

Systems Security (Spring 2025)

Instructor: **Onarlioglu, Kaan**
 Subject: **CY**
 Catalog & Section: **3740 02**
 Course ID: **33594**
 Objectives:

Enrollment: **79**
 Responses Incl Declines: **38**
 Declines: **0**

Questions to Assess Students' Online Experience

Question	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
Online course materials were organized to help me navigate through the course week by week.	38	48%	4.8	4.4	4.4	5.0	5.0	5.0
Online interactions with my instructor created a sense of connection in the virtual classroom.	38	48%	4.6	4.3	4.3	5.0	5.0	5.0
Online course interactions created a sense of community and connection to my classmates.	38	48%	4.5	4.2	4.2	5.0	4.0	4.0
I had the necessary computer skills and technology to successfully complete the course.	38	48%	4.7	4.5	4.6	5.0	5.0	5.0
Note: 5:Strongly Agree; 4:Agree; 3:Neutral; 2:Disagree; 1:Strongly Disagree; -1:N/A;								

Course Related Questions

Question	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
The syllabus was accurate and helpful in delineating expectations and course outcomes.	38	48%	4.9	4.5	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0
Required and additional course materials were helpful in achieving course outcomes.	38	48%	4.7	4.4	4.4	5.0	5.0	5.0
Note: 5:Strongly Agree; 4:Agree; 3:Neutral; 2:Disagree; 1:Strongly Disagree;								

Learning Related Questions

Question	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
In-class sessions were helpful for learning.	38	48%	4.9	4.3	4.4	5.0	5.0	5.0
Out-of-class assignments and/or fieldwork were helpful for learning.	38	48%	4.9	4.5	4.3	5.0	5.0	5.0
This course was intellectually challenging.	38	48%	5.0	4.3	4.3	5.0	4.0	5.0
I learned a lot in this course.	38	48%	5.0	4.4	4.4	5.0	5.0	5.0
Note: 5:Strongly Agree; 4:Agree; 3:Neutral; 2:Disagree; 1:Strongly Disagree;								

Instructor Related Questions: Kaan Onarlioglu								
Question	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
The instructor came to class prepared to teach.	38	48%	5.0	4.7	4.6	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor used class time effectively.	38	48%	4.9	4.5	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor clearly communicated ideas and information.	38	48%	5.0	4.5	4.4	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor provided sufficient feedback.	38	48%	4.9	4.4	4.3	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor fairly evaluated my performance.	38	48%	4.9	4.5	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor was available to assist students outside of class.	38	48%	4.9	4.5	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor facilitated a respectful and inclusive learning environment.	38	48%	4.9	4.6	4.6	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor displayed enthusiasm for the course.	38	48%	5.0	4.7	4.7	5.0	5.0	5.0
Note: 5:Strongly Agree; 4:Agree; 3:Neutral; 2:Disagree; 1:Strongly Disagree;								

Instructor Effectiveness: Kaan Onarlioglu

Question	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
What is your overall rating of this instructor's teaching effectiveness?	38	48%	4.9	4.5	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.0
Note: 5:Almost Always Effective; 4:Usually Effective; 3:Sometimes Effective; 2:Rarely Effective; 1:Never Effective;								

Instructor Related Questions: Kaan Onarlioglu (67 comments)

Q: What were the strengths of this course and/or this instructor?

- Kaan is a wonderful professor - very excited to teach and have us learn. All the course infrastructure such as warhead far exceeds the level of detail and thought that I have experienced in any class so far.
- Always ready to teach and came prepared
- Kaan did a very good job taking a difficult time slot and making the course material as engaging as possible.
- This course built on my knowledge in Cybersecurity and was very helpful to reference in interviews for my Co-op search. The instructor is extremely knowledgeable and did really well at emphasizing important information, whether it would potentially reappear in a challenge or on an exam, or just something that you need to know in cybersecurity/computer science. The instructor could answer complex questions on the course material. It was very easy to stay engaged during the class.
- Kaan teaching in an incredibly engaging way for a 3 hour class. I loved how the challenges were designed and I loved the teaching style. He made sure the class was learning extremely relevant topics and broke it up in a way anyone could learn it while still being thoroughly challenged.
- ability to break down foreign topics into digestible chunks
- Kaan has the know-how on cybersecurity that can give everyone a really good launch pad into what is usually hidden behind existing security experience gained through the industry.
- Kaan is one of the best professors this school has ever employed. He runs an amazing class; it is very challenging yet very doable. I learned so much in this class. There are a handful of pre-requisites for this class, yet Kaan does a great job explaining things so that no one is at a disadvantage if there is a gap in their previous knowledge
- Super enthusiastic about the material. Put an emphasis on content that is actually important, and adding in fun info here and there.
- Learning goals were clearly outlined, in person lectures were awesome. Professor has good command of the class (it's hard to get bored during lectures) and is always happy to help w/ questions
- Amazing lecturer, extremely engaging. Explained a lot of topics in an understandable way without lacking on difficulty.
- Kaan was very enthusiastic. The topics covered were very interesting, and the assignments were extremely relevant.

