

Spring 2026

TRACE report for CY3740-02 Systems Security (Kaan Onarlioglu)



Report prepared by Northeastern University
Created Thursday, May 21, 2026



Courses Audience: 71
Responses Received: 49
Response Ratio: 69.01 %
Opted out: 2

Report Comments

Rating Scale:

5: Strongly Agree

4: Agree

3: Neutral

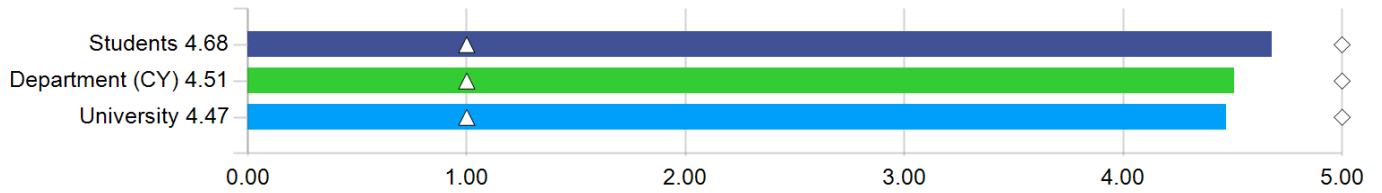
2: Disagree

1: Strongly Disagree

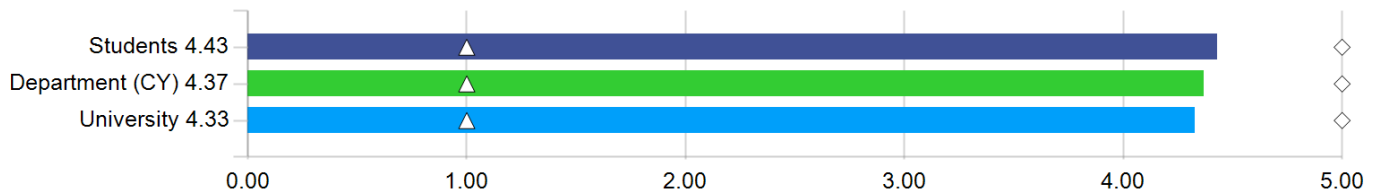
N/A: Not Applicable

Questions to Assess Students' Online Experience

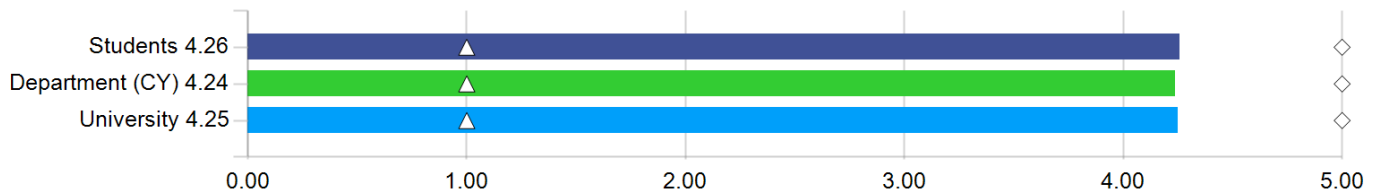
1. Online course materials were organized to help me navigate through the course week by week.



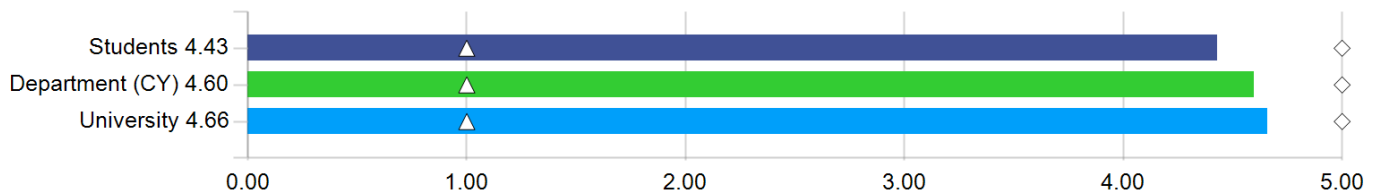
2. Online interactions with my instructor created a sense of connection in the virtual classroom.



