



2022S Instructor Report for CS 8395 04 - Special Topics (Kevin Leach)

Project Title: **Vanderbilt University Course and Teaching Evaluations**

Course Audience: **11**

Responses Received: **8**

Response Ratio: **72.73%**

Report Comments

The following is a report for an individual section of a class. Please do not distribute, print, or share this report except for administrative purposes.

Project Audience - Total number of students enrolled

Responses Received - Number of evaluations submitted by students

Response Ratio - Percent of enrolled students who submitted evaluations

If you have any questions about the evaluation system please contact course.evaluations@vanderbilt.edu.

Prepared by: **Vanderbilt University Course and Teaching Evaluations**

Creation Date: **Tuesday, August 9, 2022**

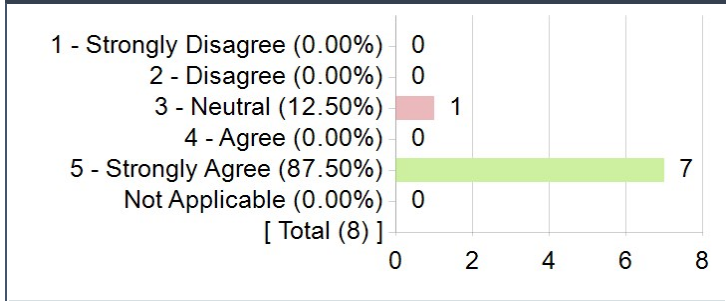
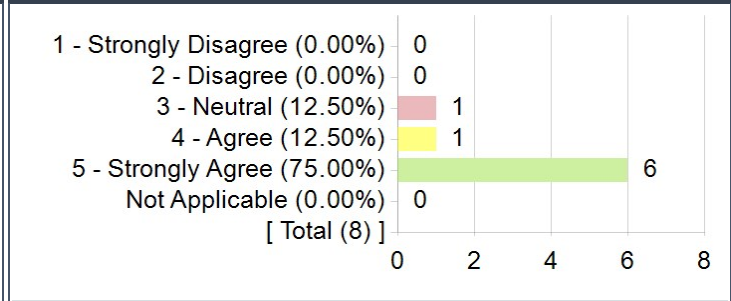
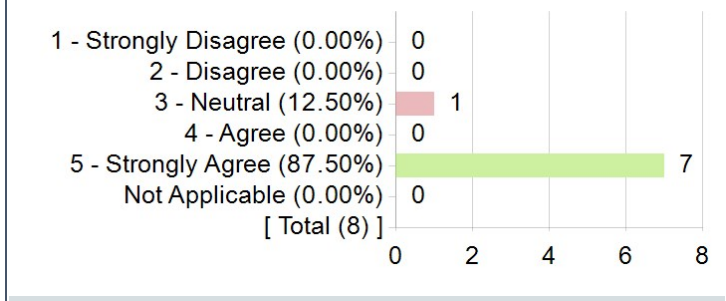
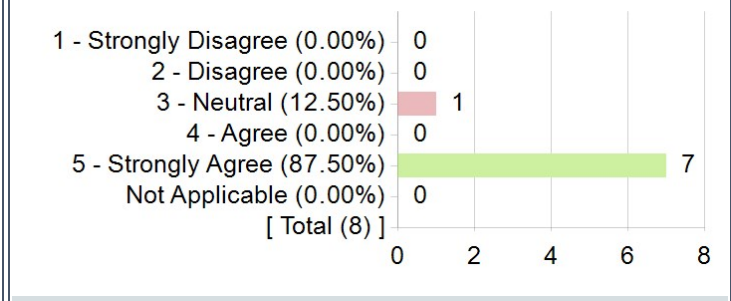
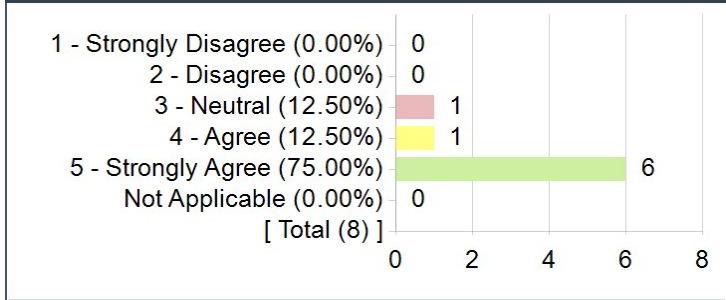
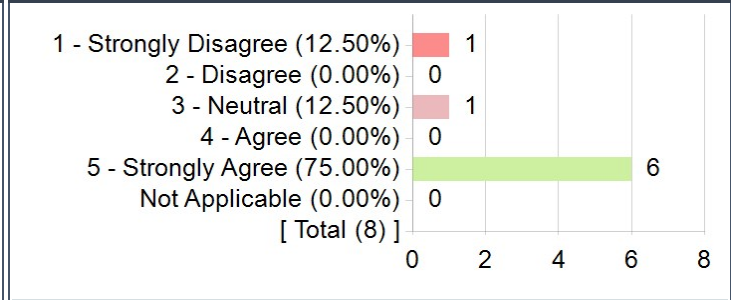
Questions about the Instructor (Kevin Leach):

