SRT Individual Report for PA 8302 001 Applied Policy Analysis (Giang Thai) - Fall 2023

Project Title: **Student Rating of Teaching - Fall 2023**

Courses Audience: **25**
Responses Received: **19**
Response Ratio: **76.00%**

Report Comments

University Survey and Assessment Services
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Creation Date: **Saturday, December 23, 2023**

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Message from the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs

The University is committed to monitoring and improving students' educational experiences. Student Ratings of Teaching (SRT) help to ensure that the student voice is present in fulfilling this mission. We encourage all instructors to incorporate student feedback into your ongoing efforts to improve your teaching and your courses.

How SRT Results may be Used
Evaluations of teaching provide information intended to help improve teaching, and may also be available to assist students in course selection and/or to inform administrative decisions on salary, tenure, and promotion. Specific use of SRT results may vary by campus and/or college as described in relevant university or unit policies.

Resources for Improving Instruction
Tools and tips for improving course instruction can be found on the OMS website (oms.umn.edu/srt), under the faculty section.

Among the available resources is a guide for connecting your teaching practices with the SRT. This guide was created by the Center for Educational Innovation (cei.umn.edu) and provides suggestions for improving instructional practices in relation to SRT items.

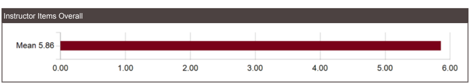
About this Report
This report contains all ratings provided by the students in your courses who submitted SRT responses. Mean (average) scores are reported as well as the frequency of how often each response was given for each item. Results are provided in the following order:

1. Score graph and frequency graphs for instructor items
2. Score graph and frequency graphs for course items
3. Comments regarding instructor
4. Comments regarding course

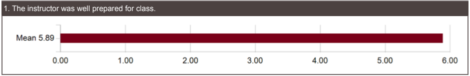
For additional information about evaluation of teaching, please reference the Evaluation of Teaching policy for your campus. The policy for Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris, and Rochester can be found here: http://policy.umn.edu/education/teachingevaluation.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Ropers
Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs

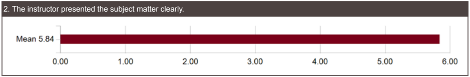
Instructor Items Overall



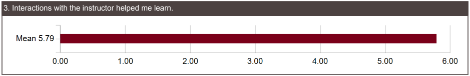
1. The instructor was well prepared for class.



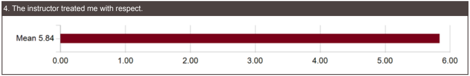
2. The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.



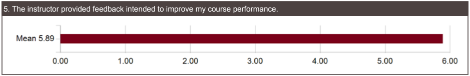
3. Interactions with the instructor helped me learn.



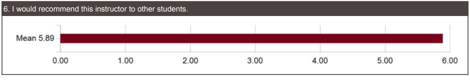
4. The instructor treated me with respect.



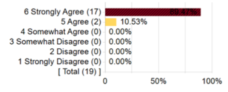
5. The instructor provided feedback intended to improve my course performance.



6. I would recommend this instructor to other students.

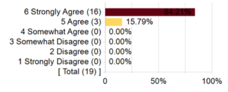


1. The instructor was well prepared for class.



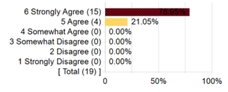
Statistics	Value
Response Count	19
Mean	5.89
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	0.32

2. The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.



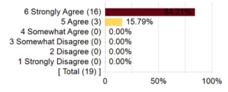
Statistics	Value
Response Count	19
Mean	5.84
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	0.37

3. Interactions with the instructor helped me learn.



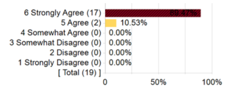
Statistics	Value
Response Count	19
Mean	5.79
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	0.42

4. The instructor treated me with respect.



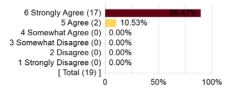
Statistics	Value
Response Count	19
Mean	5.84
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	0.37

5. The instructor provided feedback intended to improve my course performance.



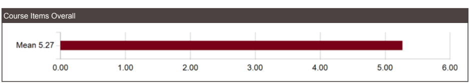
Statistics	Value
Response Count	19
Mean	5.89
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	0.32

6. I would recommend this instructor to other students.

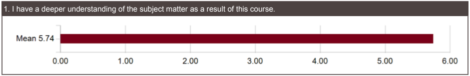


Statistics	Value
Response Count	19
Mean	5.89
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	0.32

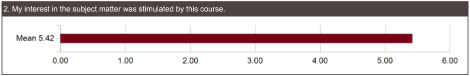
Course Items Overall



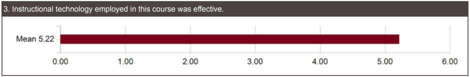
1. I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.