3. Online course interactions created a sense of community and connection to my classmates.

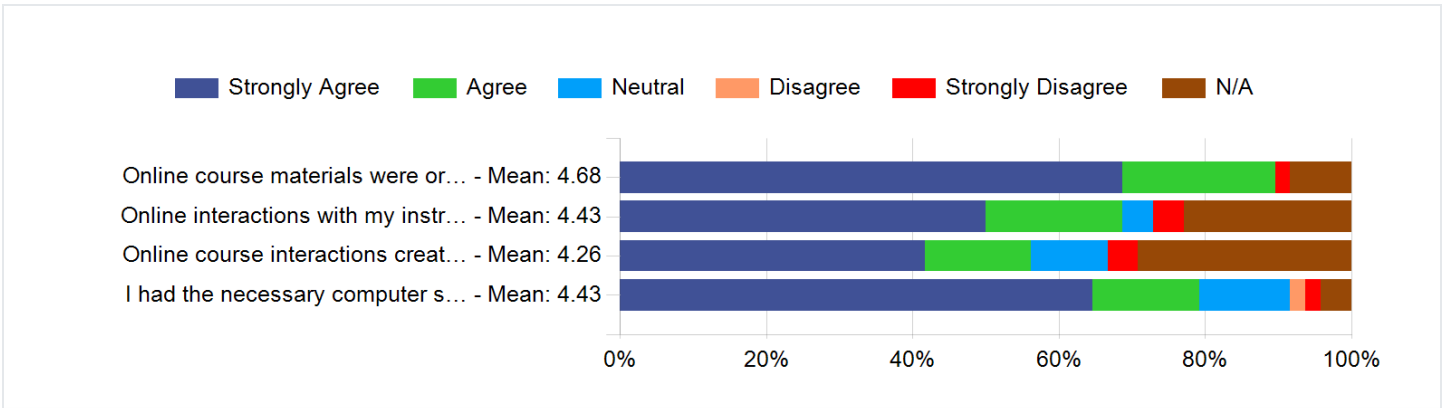


4. I had the necessary computer skills and technology to successfully complete the course.



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	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.	44	61.97%	4.68	4.51	4.47	5.00	5.00	5.00
Online interactions with my instructor created a sense of connection in the virtual classroom.	37	52.11%	4.43	4.37	4.33	5.00	5.00	5.00
Online course interactions created a sense of community and connection to my classmates.	34	47.89%	4.26	4.24	4.25	5.00	5.00	5.00
I had the necessary computer skills and technology to successfully complete the course.	46	64.79%	4.43	4.60	4.66	5.00	5.00	5.00

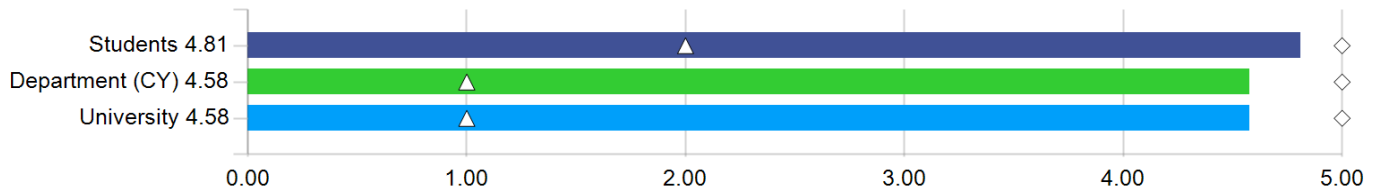


Please comment on your experience of the online course environment in the open-ended text box.

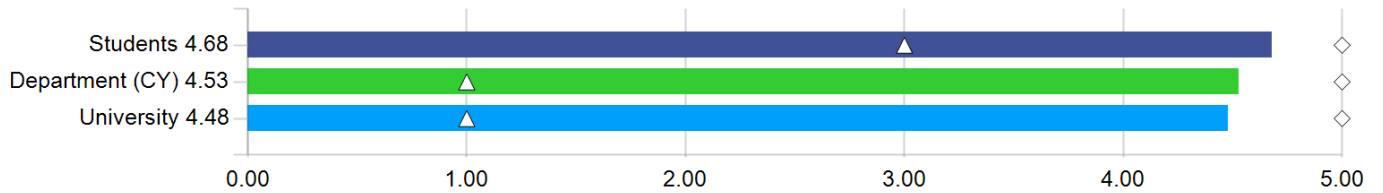
Comments
Bit hard to get introduced to course environment but organization made lots of sense after the first week.
N/A
It's really cool to have the online course materials on a Linux server, since this is a useful technical skill that is not always taught in class. Maybe instead of Piazza you could put everything on a self-hosted local mailserver and have students `sendmail` to ask questions (mostly joking ;)).
Kaan has a unique online environment which doesn't use Canvas. I appreciate that he has a Hall of Fame website which is a creative and fun way of keeping track of things.
Heavy use of Piazza to communicate updates, as well as assistance for course activities
Lectures were available on zoom and on Piazza after class.
Excellent professor
It was an in-person instruction class. Yes, he did live broadcast on Zoom, but barely anyone even went to it.
I wish the piazza was more active but acknowledge that that's the fault of us students.
Unorganized
I enjoyed how we interacted with the course primarily through the terminal. I felt it was good practice and helped build my general tech literacy.
Amazing course; great professor and makes students feel open and interested in the topics
Pretty intuitive.
Professor Kaan and his TAs were always ready to answer any question I or my peers had in the online forum and be as helpful as possible. Professor was very responsive when asked questions on Piazza and provided helpful feedback and guidance.
Well organized and easy to navigate, given you know or are willing to learn linux
The class is mostly online due to the limited lectures. Piazza is very active and is very helpful.
.
it existed, but going to lecture was MUCH more useful overall
He had zoom lectures posted for every lecture on piazza and also structured them into different recordings which made it easier to break apart lectures.
N/A

Course Related Questions

1. The syllabus was accurate and helpful in delineating expectations and course outcomes.



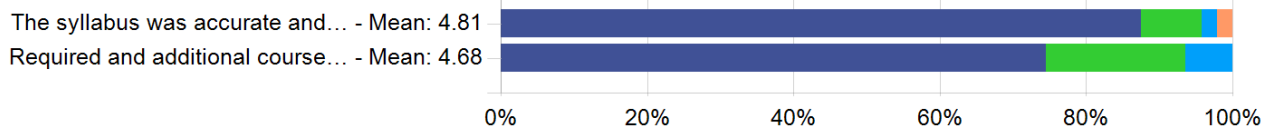
2. Required and additional course materials were helpful in achieving course outcomes.