Question	This Class Section		Department (EECS)		School (ENGIN)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
The instructor helped me understand the core ideas and issues in this subject.	4.75	0.71	4.28	0.95	4.34	0.92
The instructor explained what was expected of me in the assignments and assessments for this course.	4.63	0.74	4.33	0.96	4.34	0.94
The instructor encouraged critical, original, or creative thinking.	4.75	0.71	4.28	0.98	4.35	0.91
The instructor demonstrated interest in students' learning.	4.75	0.71	4.36	0.91	4.46	0.85
The instructor used class time productively.	4.63	0.74	4.30	0.97	4.28	1.01
The instructor created a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment.	4.25	1.49	4.41	0.91	4.48	0.86
Overall, the instructor (Kevin Leach) was:	4.63	0.74	4.13	1.03	4.18	1.01

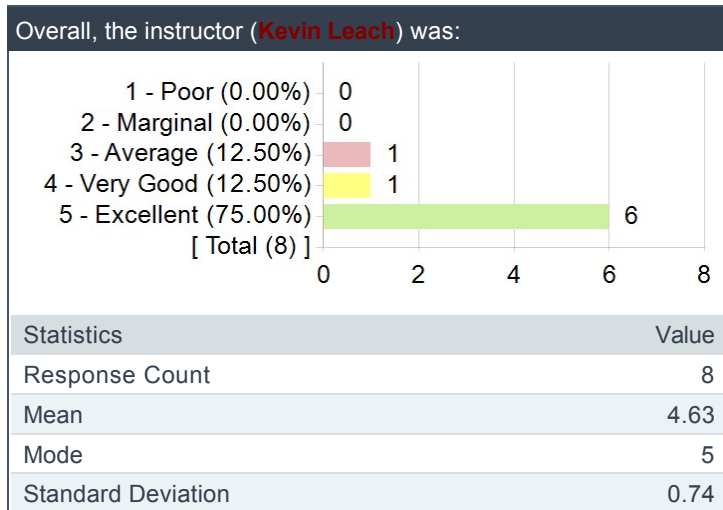
Questions about this Course (CS 8395 04):

Question	This Class Section		Department (EECS)		School (ENGIN)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
This course helped me appreciate the significance of the subject matter.	4.75	0.71	4.24	1.00	4.27	0.98
The components of the course, such as class activities, assessments, and assignments, were consistent with the course goals.	4.63	0.74	4.33	0.95	4.36	0.91
The feedback I received during the course was helpful.	4.75	0.71	4.02	1.09	4.09	1.06
I felt comfortable asking questions in this course.	4.63	0.74	4.21	1.01	4.34	0.94
This course helped me consider connections between course material and other areas of my personal, academic, or professional life.	4.50	0.93	4.15	1.04	4.26	0.99
Overall, the course (CS 8395 04) was:	4.38	0.74	3.83	1.08	3.87	1.06
Compared to other classes, the amount I learned in this course was:	4.25	1.04	3.69	1.06	3.58	1.07
Compared to requirements in other classes, the workload assigned in this class was:	4.00	0.76	3.57	1.00	3.41	1.01

Please respond to the following questions about the instructor (**Kevin Leach**).

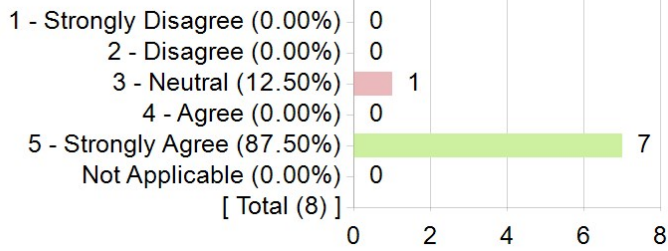
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Overall, the instructor (Kevin Leach) was:



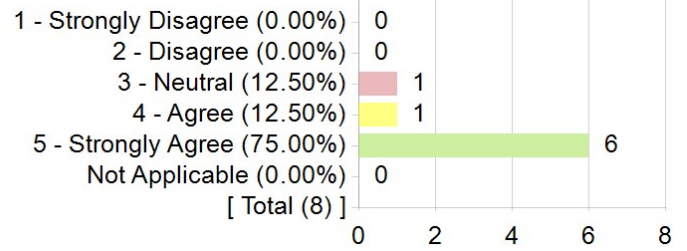
Questions About This Course (CS 8395 04):