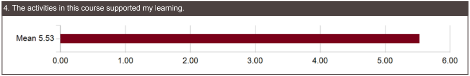
2. My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course.



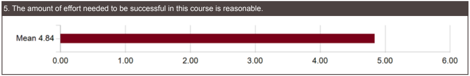
3. Instructional technology employed in this course was effective.



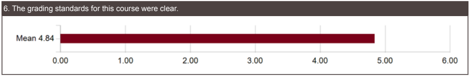
4. The activities in this course supported my learning.



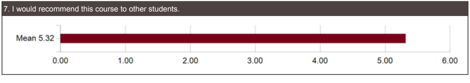
5. The amount of effort needed to be successful in this course is reasonable.



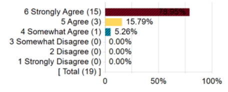
6. The grading standards for this course were clear.



7. I would recommend this course to other students.

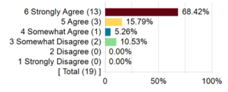


1. I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.



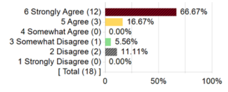
Statistics	Value
Mean	5.74
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	0.56

2. My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course.



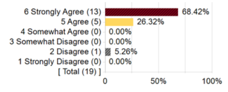
Statistics	Value
Mean	5.42
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	1.02

3. Instructional technology employed in this course was effective.



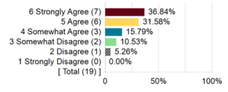
Statistics	Value
Mean	5.22
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	1.40

4. The activities in this course supported my learning.



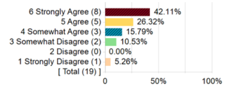
Statistics	Value
Mean	5.53
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	0.96

5. The amount of effort needed to be successful in this course is reasonable.



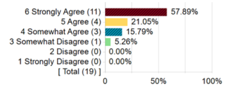
Statistics	Value
Mean	4.84
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	1.21

6. The grading standards for this course were clear.



Statistics	Value
Mean	4.84
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	1.38

7. I would recommend this course to other students.



Statistics	Value
Mean	5.32
Median	6.00
Standard Deviation	0.95

What did the instructor do that most helped your learning?

Comments
Giang gave very timely responses via email for questions and tried to find alternative explanations when her first try didn't clarify things for you. She was well–prepared for labs and quickly realized that it wasn't going to be efficient for people to figure out how to write their own code in the labs and pivoted to a more of a recitation style, which worked well for me.
Giang is very patient and helpful for homework questions.
Giang was really good at answering questions (especially over email) related to the assignments and new stata coding concepts that I had never had to implement before. I really appreciated her kind and patient assistance throughout the course.
Giang posted all of the lab information which was super helpful.
Giang did a great job of explaining how to deploy research tools. She gave clear answers to questions about how to use the techniques covered in the course. During our lab sessions, she gave easy–to–follow explanations of how to use Stata to implement the methods covered by the class. She also went above and beyond in grading. Since the assignments were somewhat ambiguous, I sometimes made analysis choices that were different from those in the answer key. Giang dug into my Stata code and engaged with my work, and was effective in providing feedback to help me see where I had conducted appropriate analysis and where I had made errors.
Giang is very knowledgeable and always willing to help! The course was quite heavy and she made it a lot easier for me to learn. The course instructor was not very useful several times but Giang definitely made up for it and she exceeded my expectations.
Email responses were clear.
Very responsive via email, well–prepared for labs, great code examples.
Giang was very supportive, kind, and helpful. She responded to emails promptly and gave clear responses on questions. Her lab sessions were very clear and constructive, and the materials were very helpful.
Giang's explanations in lab were extremely helpful to see how the methods were run in Stata. The comments in the Stata do files were great references while I was working on assignments. Giang also helped me through her clear explanations during her office hours, where she was able to link the methods back to examples from the literature she has read or her own work.
She helped us understand assignment questions and was very responsive to questions She was always well prepared for lab sessions
Labs were good.
She took her time and provided well documented code that assisted in understanding how we model the econometrics in the slides.
Giang should get TA of the year. She was always available via email or during office hours for incredibly detailed questions. Her labs were well–organized, and I appreciated that while she was prepared to answer most questions, she acknowledged when she needed to research something further.
Giang was constantly checking that students understood the content of the course. She was great at answering emails and making herself available.

What suggestions do you have for improving the course?

