



CAPP 30320 1 - Software Engineering for Civic Tech - Instructor(s) James Turk

Project Title: **Graduate Course Feedback - Spring 2024**

Number Enrolled: **24**

Number of Responses: **21**

Report Comments

Opinions expressed in these evaluations are those of students enrolled in the specific course and do not represent the University.

Creation Date: **Wednesday, September 11, 2024**

Please review and evaluate your work in this course overall.

Comments
This course felt like a capstone of sorts for the MSCAPP program. A really good way to bring together everything we've been learning and build good habits for writing production level code and thinking about software design.
This was a really fun class and it was a really different structure but great for this course.
I did a good job on this course, but I could have read more of the complimentary material.
This course has been the highlight of my quarter. For CAPP students, it represents the culmination of the knowledge and skills we've developed over our two years in the program.
Really enjoyable course, probably my favorite of all that I've taken. James is wonderful, the class felt like a CAPP 123 course and/or a capstone project for the masters.
I was satisfied with my performance in this class and gained exposure to tools and technologies used in professional settings. Good experience to work on a project and produce a finished product.
Incredible class– really enjoyed getting to work on a long project in the same group. It really felt like a capstone of everything we learned in CAPP.
The course requires a relevant time commitment but that it does not feel overwhelming. The course is well structured such that one needs to work on one project over the course of the quarter, with many milestones which helps to plan accordingly and make steady progress.
The work, required many team meetings, a relevant amount of coding and additional time for planning and investigating on our own to learn new technologies.
Really enjoyed this class. It was a great way to apply all my skills to one project.

Please review and evaluate the course on the following:

1. I took away useful tools, concepts, knowledge, or insights from this course.

1 Strongly Disagree (0)

2 Disagree (0)

3 Neutral (0)

4 Agree (4)

5 Strongly Agree (16)

[Total (20)]

0

50%

100%

Statistics	Value
Response Count	20
Mean	4.80
Standard Deviation	0.41
Standard Error (base on SD)	0.09

2. I received regular, effective feedback to help me understand where I was in the learning process.

1 Strongly Disagree (0)

2 Disagree (0)

3 Neutral (1)

4 Agree (6)

5 Strongly Agree (13)

[Total (20)]

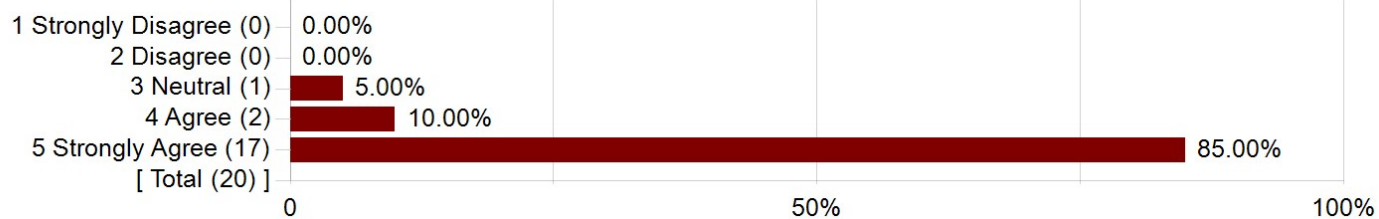
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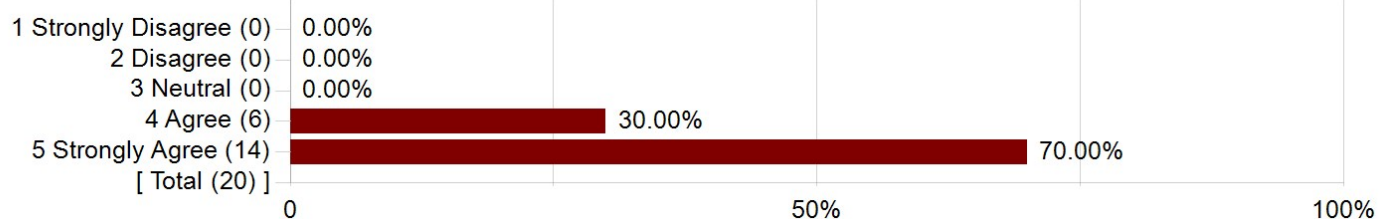
Statistics	Value
Response Count	20
Mean	4.60
Standard Deviation	0.60
Standard Error (base on SD)	0.13

