

Individual Report for Sp20-NUTR-0238-01-Econ Food and Nutrition Policy (William A. Masters wmaste01)

Project Title: Spring 2020 Course Evaluations - Friedman

Courses Audience: **51** Responses Received: **41** Response Ratio: **80.39**%



Summary of Results

Course evaluation summary

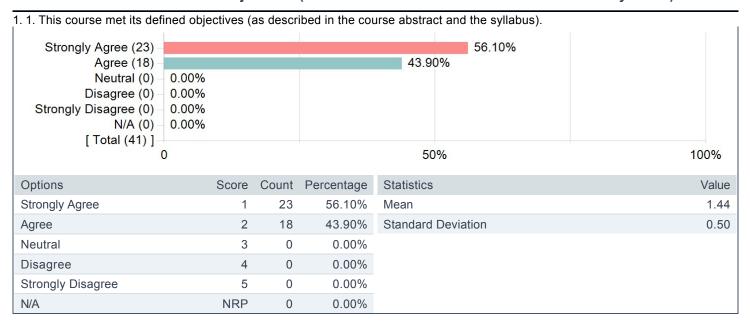
Question	Course		School (Friedman School of Nutrition)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
This course met its defined objectives (as described in the course abstract and the syllabus).	1.44	0.50	1.53	0.70
2. The amount of material covered in the course was effective for my own learning.	1.63	0.73	1.71	0.86
3. The assigned readings for the course were instructive and relevant to the course objectives.	1.71	0.81	1.77	0.87
4. Information communicated by guest lectures was useful.	1.79	0.80	1.58	0.82
5. The workload for the course (readings, homework, papers, etc.) was effective for my own learning.	1.88	0.98	1.78	0.88
6. Audio/video media was relevant to the course objectives (if used in this course).	1.63	0.66	1.57	0.70
7. Experiential activities outside of the classroom were relevant to the course objectives (if used in this course).	1.33	0.49	1.57	0.78
8. Overall, how satisfied were you with this course?	1.80	0.81	1.82	0.95
Overall	1.65	0.76	1.67	-

Instructor evaluation summary

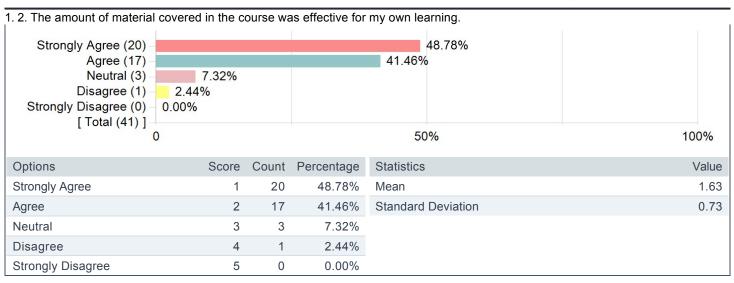
Question	Course		School (Friedman School of Nutrition)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
15. The instructor was prepared for class.	1.18	0.39	1.35	0.63
16. The instructor communicated the course concepts clearly.	1.69	0.73	1.53	0.81
17. The instructor responded clearly and completely to questions and/or feedback.	1.44	0.64	1.40	0.70
18. The instructor stimulated enthusiasm and interest in the subject.	1.28	0.46	1.37	0.68
19. The instructor was available for help outside of the class.	1.18	0.39	1.46	0.68
20. The instructor provided useful feedback on assignments and exams to date.	1.46	0.64	1.68	0.90
21. The instructor was sensitive to issues of diversity (e.g. race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation).	1.62	0.71	1.47	0.72
22. Overall, how satisfied were you with this instructor?	1.44	0.72	1.47	0.78
24. The course included relevant concepts of diversity and social justice.	1.68	0.75	1.93	0.94
Overall	1.44	0.64	1.52	-

Detailed Results of Course Evaluation

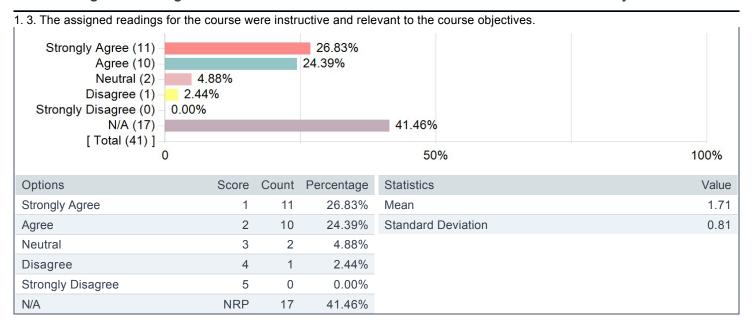
1. This course met its defined objectives (as described in the course abstract and the syllabus).