1. This course helped me appreciate the significance of the subject matter.



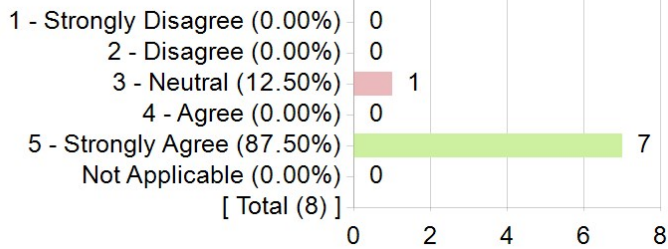
Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.75
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.71

2. The components of the course, such as class activities, assessments, and assignments, were consistent with the course goals.



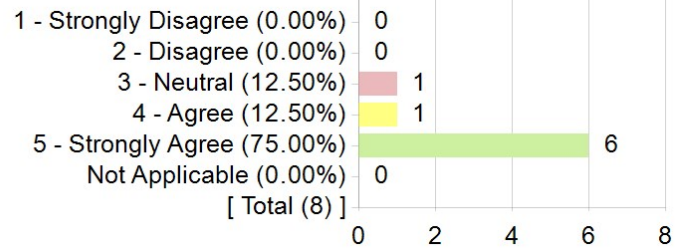
Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.63
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3. The feedback I received during the course was helpful.



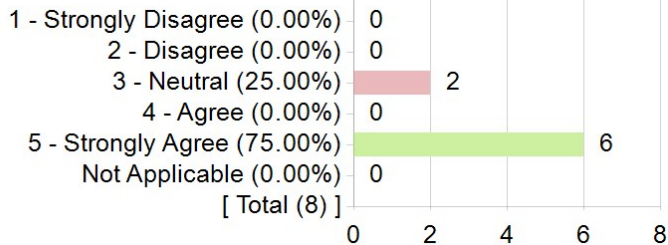
Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.75
Mode	5
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4. I felt comfortable asking questions in this course.



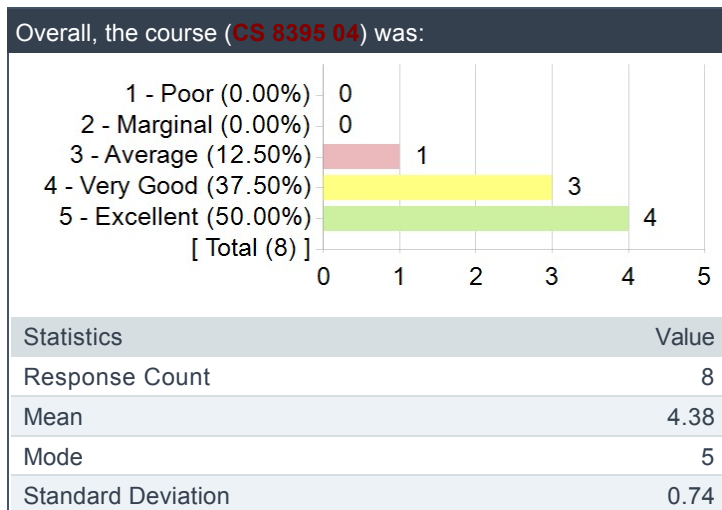
Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.63
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.74

5. This course helped me consider connections between course material and other areas of my personal, academic, or professional life.