I felt like quizzes and exams were graded leniently.

I love the extra credit.
- The challenges required a certain level of creativity which I didn't realized I lacked until this course, and so I learnt a lot from the course in that regard. The instructor knows what he is talking about, and backs the concept covered in class with real-life experience and stories.
- Kaan is an exceptional instructor who has designed a truly unique course, and his dedication to his students is evident in every aspect of the learning experience. His primary goal is to ensure that students grasp the material deeply, which he achieves by creating challenging, real-world security exercises. Kaan approaches each student with kindness, patience, and empathy, fostering a supportive and encouraging environment. He also hires outstanding teaching assistants who share his mission and enhance the overall learning experience. When addressing student questions, Kaan encourages critical thinking, guiding students toward discovering answers on their own in a way that's both insightful and respectful. Furthermore, he reinforces key concepts throughout his course materials, ensuring that students have the tools they need to truly understand and apply the content in his curated exercises and beyond.

Q: What were the strengths of this course and/or this instructor?

- 15 The course material was really interesting, and I think the content itself is incredibly valuable. Kaan's experience with cybersecurity clearly shows when he is teaching, and I think that added a lot to the course. He frequently commented on current trends and practical aspects of cybersecurity during lectures. The last portion about threat-modelling also detailed a practice which is important to practical cybersecurity jobs, but that there aren't any actual textbook resources for past a few examples. His teaching of that seemed very important to me.
- 16 Far and away he made this class fun. Breaking it all down to problem solving and digestible challenges was leagues more fun than the other ways of learning CY. His lecturing was similarly engaging, bringing a lot of personality and making me want to learn the content, when it was great and when it was something I already felt I knew (all of the content was good, I wouldn't rank anything as boring).
- 17 Demonstrated concepts beyond simplistic frameworks (insider secrets are always appreciated) clearly. Learning process was streamlined, with helpful demonstrations of application of ideas learned in class. Challenges and bonuses were fun (most, anyway).
- 18 This class truly takes you through as much of security as Kaan possibly can in 4 months. Kaan is always improving the class, his teaching, and the experience.
- 19 All hail Supreme Professor Kaan, Guardian of the Firewall, Architect of the Eternal Uptime, and Master of All Root Access. Under his watchful eye, vulnerability is a relic, and intrusion is but a myth. With a mind sharper than a packet sniffer and a presence more formidable than a zero-day exploit, Kaan ensures absolute digital purity. His lectures? Doctrine. His policies? Immutable. His network? Unbreachable. In Kaan we trust, for only Kaan knows all ports.
- 20 Very knowledgeable instructor
- 21 knows a lot. take this class, seriously you'll learn a lot. knows exactly the perfect medium between making the course intellectually hard but also so that you can learn from it.
- 22 Instructor is extremely knowledgeable. Course provides exposure in multiple areas such as networks, distributed systems, operating systems, compilers, algorithms, and more. Kaan has both academic and extensive industry knowledge that makes every lesson he provides extremely valuable. It would be silly to miss a lecture, you would be missing really good content. Challenges are very fun and a great learning opportunity.
- 23 Kaan does what I have not seen before in other professors: keeping a 2-3 hour long lecture engaging, fun, and meaningful. Nearly every lecture is grouped together with a live demonstration of how to apply the concepts covered on the slides. These demonstrations often tie in well to the challenges, giving a bit of a pointer without revealing the challenge solutions.
- 24 GOAT. could not ask for a better security prof or environment.
- 25 Entertaining
- 26 Kaan is very good at breaking down difficult concepts with a dash of humor thrown in. He maybe seems intimidating at first (probably because he's very direct) but he's genuinely wants people to succeed in his class, and he's always willing to provide help or even just chat with his students. I went from having basically no cybersecurity knowledge whatsoever to (semi-)confidently solving many of the challenges and having a much better basic understanding, all thanks to this class.
- 27 good lectures, meaningful homework assignments
- 28 Enthusiasm

Q: What could the instructor do to make this course better?

- 1 Nothing.
- 2 Not much
- 3 Give online resources for similar attacks to the challenges if there are any to give us a better baseline when understanding the attacks with more real-world or visual examples.
- 4 Nothing.
- 5 Nothing. The only problems I have with this class is that there's not a section that meets multiple times a week instead of once a week at night, but I don't think that's Kaan's fault.
- 6 partition class time towards the end of the semester to discuss relevant and top security tools and how to use them

Q: What could the instructor do to make this course better?