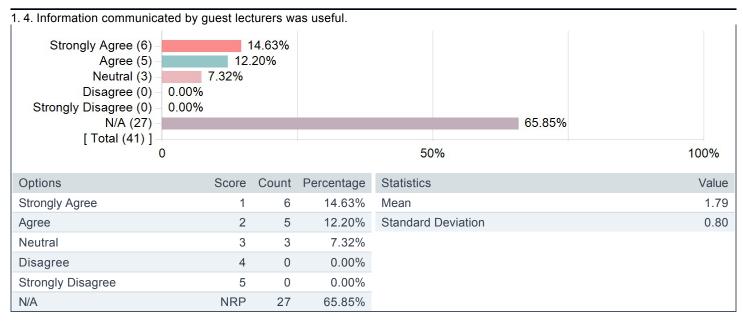
2. The amount of material covered in the course was effective for my own learning.



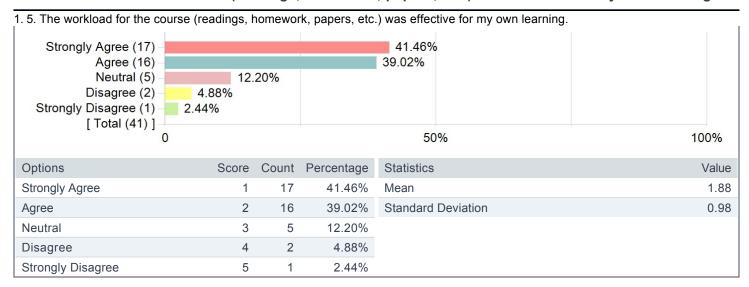
3. The assigned readings for the course were instructive and relevant to the course objectives.



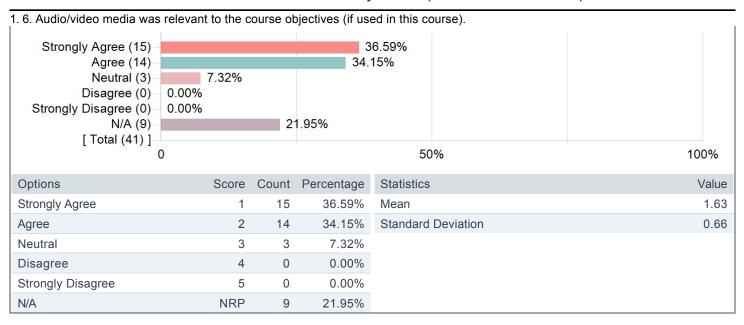
4. Information communicated by guest lecturers was useful.



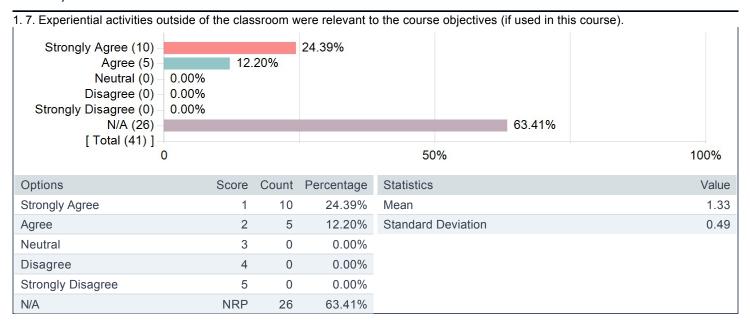
5. The workload for the course (readings, homework, papers, etc.) was effective for my own learning.



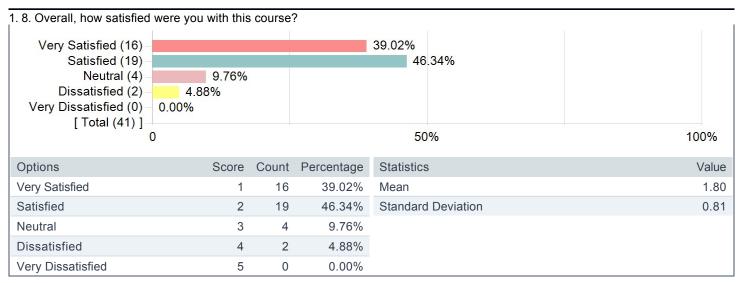
6. Audio/video media was relevant to the course objectives (if used in this course).