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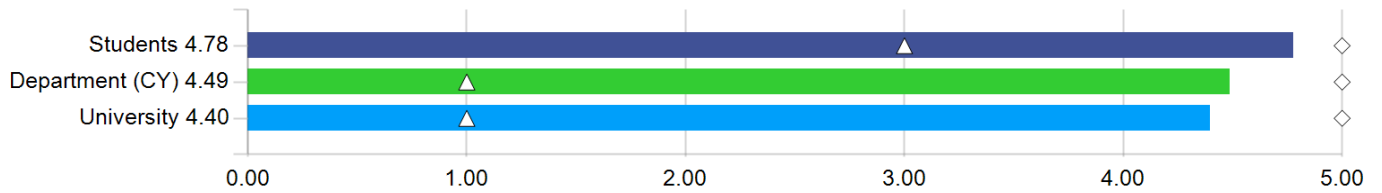
	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
The syllabus was accurate and helpful in delineating expectations and course outcomes.	48	67.61%	4.81	4.58	4.58	5.00	5.00	5.00
Required and additional course materials were helpful in achieving course outcomes.	47	66.20%	4.68	4.53	4.48	5.00	5.00	5.00

■ Strongly Agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ N/A

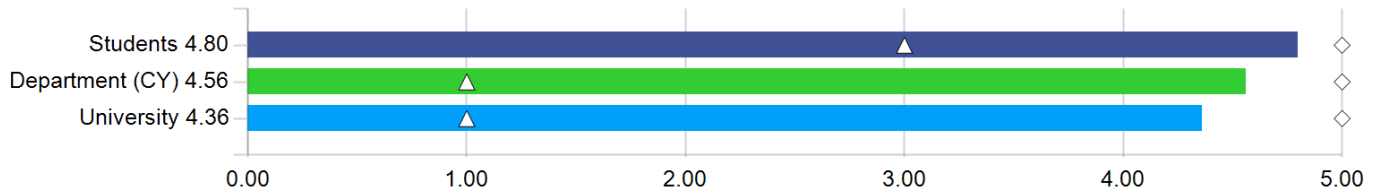


Learning Related Questions

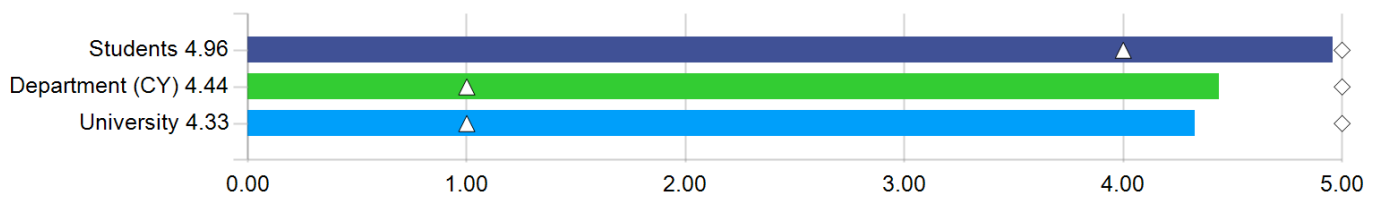
1. In-class sessions were helpful for learning.



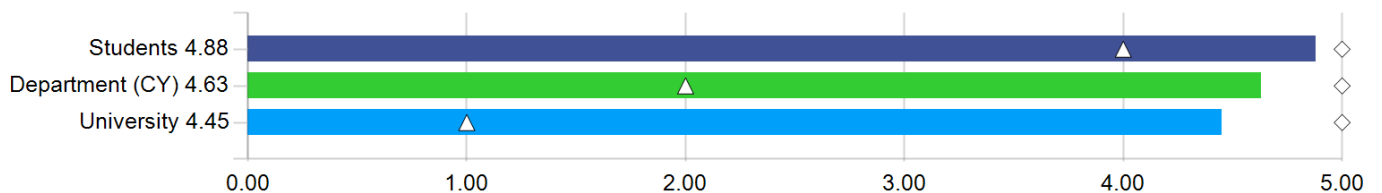
2. Out-of-class assignments and/or fieldwork were helpful for learning.



3. This course was intellectually challenging.



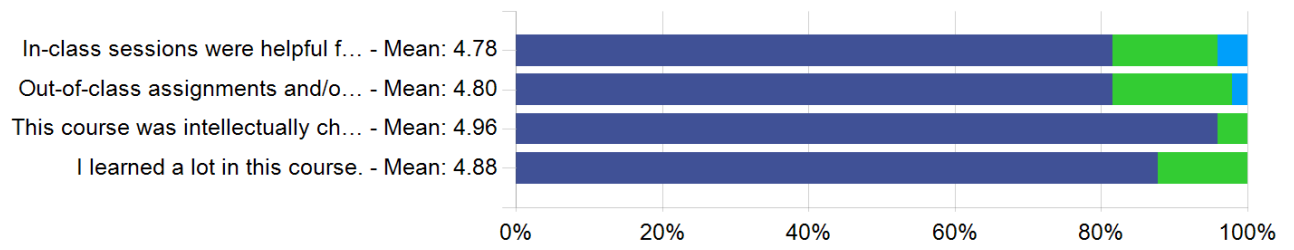
4. I learned a lot in this course.