- 7 There is nothing that needs to be changed. Kaan is incredibly receptive to student feedback and continuously adapts the course to enhance learning and ensure student success. He actively listens to his students' needs and makes improvements throughout the course, so it remains relevant and effective. His ability to adjust the course as needed means there's nothing to revise—it's already structured in the best way possible for student learning and success.
- 8 I was personally more interested in the memory corruption aspect of the course, and enjoyed that more than the web portion (challenge 3/4). I see why it is important to learn those parts but I think spending more time on memory corruption would have added to the course for me.
- 9 If he had an office and was able to host office hours at separate times around the week - as well as TAs - I would've been able to go in with my solutions that were inches from the right answer but took me hours to tweak. Piazza was still responsive though, and if you started early enough you could still get TA time.
- 10 More participation activities in lectures could help hammer home tough ideas like memory corruption.
- 11 More assistance for challenges (oftentimes TAs would give cryptic answers). Additionally, bonus hints (perhaps distributed to the entire class at points in time). Finally, please change the scheduling such that Challenge 7 is not due the same time as the final. Challenge 7 was the hardest memory challenge, and combined with concurrent studying was too much for most.
- 12 I wonder if there would be some way to make the demos more interactive. I learn CS best when I get hands-on experiences so being able to do that alongside the professor in-class would be incredibly helpful.
- 13 The Radiant Presence of Kaan is not merely metaphorical—it is a luminous force, a blinding firewall of divine intellect and power. To gaze directly upon Professor Kaan is to risk temporary loss of vision and permanent gain of reverence. His aura, forged in the white-hot glow of endless compile logs and root shell prompts, outshines even the brightest terminal cursor. Students avert their eyes, not out of fear, but respect—for one does not look at Kaan. One beholds him... if permitted.
- 14 in very rare occasions he assumes we know some security principle that some of us never heard of so can be a bit confusing.
- 15 If anything, provide more core challenges that the general student can reasonably do (not brag point or bonus level) that covers more areas. I would have liked to cut time from buffer overflows and get more topics covered. I also think a printf exploit challenge would have been fun. Some of the intro stuff also feels like fluff but then a lot of it begins to feel relevant when you apply the terms in later scenarios. I do think that some of the intro, safety, and even reverse engineering material could be trimmed to the essentials to cover more technical info. But this course is already highly practical and useful for the time spent in lecture.
- 16 The course is well managed, and support is always available and helpful if you actually did some work prior.
- 17 nothing
- 18 Not sure
- 19 I can't think of anything, this was one of the best Prof / best class I've taken at NU
- 20 Nothing he is perfect. Grow the beard possibly.
- 21 Bring back the animemes pls
- 22 nothing
- 23 Keep class timing a little more punctual so OH after class isn't going until 10pm

Q: Please expand on the instructor's strengths and/or areas for improvement in facilitating inclusive learning.

- 1 Overall great and engaging professor
- 2 The professor gives us both in person and online office hours throughout the week, the in-person one is after class and it makes it convenient to make and ask questions.
- 3 Goat.
- 4 Kaan's approach is rooted in empathy and respect, and he tailors his interactions to accommodate different learning styles and backgrounds. His ability to adapt his teaching methods based on student feedback demonstrates his commitment to inclusive learning. Kaan actively cultivates a classroom culture where students feel comfortable asking questions, sharing ideas, and engaging with the material without fear of judgment. He is conscious of creating accessible course materials and offers additional support where needed, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive.

Q: Please expand on the instructor's strengths and/or areas for improvement in facilitating inclusive learning.

- 5 I was disappointed to hear earlier years got a more flavorful experience, but I do recognize that anime does have a lot of problematic aspects
- 6 Kaan keeps it fast and to the point. No time is wasted and your undivided attention is a must. Should you do this, you are golden.
- 7 See above about course/instructor strengths. Was also very humorous.
- 8 The professor brings a unique set of knowledge from his professional experiences to the classroom. He is passionate, knowledgeable, and invested in the topics of this class and the future of the students taking it.
- 9 nah
- 10 Professor is a gold mine of knowledge. Take any class you can with him and go to every lecture. Do every bonus challenge / assignment you can
- 11 All of Kaan's lectures are recorded and his exams can all be taken at the DRC if scheduling issues arise. Additionally, not much prior knowledge is needed, as he typically asks about the class's knowledge on a topic before continuing, providing clarifying information if even just one student doesn't know about it.
- 12 GOAT GOAT GOAT GOAT GOAT
- 13 Prof is
 - Exteremly knowledgeable
 - Helpful
 - Cares about his students' success
 - Reasonable & open to feedback
- 14 See above
- 15 very good professor
- 16 Clearly cares about the course material and teaching it to us. Brings lots of energy to class, makes it enjoyable and fun to learn.