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



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



Open-Ended Feedback

9. Comments regarding the assigned readings:

Comments

N/A

We did not have many assigned readings

N/A

We did not have any assigned readings.

I appreciated that the course was effectively taught without a textbook.

It would have been good to use outside of class time to do readings of papers that were related to the larger subjects of economics that we focused on in class time, instead of being asked to watch taped lectures of material that we would then cover in real time class.

n/a

Will Masters is extremely engaging and I like that the pace of his course works for people who are much slower to pick up economics/have never taken an econ course in the past. I LOVE the fact that there is not required readings outside of class – the workload is so not overwhelming that I really look forward to doing the required homeworks. I also take the time to re–watch all classes and wouldn't do that had we been assigned much more reading.

No assigned reading for this class

I don't think there is any assigned readings. Just recommended ones. Those are helpful though.

We didn't really have assigned readings. I liked that about this course. I also liked that we were asked to go out and find out own materials that were relevant to the topics we were learning. This allowed us to begin practicing our ability to tease apart the good from the bad in terms of how economics and nutrition reporting were presented. This format really worked well for me, and surprisingly, I think I learned more in this class without reading materials than I learned in most of my classes with reading materials.

N/A

I enjoyed reading some of the optional papers provided, and would have enjoyed doing more "required" reading, or at least having structured opportunities to discuss with other interested students

N/A

Because of the amount of material in the slides and the time it took to do homework assignments, I wasn't able to dive into much of the optional readings in the new text book or the journals that Will suggested on the syllabus. While I did find the homework exercises useful in building understanding/context and applying skills, I wish we had a balance of exercise and getting to focus on reading on specific issues as case studies. This was accomplished a bit in the news analysis, but I wish I had time to do some of the other readings.

There were no "assigned" reading in this course, however, I did find articles shared by the professor or classmates to be helpful in understanding topics covered in class.

I have the readings, outlined in the syllabus, on my to-do list! Although not compulsory, they are helpful for learning the material.

I would have appreciated a few articles of economics in practice. Perhaps these could just be recommended readings for students wanting to delve a bit further into the course.

n/a

The extra lectures were helpful for learning!

10. Comments regarding guest lecturers/speakers:

Comments
N/A
N/A
N/A
Guest lecturers facilitated breakout group discussions. As facilitators, the mainly facilitated instead of adding their own thoughts. It was good to shake things up, but not very helpful/value–added.
N/A
n/a
NA NA
No guest lecturers
N/A
None that I can recall.
N/A
Would be great to hear from speakers.
n/a

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

Comments

N/A

While I didn't often seek out assistance of the TAs, the helpful feedback they both provided on homework exercises was always impressively quick!

Both TA's were very helpful; clear knowledge of subject matter

Great help!

Thank you! Great communication.

The TAs provided helpful feedback. While I did not interact with them much, they seemed accessible.

Incredible TA's. I am very thankful for their assistance and clarity throughout the semester.

Very helpful

TAs were very helpful and very responsive, thank you!

The TAs are great and they provided good feedbacks on our assignments.

They were both very available to assist students when needed, and they both seemed competent regarding the subject matter. I think Katie was a bit more engaged with the material and excited about talking about the topics, but Lucy was also very helpful when I needed her help.

Didn't have much interaction with the TAs, but their feedback on HW assignments were helpful. I think they also did a good job running the course.

They were nice.

TAs were very helpful, particularly with feedback on HW assignments.

Katie and Lucy were incredibly helpful, and the entire teaching team was super responsive and available.

When I had questions, the teaching assistants quickly answered them. I felt that they were always actively listening during the class and setting a good example for other students. I appreciated their detailed feedback on homework.

Katie and Lucy both great TAs.

They were really helpful and provided useful feedback for the homework exercises.

The TAs were helpful in the sense that they responded as quickly as they could to emails, and were available to meet when I needed help. But in the beginning, I met with one of the TAs for help on homework, and had checked my work with her, and then points were taken off that assignment for the exact thing I had checked with the TA. That was a little frustrating because it seemed she wasn't as sure on what needed to be done as I originally thought.

I was very impressed with the TA's. Incredibly helpful

The teaching assistants were great! Their comments on the homework submissions were very helpful as well as their homework assignments from last year.

TAs Katie and Lucy were great! Very helpful, prompt with grading, constructive feedback.

The TAs were very prompt in responding to questions and in returning grading.

Didn't work with the TAs much but Lucy was very helpful when I was studying for the midterm and both the TAs gave great feedback on assignments.

TAs were helpful and available when needed!