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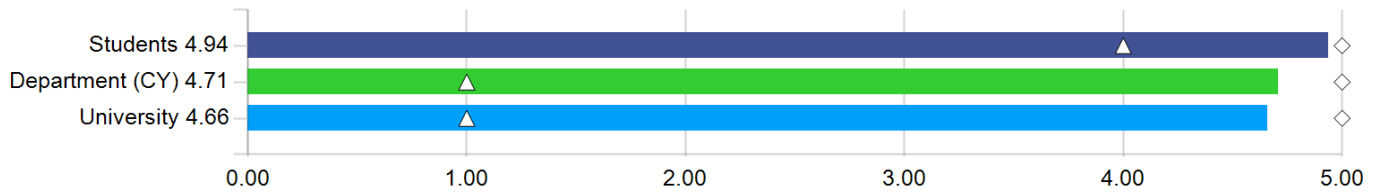
	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
In-class sessions were helpful for learning.	49	69.01%	4.78	4.49	4.40	5.00	5.00	5.00
Out-of-class assignments and/or fieldwork were helpful for learning.	49	69.01%	4.80	4.56	4.36	5.00	5.00	5.00
This course was intellectually challenging.	49	69.01%	4.96	4.44	4.33	5.00	5.00	5.00
I learned a lot in this course.	49	69.01%	4.88	4.63	4.45	5.00	5.00	5.00

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

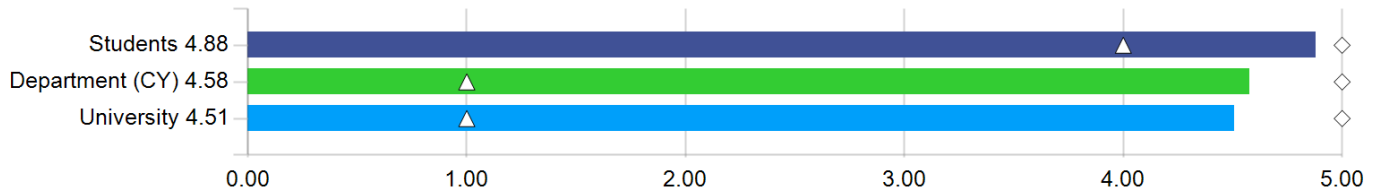


Instructor Related Questions: Kaan Onarlioglu

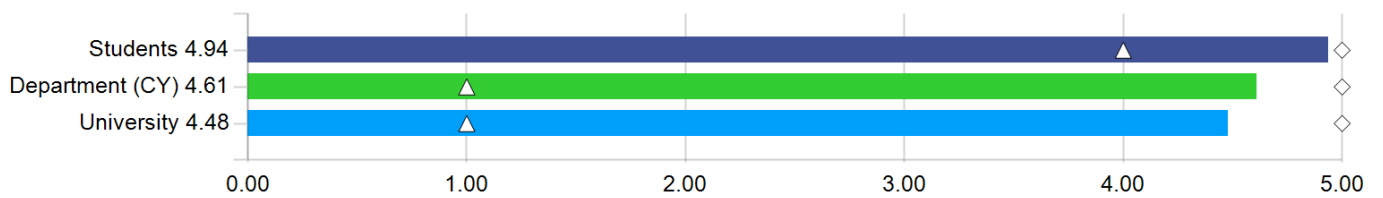
1. The instructor came to class prepared to teach.



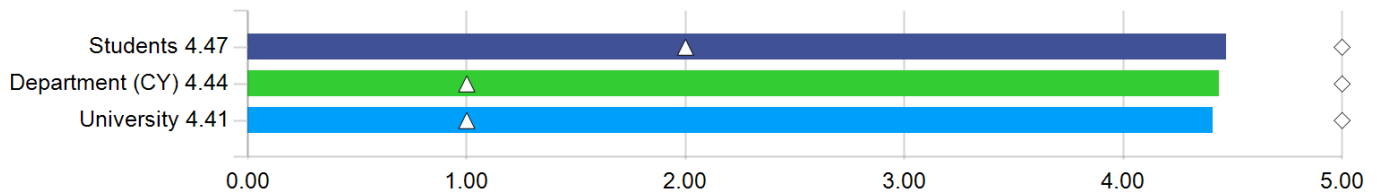
2. The instructor used class time effectively.



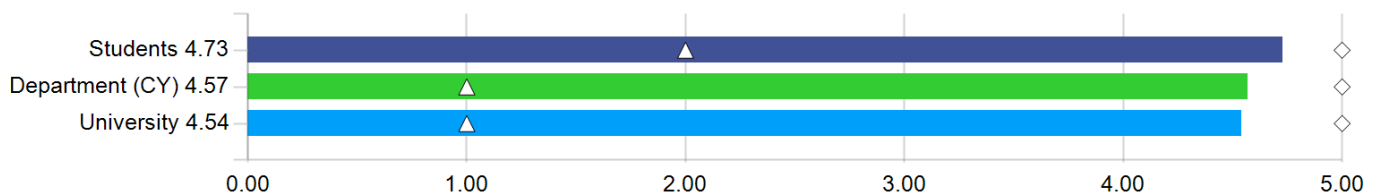
3. The instructor clearly communicated ideas and information.



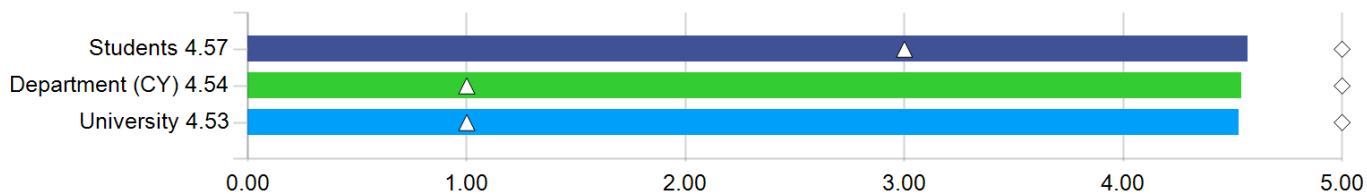
4. The instructor provided sufficient feedback.