Comments
The slides often contained errors that were not always corrected in the versions posted to canvas. I know typos happen, and the mistake was explained in lecture, but it would be helpful if those types of errors could be fixed when noticed.
1. I hope for the evaluation of evaluations assignment, we could have the flexibility to choose our own topics of interests. I know it may add some difficulties in grading, but I do think this option will benefit students more. 2. I think the instructor can include some derivation or math in the appendix of slides. I really appreciate Janna's efforts to let us understand the big picture and identification assumptions instead of details of derivations and it really helps, but I think some concepts will be clearer if we can see the derivation (like why we used robust standard errors). 3. Maybe synthetic control could be a topic to be covered as more and more policy/law evaluations used this method. 4. Probably this course could be more flexible in the statistical packages used in this class. As many students are from other schools, maybe Stata is not the default programming language for them.
I think the grading of papers in Janna's courses can be a moving target/very frustrating experience because Janna doesn't like learning through reading (or just general reading) at all and doesn't really know her own expectations until she is presented with the products of the class. This is terrible pedagogy and makes it really hard to get ahead of problems that may harm your performance over the course of the semester. When the instructor is not willing to put in a lot of work grading a paper (by setting clear expectations and then fairly evaluating whether they themselves followed their own instructions in their grading rubric or if they participated in some subjectivity/shifting expectations – all of which requires reading and re–reading), they should probably not assign a paper or they should have the TA grade it entirely. While I haven't had an issue yet this semester, we also haven't submitted our final papers which are an enormous chunk of our grade and won't be graded by the TA (whose standards are very clear and whose grading I tend to do well in). We all have limitations, and Janna's biggest limitation as a teacher is that she doesn't care to read or grade and has a bad attitude about it that she is not shy about (spent ~10 minutes of class time discussing it, writes about it in every writing assignment using all caps, etc.). If these reviews go to a supervisor, I would encourage them to at least tell her to get a grip and develop a better attitude about this part of her job if getting bad reviews bothers her at all. If it doesn't, and her publicly complaining about this part of her job to the people that it negatively impacts as well as generally performing poorly on this aspect doesn't matter to the administration/her supervisors, then by all means, ignore this review.
The assignments would take upwards of 30–40 hours when completed alone. I'd suggest either requiring or recommending they are done in groups.
I generally believe this course is quite polished. The syllabus has a clear flow to it. It is transparent from the beginning that the course will be rigorous and demanding. I would strongly suggest not to dilute the course by reducing the workload. I feel that this course was effective largely because of its intensity. However, it might be appropriate to increase the number of credits (e.g., 6 credits) to reflect the time–intensive nature of the various assignments. I track all the time I spend on my grad school courses, and doing a good job in this course easily takes at least 50% more time than other 4–credit grad–level courses that I've taken at the U. Increasing the number of credits while keeping the same syllabus would make it easier for students to devote the requisite time to succeed in this course.
Change the instructor.
Some instructions were unclear in the assignments. Sometimes I had to infer what was being asked.
Pacing could have been improved – labs and exercise sections featured a lot of dead time. I also think that, given the course had a lot of PhD students, including some materials on practically including these methods in our research/pathways towards building our understanding of these concepts, would have been helpful.
I think calling out each identifying assumption that each method uses, similar to how it was done for DID and IV, would be extremely helpful when writing the final paper. Also, if time allows it would help to go over what would make a particular method internally and/or externally valid during the lecture to help build the skills necessary for the final paper. A lot of the material is already in the slides, but I think showing the link could lead to better critiques of the papers that we analyze for the final paper. Also, if it is at all possible to space out the final assignment due date from the final paper due date any more I think it would lead to higher–quality work. Janna and Giang did a great job teaching this class! I'm thankful for their hard work and clear explanations on these complex topics and methods.
None
Having access to R would be helpful.
The first assignment was much more challenging than the ensuing assignments, not because it was more technically challenging but because the expectations weren't as clear. Because the assignment requires detailed answers to each question, it would be helpful to clarify how the answers should be presented in the assignment. The in–class exercises did not feel like a great use of time. I struggled all semester with the pacing. It always felt like we spent too much time on them. Sometimes, I knew the material well, flew through the assignment and had a lot of unused time. In other cases, neither my teammates nor I understood the material, and we had to wait for the full class discussion. In those cases, we also had a lot of unused time. If you choose to keep the in–class exercises, another minor suggestion would be to have different groups each week so that we get to learn from a wider variety of our peers.
The course can be very demanding for some students. I found that having additional lectures to complete outside of the class time was perhaps a little too much.