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

Comments

use of Poll everywhere, that was an effective way of engaging the class

Honestly, Will Masters should not be changed. He is a fantastic teacher. I also appreciate the exercises which allow students to apply concepts in meaningful ways, often using real–life events or data. This class goes beyond simply teaching material and I think that's greatly appreciated by students.

The assignments

Online modules and pace of course.

Will's enthusiasm for the material.

The homeworks.

The least cost diets exercise was super instructive.

Content

Workload

Homework assignments were challenging but helpful to understand class material

The course structure.

The format of the course is awesome. Will has obviously put a lot of thought into the design of the course so that students can get the most out of it, and it really worked for me.

The different class resources - recorded lectures, online textbook drafts, office hours, etc.

The weekly exercises were extremely useful and really helped me integrate my learning while building skills (i.e. Excel).

Pre-recorded lecture videos on Canvas.

I found all of the exercises useful for different reasons, and they built nicely on each other, but they did each take a considerable amount of time, which meant I spent more time working on them than looking back at slides/lectures.

I really liked Will's lecture style which was both fairly quickly paced, but rarely felt rushed and he always made time to fully answer student questions and really wanted our participation/engagement.

Not allowing tech (laptops, phones, etc) to be used during the class. Emphasizing the importance of understanding the diagrams (first half of the course) was helpful to prepare for the midterm.

Allowing us to drop two assignments due to COVID–19 would be good in the future, too. Option to do exams OR course project effective for different kinds of leaders. Ability to meet with Will via ZOOM should be kept post–COVID19 if possible.

The HW exercises – albeit, little more spacing could have been done for the dubmission dates.

I like the applicability to real world topics, and that we would talk about things that were happening in real time. This made the class much more interesting!

Exercises rather than reading assignments. I am someone who learns by doing so I really enjoyed the weekly exercises. In addition, as someone who did very poorly on the midterm, the exercises were a good measure for assessing how I was doing in the course. I have a lot of confidence going into the final exam. I also greatly appreciated the recorded lectures (both prior to and during our transition to online learning). It is extremely helpful to be able to go back and watch the lectures. Finally, although my work schedule and other obligations largely precluded me from being present at the review sessions, I think that is a great opportunity for students who would like to prioritize those.

scope of material

I really appreciated the option of a course project for students wanting to further investigate a single topic.

The assignments are really helpful

Will's enthusiasm, mastery of the material and encouraging attitude.

The homework examples, specifically the data visualization ones. I thought they were helpful in learning how to sort through data. However I wish we had fewer so that there was more time to really go in depth and make them more specific.

I liked that there was an assignment weekly – breaks up the grades so that it's nice to be doing something (small) constantly and learning, and doesn't put as much pressure on the larger grades.

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

Comments

The assignments are not very thought provoking. It would be nice if the assignments could be geared more toward developing critical thinking skills and less towards ability to mimic graphs on slides.

The instructor should write shorter homework instructions, shorter emails, and spend less time explaining what the course is

Comments

about. As of now, I need to decipher the objectives of homework and I need to consult with my peers to confirm my understanding of homework instructions. As for Homework 3: least cost diet, I spent more than 10 hours. There are gaps in homework 3 instructions. I had to constantly consult my peers to fill in the gap. It seems that the instructor copy—pasted from old homework without reading them. For homework 9: macroeconomic, it seems that I just need to reproduce the sample graphs given by the instructor. I don't think the instructor made it clear where students could change the variables to graph.

While the homework exercise instructions are incredibly thorough (helping to explain not only what is expected but also how to go about any potentially confusing tasks) they are a bit long! Any slimming down of text while retaining the content would be appreciated.

More group work, breakout groups for discussion

Homeworks require too much time. The workload for the course is too high.

I feel that the presentation of material goes very quickly and does not give enough time for us to think about what we are learning and ask the right kinds of questions during class.

An earlier written proposal for the final project. Not receiving written feedback until after spring break was not helpful.

Pace of learning in class felt way too fast, and expecting students to watch hours of lecture before lecture time is too large an ask. It also made class time feel redundant, instead of as an added space for learning.

More Excel skills – maybe a workshop or two...I don't feel like I learned NEW excel skills or new ways to analyze data. I think the homeworks didn't push us to pull insight from the data other than simply observing the data.

Lectures were confusing and sometimes felt like they went around and around before getting a point across.

I think sometimes students asked so many questions. That makes the lecture time shortened so many times Will couldn't finish his slide deck. I feel like it might be better to allocate the last 15 minutes of the class for questions/comments. That way Will can organize himself and able to finish the lecture.