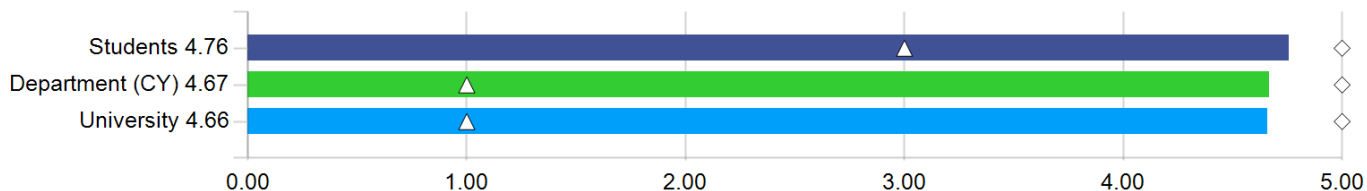
5. The instructor fairly evaluated my performance.



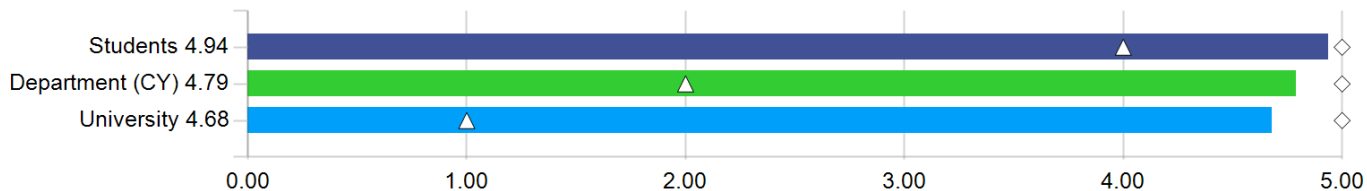
6. The instructor was available to assist students outside of class.



7. The instructor facilitated a respectful and inclusive learning environment.



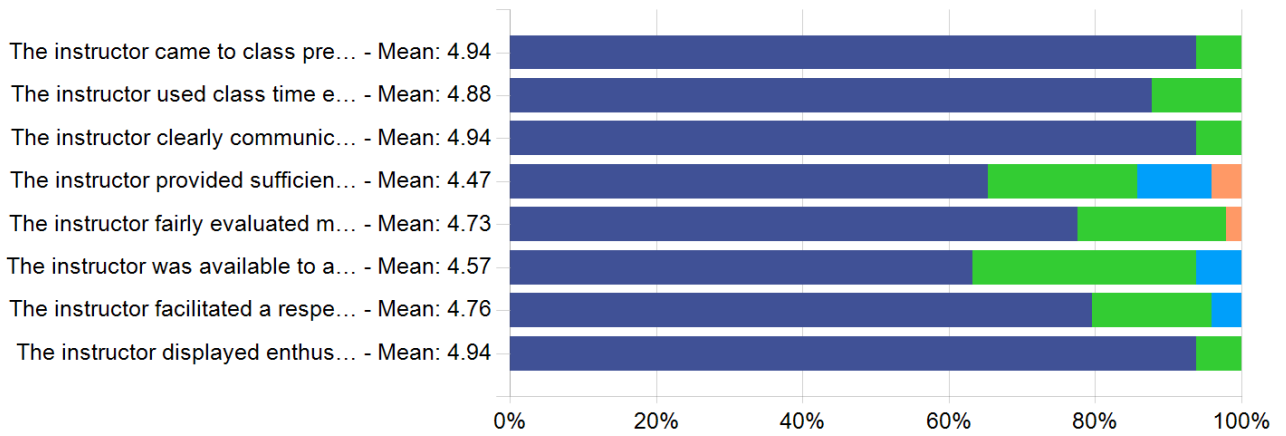
8. The instructor displayed enthusiasm for the course.



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	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.	49	69.01%	4.94	4.71	4.66	5.00	5.00	5.00
The instructor used class time effectively.	49	69.01%	4.88	4.58	4.51	5.00	5.00	5.00
The instructor clearly communicated ideas and information.	49	69.01%	4.94	4.61	4.48	5.00	5.00	5.00
The instructor provided sufficient feedback.	49	69.01%	4.47	4.44	4.41	5.00	5.00	5.00
The instructor fairly evaluated my performance.	49	69.01%	4.73	4.57	4.54	5.00	5.00	5.00
The instructor was available to assist students outside of class.	49	69.01%	4.57	4.54	4.53	5.00	5.00	5.00
The instructor facilitated a respectful and inclusive learning environment.	49	69.01%	4.76	4.67	4.66	5.00	5.00	5.00
The instructor displayed enthusiasm for the course.	49	69.01%	4.94	4.79	4.68	5.00	5.00	5.00

■ Strongly Agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ N/A



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

Comments

The instructor knows so much about the topic he is teaching, allowing you to learn much information about systems security. The challenges are very hands-on and really enforce all of the lessons in the class.

Very knowledgeable, explains concepts well, format of lecturing is great, superb.

Professor Kaan is one of the best I've ever had. He is beyond knowledgeable of everything he teaches, is dedicated to his craft, and somehow made an almost four hour Thursday night class feel like a breeze because he is so entertaining to listen to. I learned so much from this course it is my absolute favorite so far at Northeastern.

This is a really fun course if you're at all interested in CTFs or cybersecurity challenges. The lectures are interesting and teach you about a variety of different types of exploits, and the challenges (and especially the bonuses) are fun to figure out.

very good lecturer, breaks down complicated topics into an easily digestible format.

