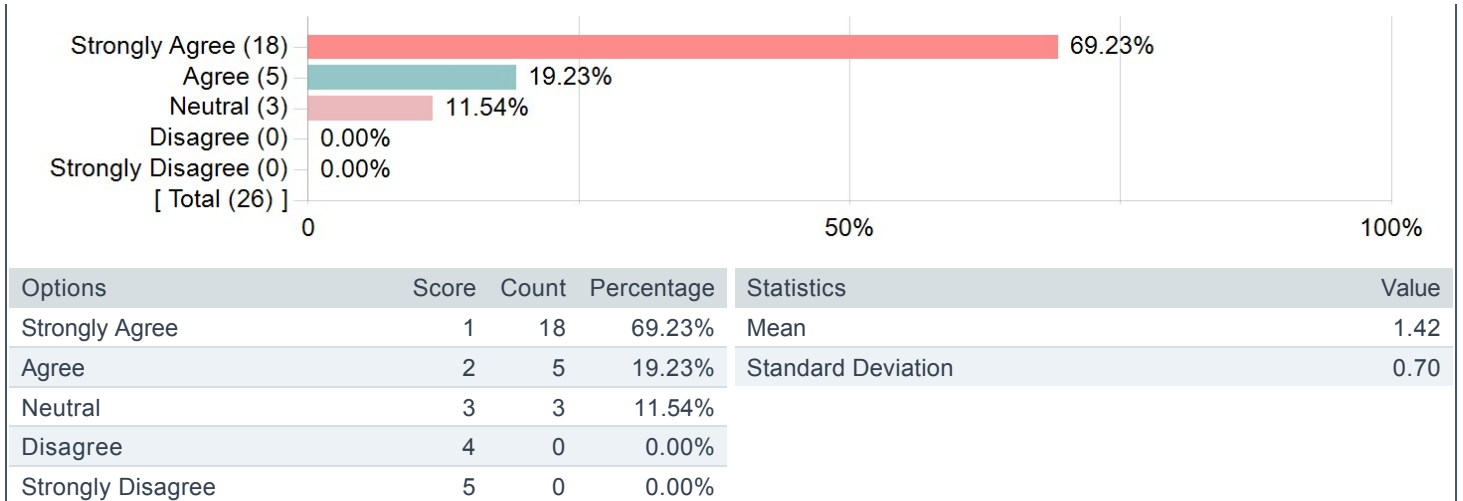
**18. The instructor stimulated enthusiasm and interest in the subject.**

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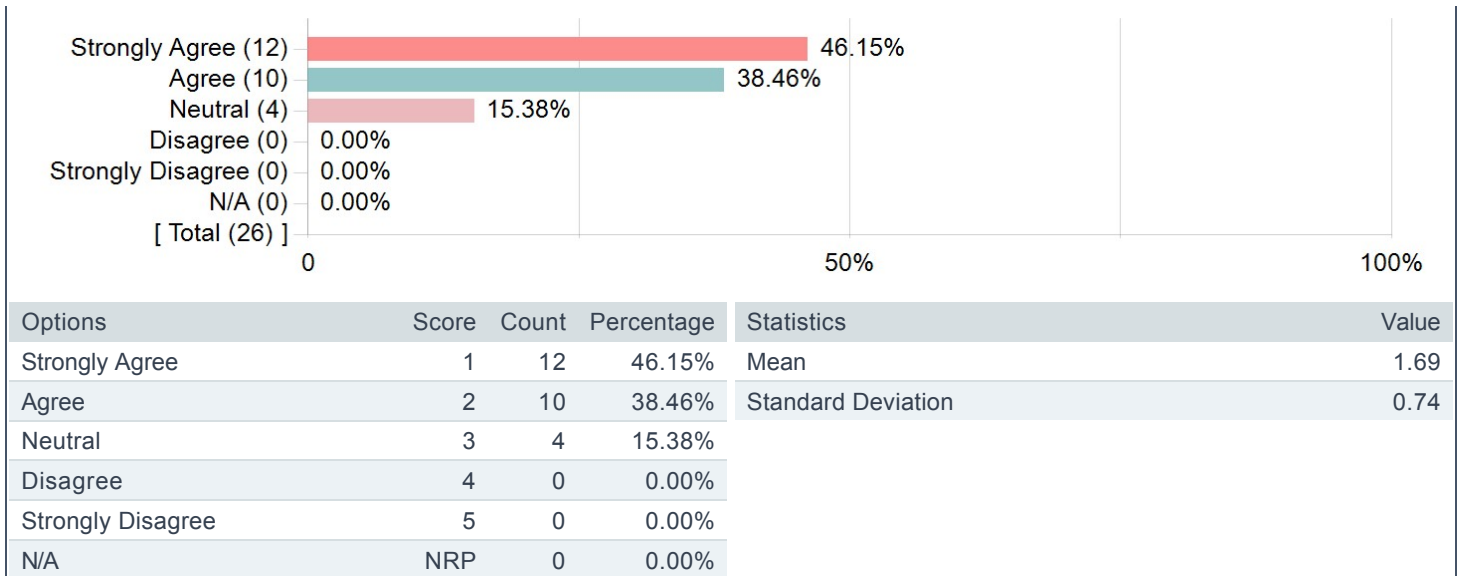
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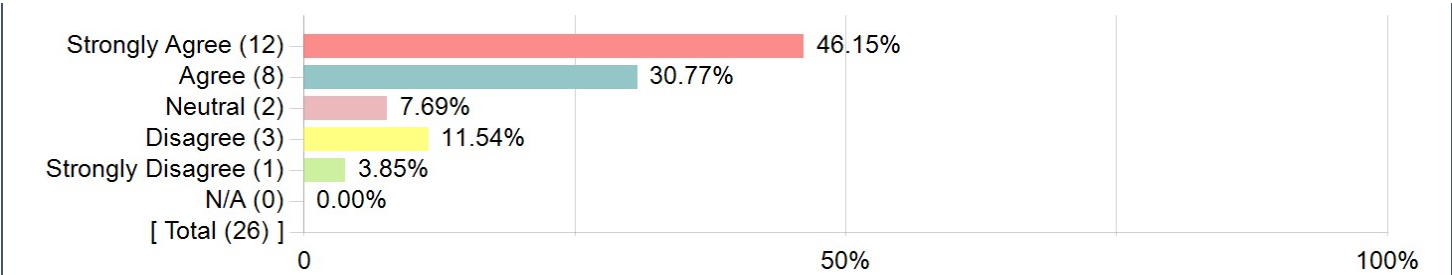
## 20. The instructor provided useful feedback on assignments and exams to date.