While I appreciated the weekly assignments and learned a lot from them, a few of them took hours and hours to complete. The policy news analysis assignment comes to mind as being one that took an extra long time, and the diet transition data analysis was also pretty complex and time consuming. It might help to offer a few more words of advice or more direct instructions to help students through these two in particular.

I think the HW assignments help with the exams, but sometimes I had a hard time grasping those concepts just from class lectures, which tend to be more abstract and big picture. I'm not sure how to fill that gap.

The amount of material covered was way too much, in my opinion. I feel like we breezed through everything and I'm left wondering what I really learned. Additionally, there wasn't one class where we got through all of the slides, which is kind of crazy considering how fast we were already going.

During the first half of the semester when we were learning the analytical diagrams, I was usually about 85% on the same page, and felt mostly confident, but sometimes going back to the PowerPoints didn't help clarify definitions of terms. For example, is a given line on a given diagram a price line or expenditure line, or how are those things different anyway? That's an exampe of a question I might still have after class. And since my schedule didn't allow much flexibility for going to review sessions or scheduling special TA sessions, I figured it out alone, but if the PowerPoints had just slightly more detailed definitions for terms, it would have facilitated my independent study more.

After the transition to remote learning, I enjoyed the use of breakout rooms and extensive chat box Q&A/discussion. I think synchronous class time could be even more effective if PowerPoints were very clearly required "reading", so that everyone would be coming to class with a working knowledge of the data and charts covered in the slides. Without substantial advance preparation, at least for me, it's hard to gather information from complex and visually dense charts in just a few seconds, let alone synthesize clear questions or comments at the same time. There's just so little time in remote learning, since long pauses feel more awkward than they might with in–person learning.

I wish we could spend more time on explaining and understanding those economic graphs.

I don't think breakout groups are useful for every class, I like when they're spread out.

When we transitioned to online, Will tried to make the sessions more interactive with discussion groups. While I think it's nice to have the breakout rooms, I didn't feel that the questions posed always led to the most focused discussions, and sometimes they felt like chatting vs. more on topic discussions. Again, I found the homeworks were thoughtful assignments, but I think having a couple weeks to focus on a reading/discussion/deeper understanding of content vs. scrambling to always finish hw assignments might have been a nice balance.

Towards the second half of the semester I felt like the homework assignments and lectures seemed a little vague compared to the first half of the course, which focused on diagraming. Perhaps including the diagrams more in the second half of the semester or tying course content back to the beginning more often in lectures would be helfpul.

Assignment load felt a bit heavy. More introductory, foundational info needed— how to draw econ diagrams, basic concepts of supply and demand, etc..

I had some trouble following the power point slides especially for the first few classes with the analytical diagrams – the content

Comments

was very heavy and cramped on the slides – there were also too many slides. Perhaps, if the additional slides were presented separately and the main ones for understanding of the concept were separate, it would have been easier.

I think there should be more clear objectives at the beginning of each class. The professor did talk about what we'd be learning, but a lot of the times I felt that it wasn't super clear and accessible, and I struggled to figure out what the "point" of each class was until either I was studying for the tests or doing the homework assignments.

I think exercise #3 needs a sample exercise (similar to the way exercise #9 & #10 provided examples/models to base the assignment off of)

This may be nit–picky, not able to be changed, what have you but: I felt a little overwhelmed by the amount of wording (for directions) on the midterm. The practice midterms had instructions of similar length but it was still necessary, obviously, to read the directions in full on the actual midterm. I don't know if it would be possible to condense some of the instruction/description — it just felt a bit rushed in the time allotted. I think allowing myself more time with the practice exams could have helped with this.

Would have liked to learn more about how to build the scatter plots for one of the Excel exercises, instead of relying on Will's default graph.

I thought that the first two sections of weekly assignments (diagrams and news analysis) were more helpful in mastery of course material than the last section (data analysis). While I enjoyed investigating the data, I found the assignments to be a bit too meticulous and time consuming, particularly for those who already have graphing and data visualization experience. Perhaps cutting back the number of data analysis exercises would be more beneficial for students time.

1

More efficiently teaching the material from the first half of the semester in order to spend more time with the material from the second half.

If there was a way to animate the graph transformations, it would make learning the basic concepts quicker. I found myself becoming confused about concepts I had learned more easily in two other economics courses because there are incredible number of dotted and colored lines and moving them in class, but that not being reflected in the powerpoints later when reviewing.