3. I would recommend this course to other students.



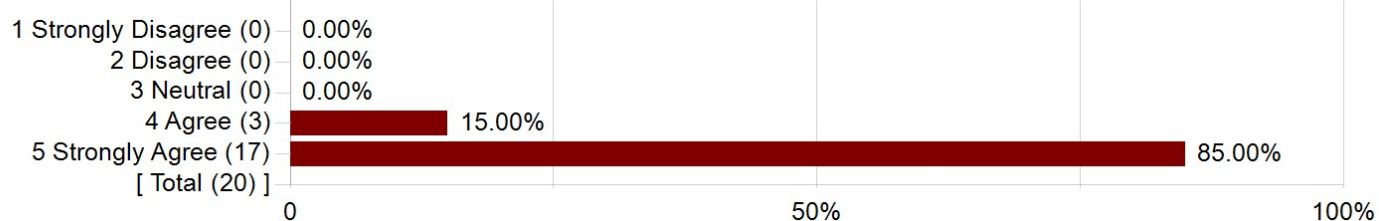
Statistics	Value
Response Count	20
Mean	4.80
Standard Deviation	0.52
Standard Error (base on SD)	0.12

4. The material in this course was constructively challenging.



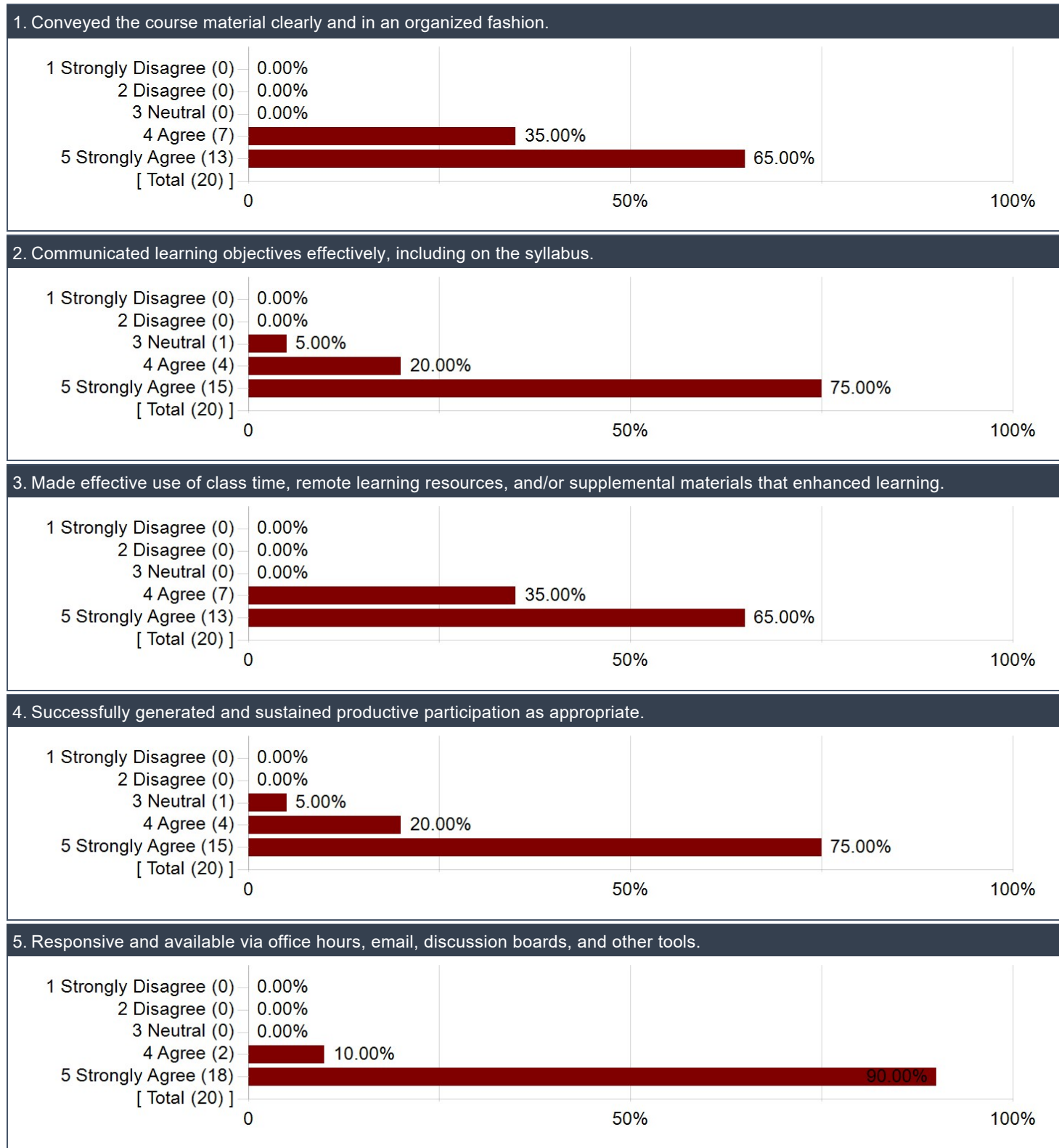
Statistics	Value
Response Count	20
Mean	4.70
Standard Deviation	0.47
Standard Error (base on SD)	0.11