Every lecture felt very well structured and thought out. Plus, the challenges/bonus were actually intellectually challenging and helped me learn a ton of new security concepts. The jokes and attention to detail also made the experience very fun and enjoyable. :)

Kaan is very intelligent, passionate, and knowledgeable about this class and its topics. I appreciate that he tries to cover relevant topics that we may come across in our careers and crack jokes. Compared to many other Khoury teachers, he is good at explaining things (many others are not) and very clear with wording. This class was definitely unique and I understand why so many people tend to like it, it's refreshing compared to other CS courses.

Kaan is an incredibly passionate educator who knows his stuff, always willing to answer questions that may even go beyond the scope of the course. Found ways to relate course material to real world scenarios, and all course material is relevant and modern. Assignments are ctf-style and are difficult, but remain relevant to what you learn in class, and TA's and Kaan are very accessible out of class to assist you in these.

Professor Onarlioglu was able to keep long lectures interesting, which is difficult in a three-hour class. I think that him being a current working professional in cybersecurity gave him ethos as an instructor, as he was able to emphasize which topics were most relevant and in what ways.

Understood the course content to a T and has hands on experience

Really interesting and engaging lectures, and the weekly homework challenges were super fun yet challenging to complete. The structure of the primary challenges + much more difficult bonus challenges made me really excited to attempt them and see how well I could do. The gamification of the challenges through the hall of fame class leaderboard site was also extremely motivating for challenge completion.

Kaan is an incredible professor and a very funny person. His class is entertaining and is the right amount of challenging if you have the prerequisite knowledge.

Extremely difficult course, extremely good professor.

Extremely approachable, was also able to respond to piazza questions super fast

incredible course. Strong content, assignments, and lectures.

Professor was very good in instruction.

Kaan cares a lot about this course and has a very practical, direct approach to teaching. This means his lectures, challenges, and exams are very to the point and require you to learn, not just memorize. This makes the course VERY effective and means I leave this course not just knowing "a few hacking tricks to save humanity when our AI overlord rises" but with a different mindset around how to design and implement software systems.

Very smart teacher, knew what he was talking about

The course felt as in-depth as possible. I learned so much, and I feel I got a functional level of understanding that other courses, which go slower and try and hold your hand a bit more, don't sufficiently grant. Sometimes it felt like I was assumed to have been exposed to things I had never heard of/didn't have a great understanding of, but that added to the course by encouraging me to build basic competencies I'm surprised I never thought about before.

Amazing course; great professor

This course is the most special course I've had at Northeastern. If you are new to Cybersecurity, this course will open a world that you've never seen before. And it's cool as [Redacted].

Prof. Onarlioglu is a highly engaging lecturer. Furthermore, he has clearly put in a lot of effort to make the course and homeworks interesting in and of themselves. He is quite knowledgeable about security and efficient in transferring that knowledge to students. Kaan is, by and large, the best professor I have had at Northeastern. I cannot recommend his teaching method or this class highly enough.

Prof Onarlioglu is very very passionate about his course and the topics covered which makes it very easy to lock in and get interested in the material. His real-world knowledge and experiences really level the course up. His teaching style and demos are very engaging and helps present the topics in class. Also, the homeworks were so incredibly interesting and helpful to the learning experience (and hard!).

their personality and passion

Professor Kaan was always ready and willing to teach, he always made sure that concepts were easy to follow and came prepared with live demos to really engrain the information into our heads.

Comments

Very active on Piazza, one of my fav professors so far, enthusiastic and engaging.

The instructor shows very clear enthusiasm for the course materials. Lectures were engaging and he always encouraged questions and class participation. He also showed a clear willingness to assist students on any lecture or homework materials we were confused about. It was clear he cared about his students success in the course.

Kaan is a great professor who makes class time very engaging. I learned a lot in class, and the challenges were well designed. This is probably my favorite class I have taken at Northeastern.

Professor is very knowledgeable and presents difficult topics in an understandable way

Extremely enthusiastic and willing to help if students had questions. Very clear and understandable in his teaching. The course was built extremely well and promoted learning and interest while also challenging students.

Khan is an amazing professor. Amazing lecturer, very experienced in the field, and has an amazing philosophy when it comes to learning and knowing what is important to teach. The class is meant to be challenging but also very manageable with TA hours and Piazza. It is very easy to pass if you want, and even easier to excel if you have time to commit to it.

good professor

good lecturer, clearly knows the material and has a passion for it

Extremely knowledgeable and entertaining. The course felt like a very curated experience, not like any others that I had taken.

instructor is well versed in the course material and genuinely support the student's success in the class

What could the instructor do to make this course better?