I think sometimes there's too much detail in the assignment explanations. It may be helpful to have directions be in a numbered list, or a checklist? When reading through the assignment it can be too much and then I miss something important, although I do find all the tips and information helpful.

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

Comments

I would really appreciate it if this course could reconsider what skills are being taught. It is possible to teach novice Excel users how to use Excel while still employing critical thinking skills about a particular question. Taking away points because somebody used a lower case g instead of an uppercase Q or whatever really doesn't teach the student how to think for themselves.

Very lecture heavy course

Will is a great instructor and cares immensely about his students and their learning.

Great class. Thank you!

Incredibly effective course.

Really appreciate the flexibility of the professor during the wake of COVID.

Challenging course

I really like how Will got us students engaged in the conversations around these materials. I think more students could have spoken up and gotten involved, but once we had to transition to online due to the pandemic, the break–out sessions allowed even the quieter students to get involved in the discussion. That's great! Perhaps something like that should get incorporated into the face—to—face course once things go back offline.

The links for the slides often did not work at the end of the semester.

It was not clear how to prepare for lectures since classes started via zoom (probably because contents on diagram analyses were completed).

I think this course would serve students well in any Friedman concentration. Will does a great job teaching content that can be dry or difficult to understand!

This course switched to online flawlessly after spring break (due to COVID).

This was one of my favorite classes at Friedman so far! I learn more by ruminating on the material (more–so than asking questions off the bat) and so I felt the design of this course was great for the many different types of learners at Friedman. The tie–ins to current events was great.

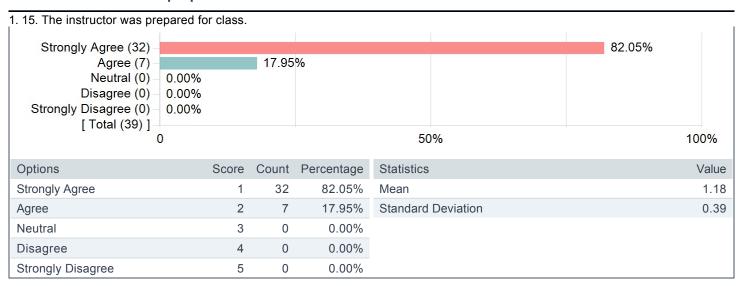
I felt the transition to online learning to be very seamless and accommodating. Great job!

All things considered, Will did a great job transitioning the course to an online format. I appreciated his openness to course feedback and efforts to keep students engaged both in person and on Zoom. As mentioned above, I do wish we could have spent much more time on some bigger picture aspects of how economics principles affect food and nutrition policy. I feel like we spent too much time on econ basics. I would rather have taken an intro to Econ course before attending Friedman. Will is a fantastic educator and has so much to offer students. To be honest, I think his talents are a bit wasted catching students up to speed. The material we learned in the first half of the semester is available on YouTube and elsewhere. Not the best use of Will's time or students' money! I feel like I missed an opportunity to really delve deep into different topics in this course and benefit from everything Will has to offer.

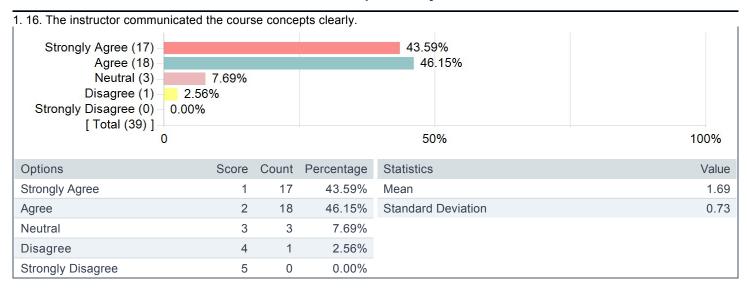
I learned a lot, thanks!

Detailed Results of Instructor Evaluation

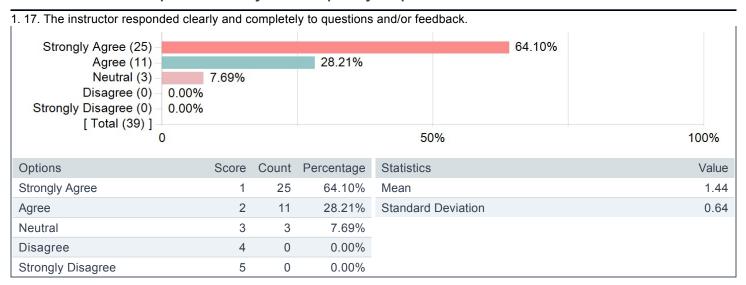
15. The instructor was prepared for class.



