JHU - Krieger School of Arts & Sciences / Whiting School of Engineering
ASEN.2021.Fall

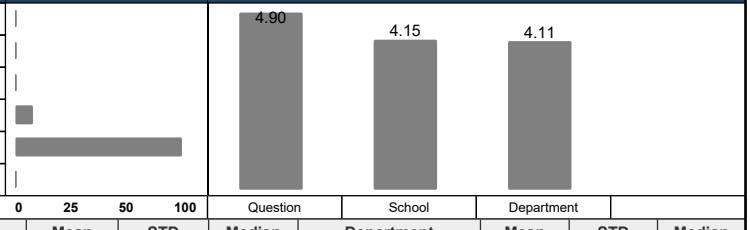
Course: EN.601.417.01.FA21: Distributed Systems

Instructor: Yair Amir *

Response Rate: 22/23 (95.65 %)

1 - The overall quality of this course is:

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%
Satisfactory	(3)	0	0.00%
Good	(4)	2	9.52%
Excellent	(5)	19	90.48%
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%

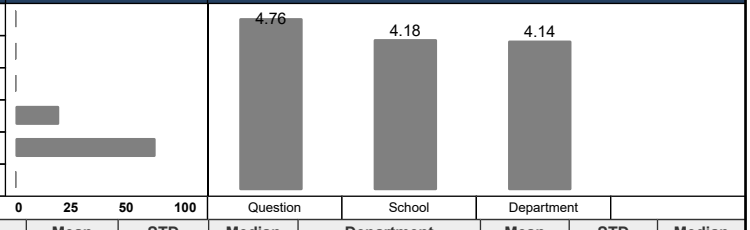


Response Rate	Mean	STD	Median	School	Mean	STD	Median	Department	Mean	STD	Median
21/23 (91.30%)	4.90	0.30	5.00	11607	4.15	0.97	4.00	1871	4.11	1.03	4.00

2 - The instructor's teaching effectiveness is:

Yair Amir

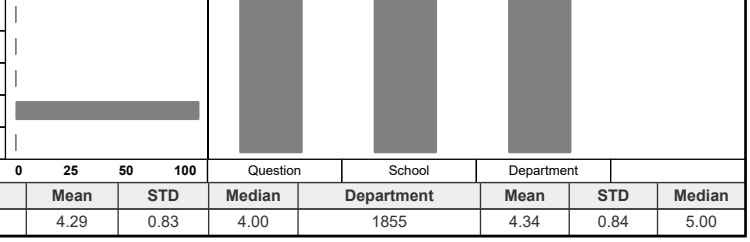
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%
Satisfactory	(3)	0	0.00%
Good	(4)	5	23.81%
Excellent	(5)	16	76.19%
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%



Response Rate	Mean	STD	Median	School	Mean	STD	Median	Department	Mean	STD	Median
21/23 (91.30%)	4.76	0.44	5.00	11515	4.18	1.00	4.00	1857	4.14	1.05	4.00

3 - The intellectual challenge of this course is:

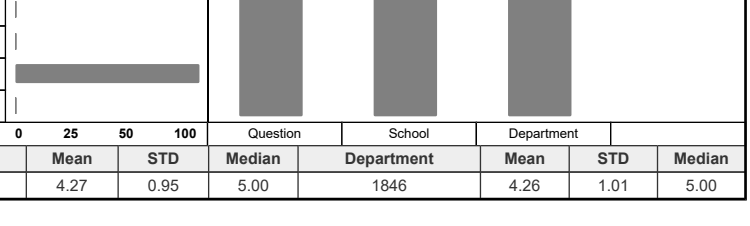
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%
Satisfactory	(3)	0	0.00%
Good	(4)	0	0.00%
Excellent	(5)	21	100.00%
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%



Response Rate	Mean	STD	Median	School	Mean	STD	Median	Department	Mean	STD	Median
21/23 (91.30%)	5.00	0.00	5.00	11495	4.29	0.83	4.00	1855	4.34	0.84	5.00