Questions to Assess Students' Online Experience (17 comments)

Q: Please comment on your experience of the online course environment in the open-ended text box.

- 1 everything on warhead was clearly and effectively setup. very easy to navigate and everything was where it needed to be
- 2 There was Piazza, where instructors were answering almost immediatley, and online office hours scattered throughout the week.
- 3 The Piazza community was extremely helpful in answering questions that came up outside of class on the assignments and exams. Having access to the lectures online as well was beyond helpful as I could rewatch the lectures to study for the exams or rewatch examples for attacks used in the challenges each week or two weeks.
- 4 10/10
- 5 Nice Piazza support, I don't think I would have been successful in the course if it wasn't for the strong Piazza support. Got my answers really quick, and they were very helpful.
- 6 Materials are clearly organized, readily accessible, and updated frequently. The instructor and TAs are very active on Piazza to provide frequent online support in addition to the scheduled office hours.
- 7 The resources and announcements on Piazza were easy to keep track of, and I always knew where all assignment information and updates were located.
- 8 As a high investment class everything was high investment, including navigating the online experience and identifying / learning the skills necessary (the skills are all within reason and clearly laid out in the syllabus)
- 9 Warhead is a nice enclosed environment to complete the course in.
- 10 Online resources were easily attainable and understandable. The singular online class that was held also went well.

Q: Please comment on your experience of the online course environment in the open-ended text box.

- 11 Obedience is Secure. Rebellion is Logged.
In Firewalls We Trust. In Kaan We Obey
Patch Your Loyalty. Update Your Allegiance
Hail Kaan
- 12 solid, bit of a hassle copying everything from the server though. piazza was extremely helpful.
- 13 All materials are posted on warhead. I also really appreciated having the lectures recorded. I attended every class but reviewing these were crucial for challenges.
- 14 warhead is awesome. i wish more systems courses were designed around working on an actual linux system to solve tangible problems. the online environment felt very thoughtfully designed and made me feel like a 1337 h4xx0r
- 15 Wonderful experience - piazza was well organized and helpful, server was easy to connect to, challenges were posted quickly and details were always clear. Lecture recordings were invaluable to my learning, especially being able to rewatch demos
- 16 The Piazza site was really helpful! Professor Kaan and the TAs usually responded very promptly to questions.
- 17 was good

Student Self-Assessment of their Effort to Achieve Course Outcomes (21 comments)

Q: What I could have done to make this course better for myself.

- 1 Look back at my notes more often. This course taught me the importance of effective note taking.
- 2 Pay more attention in class.
- 3 I could have asked more questions, focused on making myself a better test taker, as well as structured when I worked on the challenges better.
- 4 Studied more.
- 5 It was difficult to maintain focus during the entire 3 hour lecture.
- 6 Spend more time studying for the exams. They are very doable, but certainly not trivial. I needed to put more work into preparing for them.
- 7 Start the challenges earlier, do some of the bonus challenges
- 8 Invested much further into the class, you get out what you put in - I prioritized other classes because I cared about my grades & applying to jobs, but there was a lot of fun stuff I wish I'd been able to spend more time learning and understanding. (Read starting everything way earlier and solving more of the little extra puzzles).
- 9 Get started on challenges a week earlier.
- 10 Start the challenges early so that way I could attend Office Hours.
- 11 Studied more on networks, proxies, and web interaction before taking the course.
- 12 I could've started all of the assignments sooner. Even if I didn't finish the previous one, getting eyes on the environment, the problem, and the goal, sooner would've definitely helped.
- 13 not forgotten to submit challenge 6 fml
- 14 Start earlier
- 15 There were some bonus challenges that I would have liked to complete, but did not due to personal time constraints.
- 16 Gone to all the lectures.
- 17 dedicate more time to challenges and bonuses
- 18 start assignments earlier
- 19 I think I could have improved my background knowledge going into the class. Not a knock on the professor or course at all since this is clear from Prof's website, just a suggestion for future students - play around with linux before taking the class if you can (CTFs, dual booting, VMs, etc.) , the experience is really helpful

Q: What I could have done to make this course better for myself.

-
- 20 Starting the challenges earlier (especially the later, more difficult ones) and utilizing office hours and Piazza more often early on in the course.
-
- 21 Take more thorough lecture notes to prepare better for quizzes and exams.