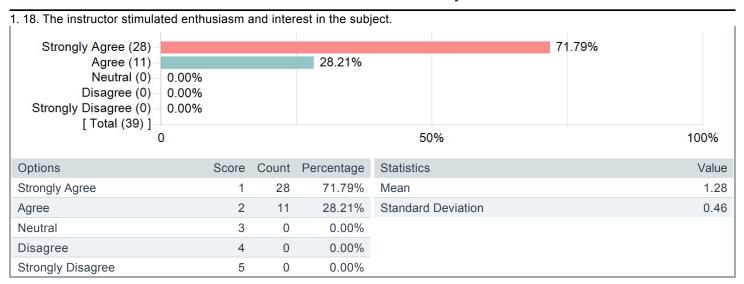
16. The instructor communicated the course concepts clearly.



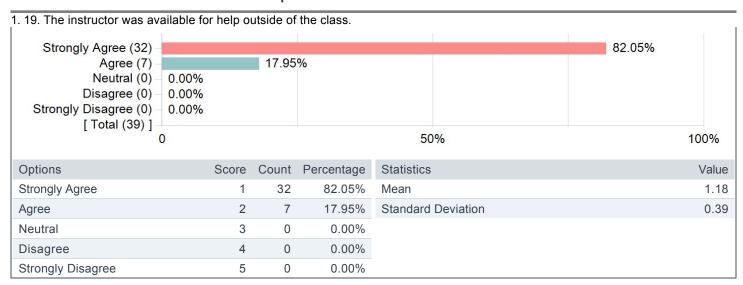
17. The instructor responded clearly and completely to questions and/or feedback.



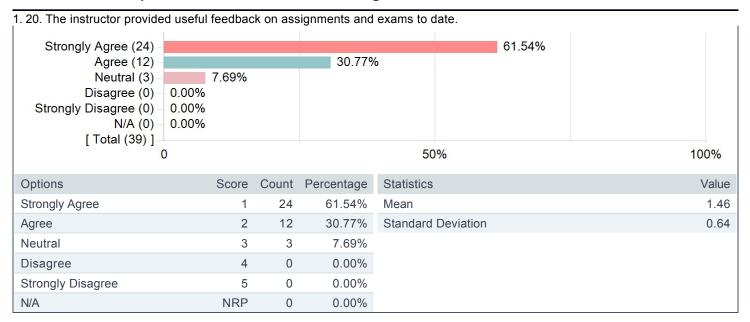
18. The instructor stimulated enthusiasm and interest in the subject.



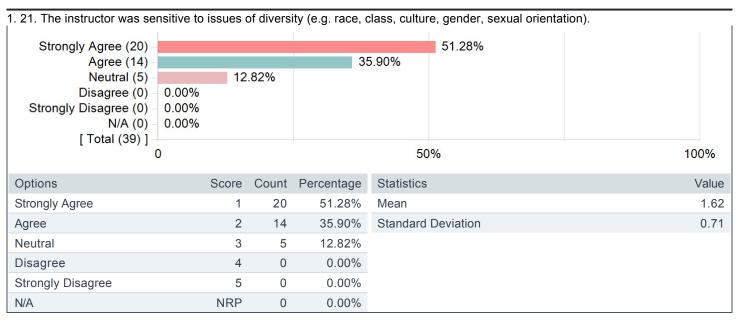
19. The instructor was available for help outside of the class.



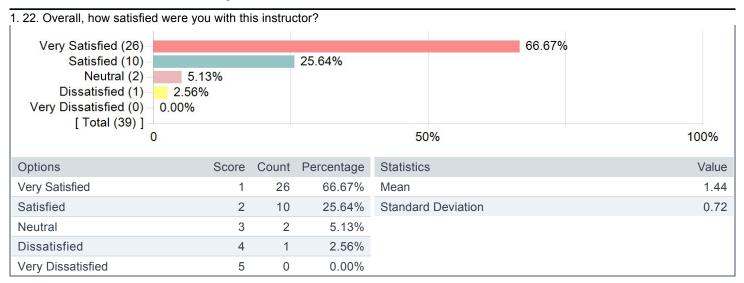
20. The instructor provided useful feedback on assignments and exams to date.



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



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



23. Additional comments regarding the instructor:

Comments

Will encourages student participation, responds thoroughly and thoughtfully to questions and provides helpful explanations to concepts that might otherwise be difficult to understand. Each homework is carefully designed to be a meaningful exercise that benefits students' learning. Will welcomes feedback and often adapts the course based on student needs or requests. The Econ Potluck that he hosts was an excellent experience, linking course concepts to food and providing an exciting way to engage with faculty and students outside the lecture hall.