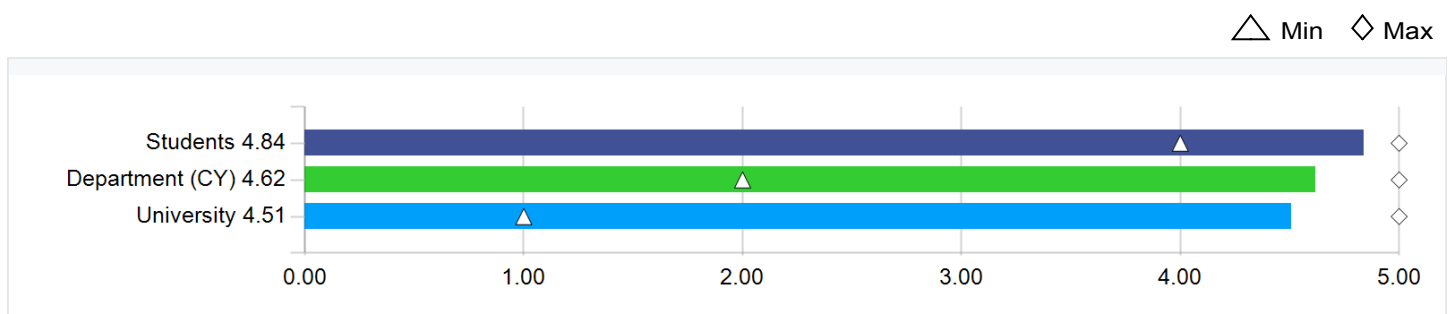
Comments
Maybe including a few links in the challenge PDFs that could help people figure out the solutions to the challenge for the people who have not interacted with any of the tools or ideas before.
The instructor could have provided a few more office hour opportunities I suppose but overall Piazza compensated for a lack of office hours. Other than this I can't think of anything else to make this course better.
It is kind of weird that the course ends a week earlier than it needs to. Why not have the final a week later? It could still be during the normal class time.
Nothing. 0 complaints!
The course structure is overall very solid and well thought out.
Review sessions for exams would be helpful
It would have been nice to get more specific feedback on exams, particularly for open response questions where he would grade many people's answers as "you get the point, but it's a stretch". I think it would be good to dedicate some time in class allowing students to read out their answers and explaining why they were marked one way or another.
Different time slot.
There's very little that could really be improved here, you're getting a better course on cybersecurity than pretty much anywhere else.
N/A
More of helped on the challenges. He was really broad about it.
Make it less challenging
Nothing
It's perfect. I just wish the instructor make it clearer what will be examined on the slides.
A bit more focus on engaging with the class during lectures would be nice. As is, I feel I could get the same course outcome by simply watching recordings of the lectures. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, some in-class activities do go a long way.
Nothing really, the course is very ideal to me at least.
not much
There really is not much, it is made very clear at the start of the course and even before the course starts that it would be a very challenging course and only due to the nature of the content.
One challenge in particular (challenge 7) had a very low clear rate, and Kaan mentioned that it has been this way in the past too. I think this is probably due to how many separate problems need to be tackled in the challenge (ASLR, stack canaries, no easy debugging with gdb, etc.). I don't want to just say "make it easier", but I do wonder if there is some way this challenge could be reworked, since it scares people away from doing it.
Really good course, maybe update the content for today's world with AI. It's not going away and is an expert in the field.
No notes; thought it was great as is
Get approved for more TA hours and more class time. While I understand that no guidance on bonus challenges is intentional, I think allowing the TAs to give hints for them is helpful, especially if someone is already heading in the right direction and giving the student more confirmation as they get more confident in crafting attacks.
nothing
i dont know
NA

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

Comments
Kaan is extremely knowledgeable and is enthusiastic about teaching, which made it a lot easier for me to learn the material in the course. He and the TAs are there to help, and when I have gotten their assistance, it has been extremely helpful.
The Professor was inclusive in the sense of he treats all his students fairly and equally which means he also expects all of us to work hard and put in effort. He is a "tough love" type of Professor which is necessary to learn the extensive content of this course.
Using a microphone could help students in the back hear the instructor better since it's quite a big classroom.
I personally thought that sometimes Kaan's language was a bit aggressive or exaggerated for some situations. Sometimes it made sense since he wanted to keep us engaged, but he mentioned that not many students sought help compared to usual. I feel that it's correlated to the fact that it's easier to ask a classmate who understands you and is nice to you rather than sometimes feeling stupid or under scrutiny. I reached out once on Piazza and did not like the response I received which is why I did not reach out again.
Kaan doesn't rely on interactions with the class throughout his lectures, but it could be helpful to maybe present problems in class, give us a moment to solve them, and go over them.
N/A
N/A, instructor is already very strong
N/A
Kaan can seem a bit intimidating at first but he's very helpful and open to questions, especially at office hours.
He was always prepared and knew what he was talking about
Overall cares a lot about the subject. Makes students feel comfortable and gives a lot of assistance when its needed.
The instructor is an expert in the field and he made a playground for young hackers. If you are talented enough, you can gain as much bonus and brags you want. I'm not that talented, so I didn't get as much fun.
I have to say, without this course, I won't be able to understand what is memory corruption for my life.
Again, lectures, homeworks, exams, and piazza responses are all uber engaging and helpful to learn the course and real security principles and methods.
chill guy
Kaan always responded to questions on our online forum which really helped me, especially early on in the course. He always ensured that lectures were recorded and course materials were available outside of class to be able to study for quizzes and tests. The fact that lectures were streamed and recorded made them easily accessible even if one could not make it.
Overall, best professor I've had at northeastern. Always responsive and active after hours, and engaging with students during class
No notes; thought it was great as is
N/A
did very good job
I think everything was fantastic, there were some things that I felt we didn't spend enough time or things that we were expected to learn and figure out ourselves, but the syllabus and Khan said we were responsible for our learning, and after finishing a challenge it felt very achievable.
slides and recording of class's lectures were uploaded

Instructor Effectiveness: Kaan Onarlioglu

What is your overall rating of this instructor's teaching effectiveness?