4 - The teaching assistant for this course is:

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%
Satisfactory	(3)	0	0.00%
Good	(4)	0	0.00%
Excellent	(5)	21	100.00%
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%



Response Rate	Mean	STD	Median	School	Mean	STD	Median	Department	Mean	STD	Median
21/23 (91.30%)	5.00	0.00	5.00	11426	4.27	0.95	5.00	1846	4.26	1.01	5.00

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5 - Please enter the name of the TA you evaluated in question 4:

Response Rate	20/23 (86.96%)

- Jerry Chen
- Jerry Chen
- Jerry Chen
- Jerry Chen, Sahiti Bommareddy
- Jerry Chen, Sahiti
- Jerry Chen, Sahiti Bommareddy
- Jerry Chen
- Jerry Chen
- Jerry Chen
- Jerry, Sahiti
- Jerry
- Jerry Chen, Sahiti Bommareddy
- Jerry Chen
- Jerry Chen
- Jerry and Sahiti
- Sahiti
- Jerry
- Jerry and Sahiti
- Jerry Chen
- Jerry and Sahiti

6 - Feedback on my work for this course is useful:

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent
Disagree strongly	(1)	0	0.00%
Disagree somewhat	(2)	0	0.00%
Neither agree nor disagree	(3)	1	4.76%
Agree somewhat	(4)	3	14.29%
Agree strongly	(5)	17	80.95%
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%

Percent Responses: 0 25 50 100

Means: 4.76 (Question), 4.03 (School), 3.94 (Department)

Response Rate	Mean	STD	Median	School	Mean	STD	Median	Department	Mean	STD	Median
21/23 (91.30%)	4.76	0.54	5.00	11410	4.03	1.02	4.00	1837	3.94	1.07	4.00

7 - Compared to other Hopkins courses at this level, the workload for this course is:

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent
Much lighter	(1)	0	0.00%
Somewhat lighter	(2)	0	0.00%
Typical	(3)	0	0.00%
Somewhat heavier	(4)	6	28.57%
Much heavier	(5)	15	71.43%
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%

Percent Responses: 0 25 50 100

Means: 4.71 (Question), 3.42 (School), 3.68 (Department)

Response Rate	Mean	STD	Median	School	Mean	STD	Median	Department	Mean	STD	Median
21/23 (91.30%)	4.71	0.46	5.00	11434	3.42	0.97	3.00	1843	3.68	1.03	4.00

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Response Rate: 22/23 (95.65 %)

8 - What are the best aspects of this course?	
Response Rate	19/23 (82.61%)

• The course teaches the ins and outs of distributed systems. From implementing protocols yourself that run distributed systems to using state of the art tools that provide those protocols. The professors vast and in depth knowledge of this field makes the course much more interesting. Apart from the content of the course, the feedback on homeworks is very thorough and helpful. The professor is always there to discuss any questions or concerns about the course.

• Substantial amount of hands on experience.

• Very practical assignments, Professor Amir is one of the professors who actually care about students and whether they have learned the material in the course.

• Interesting lectures, great support from professor and course staff

• The course is not only teaching knowledge but also the way of thinking, very interesting class. I am very lucky to catch the last chance to be enrolled in the course.

• Professor Amir is super enthusiastic and passionate about the material, which makes classes a pleasure to attend. Good mix of theoretical knowledge, practical exercises, and real-world insights from lectures, speakers, and assignments.

• You actually learn about Distributed Systems from a fundamental level. Too many classes nowadays are watered down; this one is not. I learned so much in this course. Dr Amir is a great lecturer. He's a very good speaker and his class is extremely well organized. Jerry was a phenomenal TA. This is definitely one of the best courses I've taken at Hopkins.

• The projects are very challenging and will require you to think very deeply about the design. The course material is also very interesting, consisting of different problems encountered in distributed computing, algorithms to solve these problems, and systems that implement these algorithms. Invest a lot of time in this course to learn a lot!