Thank you!

Will was sometimes aggressive in his requests for students to be as enthusiastic about the material and participation as he is, and this often had the opposite effect. The more he pushed us to join him (really it was his approach to pushing us, which felt threatening at times) the more I felt punished for not understanding certain concepts or being able to translate his data into meaningful statements, and the more disinterested in the subject material.

A very empathetic approach to economics. Amazing professor who applies concepts to current events. Very inspiring

Will's brain works differently than the student body so it takes some getting used to and clarification when asking questions. However, I've never had a professor more interested in understanding what the students felt and thought about subjects/areas of confusion.

Will is a great professor and his enthusiasm for econ and the world is incredible. I sometimes felt like he was stuck is his way and had a hard time understanding what students were saying. He did the best job of all my professors adapting with the pandemic, and to that I applaud him. I can tell he doesn't mean to but sometimes I felt judgment from him on students questions. Overall, fantastic professor

He is very enthusiastic!

Will was a very thoughtful and exciting teacher. He definitely thrives on interactions with students and has found a nice way to engage students, which is refreshing. I like how honest he is about the materials – how some of these topics are difficult to navigate socially but how using economics data gives us a new perspective about the world. I had an economics class a long time ago, but this course felt completely different and much more interesting, relevant, and important. I especially like that he was willing to incorporate Covid–19 topics and data in our course so our learning could be especially relevant and timely. Excellent instructor.

I said this in the mid–semester evaluation, but Will cares about the topic and his students – in and out of class. No matter what the situation may be, when an instructor puts in the effort and cares about his students, the outcome will always be the best that it can be.

Will is great; he's enthusiastic and very committed to making sure his students understand the concepts presented in class.

I appreciate how serious you (Will) are about teaching and have continued to learn a lot from this course despite the disruption of transitioning to remote learning. Thank you to you and the TAs for your commitment to the student experience! I also specifically appreciate how you recognize all questions and take them seriously, with both in–person and remote classes. For example, repeating and considering questions as they're asked, even if they're not directly pertaining to your line of thought or are incorrectly interpreting something. That kind of attitude really creates a good environment for questioning and engaging the material, which isn't always the case in classrooms.

Very nice and patient in answering students' questions.

Comments

I appreciate Will's enthusiasm for economics, and it was a pleasure to learn from him this semester!

I really loved the lectures, so I was disappointed when we moved online. Will really worked hard to keep the lectures engaging and I appreciated that he wanted feedback throughout the transition and tried different structures for class. He was extremely responsive to emails and always offered in–depth feedback which was helpful. I would have liked a chance to read/use his new text book, but felt I didn't have time to prioritize reading when I was focusing on the homework assignments.

Professor Will Masters is a fabulous instructor who is very passionate about teaching and is always willing to help students develop their skills.

Will's energy and enthusiasm for the topic was very noticeable. He made a subject that can be difficult to understand much more approachable.

Will is a wonderful professor and treats students as colleagues. I would recommend him to other students without question.

I greatly appreciate Professor Will's almost immediate responses to many doubts and questions even on Sundays. The additional Friday review sessions were also very helpful.

Will seems very passionate about what he does, which is really great in a professor. I do wish he provided a bit more clarity sometimes on the topics and what we were really supposed to get out of it, because sometimes I didn't understand where he was going if he would be going on about a subject. I do appreciate how much he cared about our learning though!

Great!

Will is very dedicated and efficient in replying to email queries/ emails for help etc. I really liked how he brought lots of real world examples to the course, including lots of interesting background material in his lectures (e.g. talking about WalMart's supply chains in the context of monopoly). Perhaps we could have spent a little less class time establishing the economics fundamentals in the first part of the course (e.g. PPB, demand and supply curves). At times, the in–depth explanations on how to derive the curves (e.g. trade–offs for PPB and individual consumer and producer surplus for the buyers and sellers of fish for demand and supply curves) seemed to complicate the concepts.

The only reason I didn't put "very satisfied" is because of my comments from the previous section. I don't think we really got to experience Will's full potential. Hopefully Friedman do a better job defining course goals! (This issue is not exclusive to NUTR 238) I am so grateful Will conducted Friday review sessions. They were extremely helpful and offered an opportunity to learn from him in a more relaxed, personal environment.

Thanks for doing so much to help with our learning! I appreciate it!

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