5. I felt that the classroom was an inclusive learning environment for me.



Statistics	Value
Response Count	20
Mean	4.85
Standard Deviation	0.37
Standard Error (base on SD)	0.08

Please review and evaluate the faculty on the following:



Please elaborate on any of your responses above.

Comments
It was very well organized in terms of technologies and lessons that built off of the themes of what we were encountering in our projects.
Professor Turk did a great job in conveying the key intuition of several topics that are relevant to software engineering in general. I felt this course was a great complement to all of the CAPP coursework I had taken previously; it managed to cover several small knowledge gaps I had from previous classes. Also, we managed to build a well-designed product with potential to make social impact.
James has consistently been very helpful both in and out of the course. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience, using his skills to contribute to the common good. It's inspiring to have someone who has truly 'walked the walk' as our instructor.
I really enjoyed taking this course! I got experience collaborating with a large team in creating software. Given that the course is new, this is natural, I would suggest providing more clarity on the grading and consolidating important deadlines and requirements in the course website (it gets hard to navigate old Ed posts over time)
James is great, as usual!
The lectures could be a bit vague and sometimes uninteresting because they were very high level overviews of general software engineering concepts. However, because James is so incredibly knowledgeable in the field, he can answer any question, facilitate an conversation, provide any example, and give lots of additional support outside of class wherever more interest or context was needed.
Loved the course and Turks lectures overall. It felt that they were a bit disconnect at times (the lectures and the project) so part of me wishes there were a few labs you could opt into (maybe require 2/10) that align with your roles on the project so you could have more of a sense of how to approach your role and chat with other people across teams that are in the same role.
James is a great and highly supportive professor. It would have nice to have a few more code quality checks across the quarter
The course is great and I would highly recommend it for any CAPP student. It feels like a good culmination of the program with a project that puts together many of the skills we learned before . The class is challenging without being frustrating and one learns a lot about software design and practices and new technologies one might require for the project.
James is an amazing instructor, he is really clear, is super available to help students (and super helpful) and the class is super well planned and thoughtfully designed.
Jame is a really good professor, willing to adapt lectures to our needs, and provide feedback throughout the quarter.

What aspects of the instructor's teaching contributed most and least to your learning?