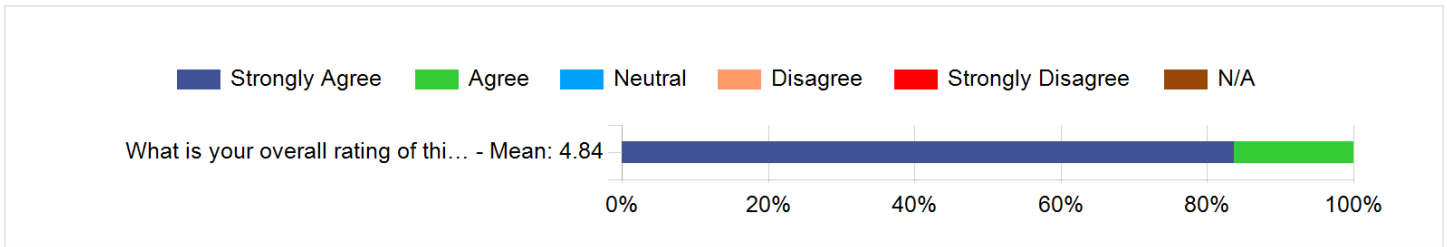


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What is your overall rating of this instructor's teaching effectiveness?

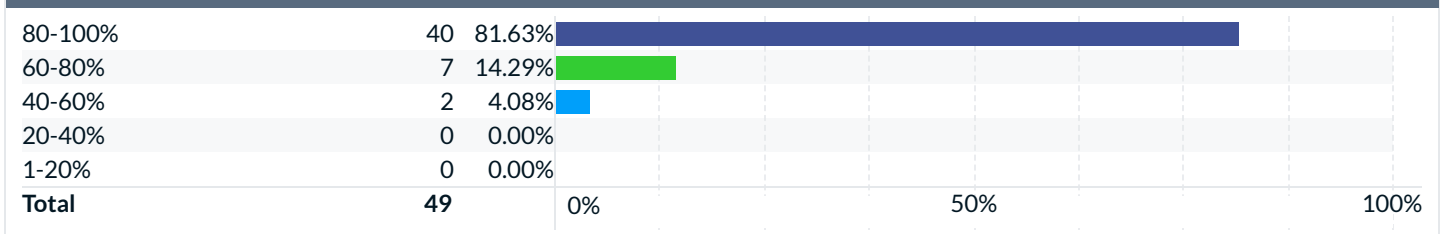
Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
49	69.01%	4.84	4.62	4.51	5.00	5.00	5.00

What is your overall rating of this instructor's teaching effectiveness?

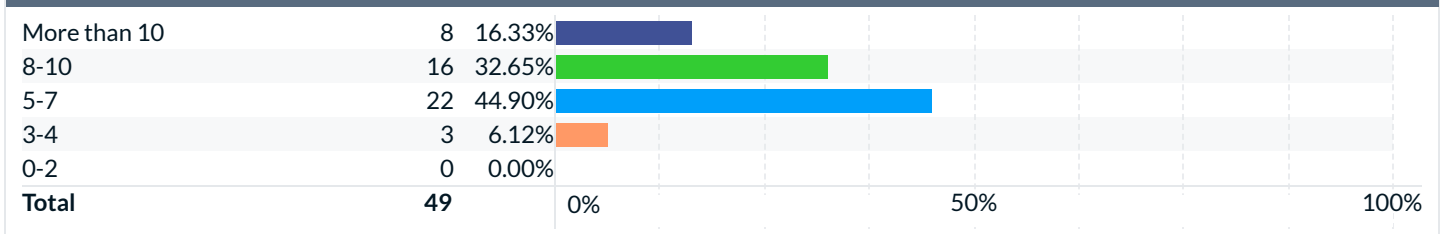


Demographics

How often did you attend this class both in-person and remotely?



The number of hours per week I devoted to this course outside scheduled class meeting times.



Student Self-Assessment of their Effort to Achieve Course Outcomes

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

Comments
I could have utilized the very helpful office hours a lot more for the issues I had with the homework. I also should not have been so intimidated by the course challenges and not have been as afraid to fail in the class.
Ask for more help
To start challenges earlier and take more time on understanding conceptual material to make it easier to understand the challenges.
I believe I did everything in my power to make this course go well for myself. I attended all classes, stayed for office hours each class, studied the material hard, and worked on the challenges diligently. I think timing wise I could've tried to come more prepared to office hours with better questions for the TAs to get more out of it.
gotten help...
For the first quiz, I did not study as much as I should have which reflected in the results. Later in the class, I learned more effective study methods which yielded better results.
More timely completion of assignments, as they do build up and take considerable time
Stay after class and talk with TAs during office hours
start more assignments earlier, especially the more complicated ones
Met with the TA rather than attempt to debug myself
More studying. The content was great.
Started the homework much earlier
I kind of wish he pre-posted the presentation slides beforehand, it would've made the class instruction more of interactive and everyone at least would've known a bit of information beforehand.
You get what you put in to this course, my only regret was taking it during a semester while I was so busy with co-op search. My advice to those considering taking this course: Don't just take it because of the good reviews, you need to actually be interested in the content, because you will struggle at some point, and at that point if you're more worried about the grade than the actual course it will not be enjoyable.
Studied more
I struggled with time management in all of my courses this semester. If I had started earlier, or spent less time on the early challenges/bonuses when I wasn't getting anywhere, I would have been more on top of challenges, be able to ask for help after class, and not have to cram everything in the last two days before a due date. Basically, I didn't start strong, and from there I felt I was catching up all semester.
Download the slides from the remote machine before exam. I did not know that exists.
Gone to more office hours
Begin challenges earlier!
Taken a lighter course load this semester.
Attended office hours
Spend more time working on bonuses and starting assignments sooner to have more time to think about them.
attend more classes
come in with a more comprehensive knowledge of gdb/linux/etc, but overall it was fine
Go to TA office hours more
started the homework ahead of time rather than a day before