• The interesting content and amazing professor. The class is great, and Dr. Amir is one of the best professors I've had at Hopkins. He cares so much about his students and the class which is rare for someone who also has research and other obligations. You also learn so much over the course, and it challenges you and causes you to grow.

• This course really challenged me to learn the content of the projects. I came out of it with a great understanding of the topics. The course also had great guest speakers and an amazing professor.

• You learn a lot, projects are super interesting, and lectures are very easy to follow along with.

• The material learned is really interesting, the instructors are all very willing to give personal feedback on your work and are responsive to online questions, the projects are really cool and fun to do

• I really enjoyed Yair's teaching style and his enthusiasm in lecture every day. It seemed like he really enjoyed teaching us and was invested in our success during the course.

• The teaching team is very passionate in helping students with their time. The projects build on each other so that the progression goes well with the lessons in class and helps us fully grasp the content as well as why they are assigned. The class discussions and theory assignments exercise our ability to problem solve challenging puzzles optimally. Guest speakers helped show the connection between class concepts and their practical applications at different scales.

• The professor & TA (Sahiti) genuinely cares about each student individually. We get to meet with them multiple times for each project and they tailor help towards each student based on how they are doing. This class is designed unlike any other class in which we learn to design our own tools/network protocols from the very bottom rather than build on top of pre made programs. It's project based so there are no exams.

• Father-like Professor who cares about me more than my dad. Learning materials was genuinely fun and interesting. You will learn from the fundamentals not just applications.

• The immense amount of knowledge and domain specific examples the professor gives.

• The effort the teaching staff puts into this course is incredible. They were always available and really invested in my improvement. The projects are quite substantial so completing them will give you a strong sense of satisfaction.

• - pushed me and forced me to grow as a student (accomplished more than I ever have in a Hopkins class) - structure forcing you to start assignments early - the professor and TAs wanting you to succeed - interesting material and guest lectures (i was only mildly interested at the beginning, but really liked it towards the end)

9 - What are the worst aspects of this course?	
Response Rate	18/23 (78.26%)

• N/A

• Sometime it might be too much for student with too little socket programming experience.

• classroom location, non-adjustable seats/desks

• The course is great in general. No doubt it's intellectually challenging, but I believe it is also what Hopkins students signed up for. A possible improvement of the course would be to have the first theoretical assignment explained in slightly more detail, with some examples for instance. For students who are not familiar with the procedure of proving an algorithm, it is a bit less obvious.

• Work spikes when assignments are released as opposed to being more moderate, but consistent throughout semester

• Theory assignment is too hard

• N / A

• The projects by their nature require a lot of time and thinking to complete, so don't procrastinate. To succeed in this course you need to put in a lot of effort and time, so be ready for that.

• Oftentimes, the expectations are very unclear. This can cause challenges with meeting expectations in some regards, so better documentation of work would be better. I think this was the main worse aspect. Also, the submission system felt outdated and harder to use rather than just using gradescope (these are relatively minor though).

• There wasn't enough time to implement a few of the protocols, specifically leadership-based resilient protocols.

• Surprising amount of work for each homework.

• Sometimes the professor goes over time, which can make it difficult to get to your next class on time

• The worst aspects of this course were the projects as they took a very long time to complete typically.

• The course is very fast paced and the theory questions are very challenging. I often felt discouraged by how my performance/understanding wasn't improving.

• N/A

• This is a fantastic course, the projects are incredibly long, but you get what you put into them.

• Professor Amir is excellent, but his teaching style can sometimes come off as abrasive if you aren't used to it. That can make it hard to speak up in class if you don't have a high degree of self confidence.