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**21. The instructor was sensitive to issues of diversity (e.g. race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation).**

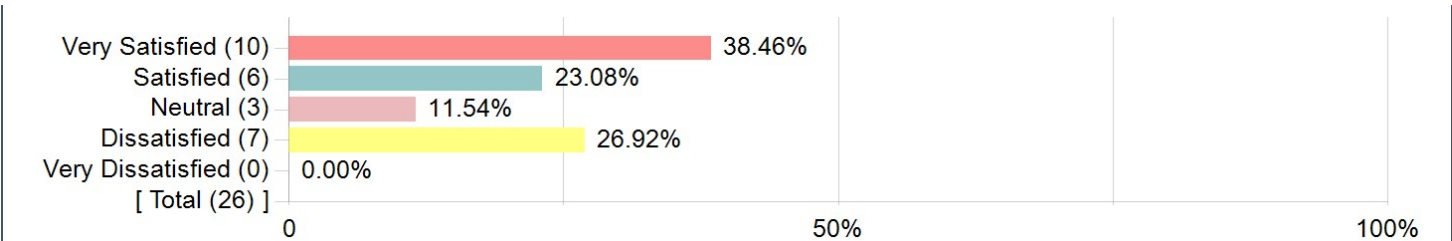
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Options	Score	Count	Percentage	Statistics	Value
Strongly Agree	1	12	46.15%	Mean	1.96
Agree	2	8	30.77%	Standard Deviation	1.18
Neutral	3	2	7.69%		
Disagree	4	3	11.54%		
Strongly Disagree	5	1	3.85%		
N/A	NRP	0	0.00%		

**22. Overall, how satisfied were you with this instructor?**

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Options	Score	Count	Percentage	Statistics	Value
Very Satisfied	1	10	38.46%	Mean	2.27
Satisfied	2	6	23.08%	Standard Deviation	1.25
Neutral	3	3	11.54%		
Dissatisfied	4	7	26.92%		
Very Dissatisfied	5	0	0.00%		

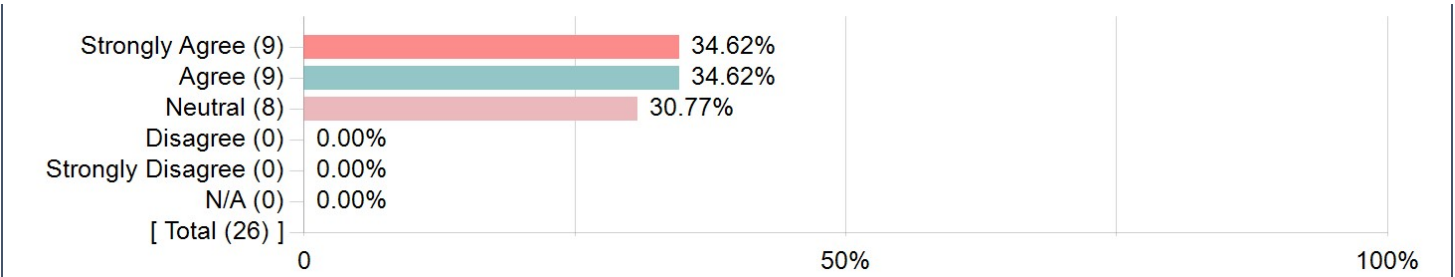
**23. Additional comments regarding the instructor:**