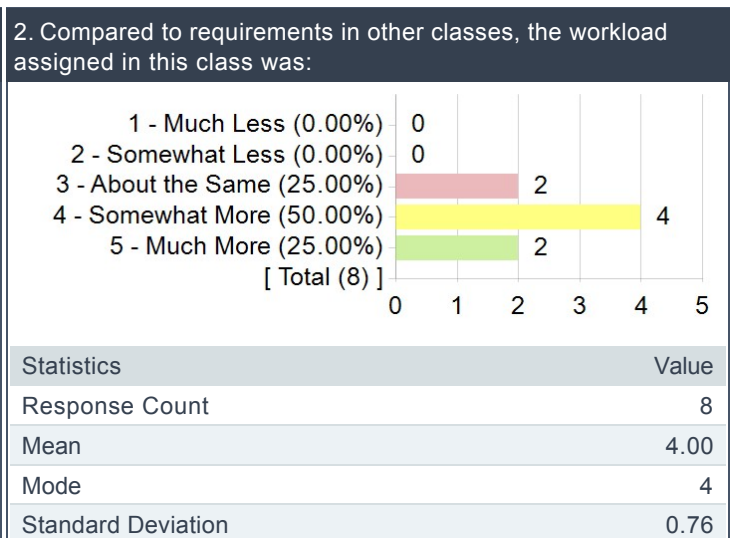
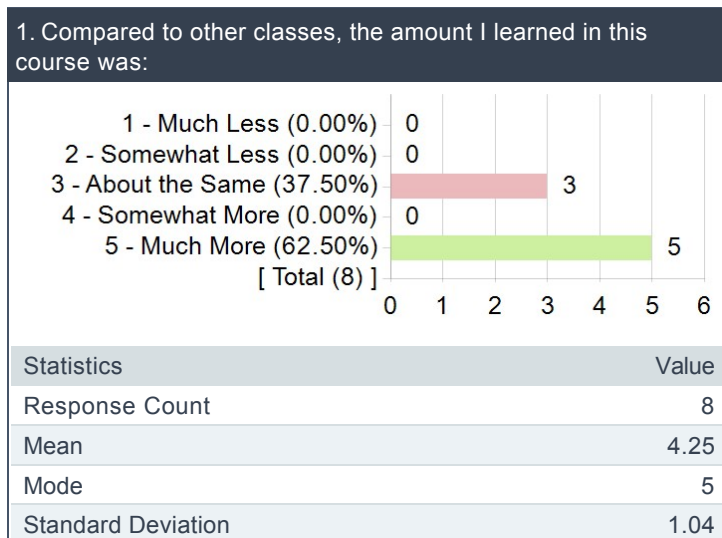


Statistics	Value
Response Count	8
Mean	4.50
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	0.93

Overall the course was:



Questions About This Course (CS 8395 04):



What elements of the course (CS 8395 04) most contributed to your learning?

Comments
I think all elements contributed to my learning. Readings were essential to lecture discussion, discussion helped to gain better understanding of the research, and homework was essential for truly understanding the tools.
The consistent feedback and ability to ask questions freely was helpful in clearing any understandings during the course.
I think the readings gave me a more in-depth understanding of the nature of security research, and improvements to be made in the field.
The readings were interesting and enjoyable; I learned a lot from these breadth-wise. The homeworks were super fun challenges; they put what we were reading about well into context.
Paper discussions, lecture slides, and assignments. Paper summaries helped hone writing skills by requiring 500 words or less (most of the time I would write up to 700–900 words and then trim it to e.g. 490–500 words; for me, this is a helpful exercise that helps me train word economy) and I appreciate the emphasis on writing clarity and communicating claims with a logical structure throughout the course when analyzing papers, etc. I also thoroughly enjoyed the assignments– they were an ideal difficulty level in my opinion and covered a variety of relevant tools and areas.

What improvements to the course (CS 8395 04) would you recommend?

Comments
I actually really liked the structure of the course. I think some readings could be replaced with something like students being responsible for leading discussions to lessen paper load.
I think a bit more focus of chapters or sections of content would've been appreciated in the class as it felt like a continual jump to jump of work.
I would recommend reducing the amount of reading reviews due every week. I found it was difficult for me to keep up with the workload especially as I was juggling other courses. I would also recommend homework assignments that are more tailored towards students who may not have sufficient background, as this course does not have any prerequisites. I think it would be better to have one student present on one paper, rather than multiple students presenting on the same paper, to reduce bias when students are evaluating presentations.
more guidance on homeworks
The readings + the reviews were a lot, although I think that they were crucial. Maybe shorter written reviews (a few sentences) and then more of an emphasis on in-class discussion.
Maybe consider requiring more presentations (e.g. 2 presentations per semester with assigned teams of 2–3) and teams presenting have the week off from paper summaries or something.
Additionally, consider introducing more of the review process to students (e.g. weak/strong accept/reject and reviewer comments of selected papers) and/or require a student review in addition to or alongside a short summary. I often struggled with discerning what should be considered a limitation/weakness in the eyes of a reviewer and think these exercises have helped improve my own writing/critical skills.
Finally, I am a big fan of Piazza but wish it could be more active in an organic way (I know this is difficult with a small class); perhaps require a basic discussion post on current events (e.g. SolarWinds, Lapsu\$) and/or comments from students.

Do you have any other comments?

Comments
Prof. Leach is awesome, hope he stays at Vanderbilt for a long time.
Overall, the course was well structured and I appreciate having everything we need to know available on the website. The schedule helped with pacing, and the frequent emails and use of Piazza helped with understanding the material.
This was one of my favorite classes that I've taken at Vandy. Thanks for caring and taking the time to craft a great mix of a research seminar + project course!
Thank you for a great semester and thank you for sharing about your own career adversity. I believe discussions of failure should be normalized and are informative, reassuring, and critical for growth in any career.