• none (i would say the workload but having to put a lot of effort and time into a class is not necessarily a bad thing)

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10 - What would most improve this class?	
Response Rate	14/23 (60.87%)

• N/A

• As mentioned previously, a possible improvement of the course would be to have the first theoretical assignment explained in slightly more detail, with some examples steps for instance. For students who are not familiar with the procedure of proving an algorithm, it is a bit less obvious. Additionally, when explaining some algorithms, it might be helpful to embed some animations into the slides, e.g. http://thesecretlivesofdata.com/raft/ for Raft protocol.

• NA, great class!

• N / A

• Some of the lectures are a little hard to follow and are not the most engaging. Finding a way to increase student interaction would help make the class livelier.

• Clearer expectations would be great. Also, I think maybe changing lectures styles slightly to use more more blackboard style rather than just powerpoint. Finally, I think a potential change would be to somehow scale down the first assignment or make networks a pre-req to the class and then add another assignment on some of the content that was not covered in an assignment (like overlay networks).

• I have no suggestions, class was very well done.

• Have deliverables due for each homework and not just the final due date.

• Ending more on time, some more background into network programming/distributed systems programming would be helpful before the first exercise. One of the instructors gave a presentation about how the first exercise could have been approached and I think that would have been helpful in other exercises, like exercise 2.

• I think it would have been helpful to break up the assignments into shorter and more frequent ones to make the content a little easier to digest as we learn.

• Making computer networks a pre requisite for this class. I think a bit more exposure/understanding of the internet would've been very helpful in this class for me.

• N/A

• More more domain examples! The professor has so much experience, and I would love to see more of the work he has done and relate it back to class.

• The homework assignments could be clearer. It took awhile before everyone understood what the exact requirements were for each one.

11 - What should prospective students know about this course before enrolling? (You may comment on any aspect of this course such as assumed background, readings, grading systems, and so on.)	
Response Rate	17/23 (73.91%)

• Prepare for a heavy workload.

• You need to know how to write proper C++ code.

• This course is not easy. Forget about the grade and try as hard as possible, you will enjoy this journey. Like Professor Amir (my instructor of the course) once said, as Hopkins, we should aim further, dig deeper and try harder.

• C/C++

• It's a heavy workload but you will learn a lot.

• This class requires a lot of time and effort. Try to keep the rest of your course load light or you're in for a tough semester.

• The class is a lot of work but is amazing. I highly recommend it. You will work a lot and be challenged like almost no other class but will come out of the class much stronger. Some networks knowledge would help but is not necessary.

• none

• Great course to take.

• Have a strong background in C/C++, there are two theoretical assignments

• This is a pretty tough class overall, and you definitely need to be confident in your coding abilities in order to do well.

• The assignments are very challenging so communicating with the teaching team early and dedicating ample time to the projects ahead of the deadline is important.

• Amir is the most amazing CS professor, he cares personally about all his students & seriously wants you to succeed. The workload is much higher than other classes so make sure you can commit to the work and demand of the course. You probably will receive grades you've never had but don't be afraid because of that - the professor values your growth and hard work more than anything and your final grade will reflect that. Finally, this class will help you grow so much as a CS student; your coding & understanding of systems/intellectual level will increase exponentially.

• hopefully this course is available for you

• This class is one of the hardest CS courses available, be careful taking it on a heavy courseload.

• If you are not strong with any of the following: computer networking, C/C++, analysis of algorithms, then the course is doable but very difficult. If you are strong in one or two of those, the course is difficult. If you are strong in all three, the course is medium difficulty.

• - background in Discrete Math is helpful for Theory Assignments - this class is not easy (definitely the hardest class that I have taken at Hopkins) - paired programming is required for all assignments (not for people for prefer to work by themselves) - you will spend hours on the weekends completing assignments (be prepared to work 30+ hours a week for some projects) - do not get behind in material (the habit of only reviewing what you need for the homework does not work when you have 10+ hours of dense lectures) - failing the first couple assignments is not the end of the world (just show improvements and you should be fine [will cut it close though lol]) - be open to having your designs critiqued (bluntly: drop the know-it-all attitude)