Comments
Will made econ fun and engaging! I felt that the topics were learned in the beginning with the analytical diagrams were so important to understand so many different areas of the food system. I felt at times he could be a bit harsh and opinionated that could come across wrong to certain individuals in the class with different political or racial background. But I really appreciate how available he made himself to students with the friday review session opportunity.
I felt at times there were discussions around LGBTQ, race, and other cultural topics that felt confusing and inappropriate.
I think when it comes to sensitivity with issues of diversity, Will tried to bring in certain topics that were relevant, but because it was never the main content of the course, it was kind of glazed over unless someone brought something up. This is an issue I have with all Friedman classes though. Only fundamentals of ag (I guess this outs me as an AFE student) went into detail, but it truly wasn't enough.
Will shares a great enthusiasm for economics that is very contagious. I definitely love everything about economics a lot more now than I ever did. He also sets up the class in such a way that you do not need to love economics to enjoy the class or do well in it.
Multiple times during the semester, I felt extremely uncomfortable during the lectures. Will talks about low income countries as if

Comments
<p>they are the worst place to be and makes inferences that are damaging to internalize while learning economics. Having come from one of these low income countries he's talking about, I find myself angered during lectures and am often in pain thinking about other, more privileged students conceptualizing the world the way Will is presenting it. He often will go on long rants about his own views of society, claiming more police make communities safer (proven to not be the case), demonizing low income people, making grand assumptions about the capability of low income countries to contribute to the global market without intervention (most of these countries have had their resources stolen by colonizers and have more than enough to be considered high income if there was less intervention). Will either needs to take a much less opinionated approach to teaching or this class should be taught by someone else.</p>
<p>He has a lot of knowledge and wants the students to learn! All the assignments done were to help us in the future.</p>
<p>I really enjoy the enthusiasm and occasional humor in the class! I would say that giving more insightful responses to student's questions would be better and being more prompt on when well get exam grades back would be great too!</p>
<p>I appreciate Will's enthusiasm for the subject matter and his excitement when he teaches.</p>
<p>Will's passion for the subject is clear, and this got me very excited during the first week of class. Especially given my prior experience with and interest in econ. However, as mentioned previously, the speed at which the concepts are taught makes it very difficult to absorb the content, and his teaching style often felt slightly passive aggressive. When students would take a while to answer to how the diagram would change following a policy he would say in a demanding tone "you should be able to do this very quickly." Which was frustrating and discouraging, especially as we had not been given sufficient time to absorb the info previously. It was shocking to me that my experience in Parke's regression analysis course, another required course—one I was much more intimidated by topic-wise, was so much more pleasant because of how accessible Parke made the content. There was such a stark contrast in how Will and Parke delivered their content, where Parke paused frequently to ask if we had questions, spoke and introduced the concepts slowly, and responded with enthusiasm and respect to our questions, and I think Will's future econ students would benefit tremendously from Will adopting some of these practices.</p>
<p>Thank you for your teaching and enthusiasm for the subject, Professor!</p>
<p>The instructor is very enthusiastic about the subject and tries to pass his passion to his students. There is no doubt about his honesty and integrity towards his work. But the problem lies in his way of communication. When we are highly enthusiastic, we share a lot of information about our interest and the instructor is no different from that. These numbers of words makes people get confused and loose interest in the subject.</p>
<p>The instructions he gives for assignments is written the same way he talks. So, those are confusing as well. Because among the lines of instructions he writes interesting facts that confuses the reader. These facts are like footnotes that should come with this sign (*) at the end of the instructions. Instead of writing too many words what he can do is write instructions in bullet points and then add footnotes, making instructions much clear and prim. Also, its better if he leaves the interesting parts to be discovered by the students. When he discloses those, interesting issues do not remain interesting anymore.</p>
<p>Because of this mode of communication even the office hours become hard to manage. Also, his assignments take at most 2 hours to finish but understanding the instructions takes a day and I confirmed with my classmates that I am not the outlier.</p>
<p>It would be helpful to draw some of the graphs from scratch so we can really understand the individual components, what they mean, and how they look different in different scenarios. The slide builds are sometimes too quick to fully grasp what a line means.</p>
<p>I am so impressed with Will's ability to find and organize data and make meaningful charts that tell a story of the world that we wouldn't be able to see without zooming out. However, his speculation about the cause of the patterns in the charts sometimes steered the class in a tangential direction that felt more like speculation and less like data analysis. Is economics both? I'm still uncertain.</p>
<p>Will Masters is one of the most enthusiastic professors I've ever had. His approach to teaching economics is different than the approaches of previous professors I've had in undergraduate economics classes but, I appreciated the way he taught the course concepts. However, it did sometimes feel like important foundational concepts, such as elasticity, were only glossed over briefly rather than discussed completely. Overall, Will Masters is incredibly kind, empathetic, intelligent, and passionate about food economics and teaching.</p>

**24. The course included relevant concepts of diversity and social justice.**

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Options	Score	Count	Percentage	Statistics	Value
Strongly Agree	1	9	34.62%	Mean	1.96
Agree	2	9	34.62%	Standard Deviation	0.82
Neutral	3	8	30.77%		
Disagree	4	0	0.00%		
Strongly Disagree	5	0	0.00%		
N/A	NRP	0	0.00%		