Comments
James is an excellent teacher and has a lot of experience with the concepts presented in class! I also liked how James was very active in terms of answering our questions and providing resources.
The labs and visits to meetings were very helpful.
availability to get input and feedback on projects, I think I was not great at keeping up with the readings and the project work at the same time so not sure how useful that was
Lectures, discussions and project building.
His extensive experience in the field and his openness to discussions were particularly beneficial to my learning
For me it was so valuable to learn from James who has experience working in civic tech. The feedback provided during team weekly meeting was incredible helpful because it was directly applicable to the work we were doing.
After the teacher mentioned the participation grading portion, I participated more in class and, unsurprisingly, got more out of those classes. Overall, the portions of the lectures that had a given and go between the professor, TAs, and the students were the most rewarding.
It was really interesting to learn from James's experience and feel like we were starting to contribute to the civic tech ecosystem.
James was a really great instructor! I always learn a lot in his class and he is very responsive to students' feedback and needs. If many teams were facing similar challenges, he flexibly adjusts the lesson schedule to ensure that we got to understand the content that was necessary to get the project up and running. The many concepts on how to collaborate effectively as a team to create a software was one of the big takeaways from this class, and we could attempt to apply that in our team projects.
He also made time in his schedule every week to join each team's meetings, provide guidance and help answer technical questions. At the end of the quarter, he also took an extra hour to two to help each group conduct a retrospective meeting which really helped to consolidate much of the key learning points and takeaways as well as help us reflect on the whole team project experience together.
James knowledge and experience in the field was immensely helpful and impactful to my takeaways from this course.
Turk is really adaptive and quick to make sure that people understand the material or reorganize the material so it fits at a better time in the quarter.
Maybe a little less lecture-style and more interactive at points? I love Turks lectures but also definitely get a lot out of the interactive moments.
James is quite clear in his teaching and is super helpful that he includes good examples to make the concepts more concrete. in the same fashion, during class we completed two lanes that were super useful in further learning some concepts
I enjoyed the real-world examples that James' used in class to explain class topics or use cases. I also enjoyed the UX/UI guest speaker.

Please suggest any changes that could improve this course (e.g., class material, class structure, assignments, inclusive pedagogy).

Comments
Because this class is project based and most of my teammates did not have a software engineering background, I felt like we struggled a lot in the beginning. We had a ton of ideas but didn't have a clear direction. Our TA and James were very helpful in pointing out resources and answering our questions, but it was still very challenging. I think structuring the course like 122, where there are PAs and then a final project at the end, would have gave me more confidence in applying the skills we learned in class.
This class requires a lot in a short time period, so some things that were offered can be easy to not get around to. For example, I believe it was mentioned in class that TA's and Professor Turk were willing to do some code review if we needed. I feel like having an experienced engineer review my code and suggest structural changes would have been very instructive and helped me see how to apply some of the principles we learned in class better. Like I said, I believe this was offered, but having it as part of the set structure of the class would've made it so that opportunity didn't get lost in the rush of the quarter.
I think the biggest struggle on our team was lack of frontend skills, so providing templates or tutorials that we could go off of (or having an extra crash course) would be really helpful.
I think we also had a mismatch of goals in our team at times that would have been helpful to clarify in terms of establishing really strong coding practices and team work vs getting something out the door as fast as possible, so maybe some clarity and reiteration on your end would have been helpful (or maybe we were supposed to learn that lesson ourselves).
Otherwise the material was helpful, interesting and relevant
This course had the best structure of any course in which I've participated.
I think it is great overall, I would probably add remote office hours in there, but it is a great class.
If you are new to code reviews, pull requests, and getting your commits merged on GitHub, it may take some time to get accustomed to these processes. Consequently, the first two weeks of coding as part of a Software Development team can be somewhat disorganized.
Putting key deadlines and info in the course website from the start, it can get a bit hard to navigate old posts on Ed
The slides being shared before class is helpful for Notability and Goodnotes. Also changing roles, especially for certain roles like frontend can be difficult. Role changing makes a lot of sense for some positions, like project manager, and fits naturally to project growth, but others would be quite difficult. During the quarter, we were given flexibility, which solved this, but I just wanted to note this.
It's tough in this course, but I think starting the project ideation ASAP after the quarter starts would have given us a little more time
Perhaps some small assignments or code samples that could more concretely illustrate the concepts taught in class, given that many of them are quite new and abstract. It would have been fantastic if this class was offered earlier in the academic year, and then learn those concepts and try to apply them to future projects or class work in the remainder of the academic year.
In general, the lecture slides were interesting but there was little incentive to engage with them given that 100% of the graded work was on the project. It might be a good idea to have optional labs worth — maybe have eight (one a week) and require submitting three of them, for about 20% of the grade.
Class material was probably the least interesting part of the class since the projects were a big focus, and thats where most of the hands on learning and support was happening. Perhaps facilitating more coding labs and/or repo examples in class could provide more context to the topics. (I really liked the lectures where he included code examples in the slides to highlight different "best and worst" practices)
I think the TA component was hard to know how to get the most out of. It felt hard to know what questions to ask until it was too late or hard to feel on track when he would mention stuff way beyond what we were focused on that week. Maybe I'd suggest them coming and listening into the first few meetings and piping up when they had suggestions instead of responding directly to questions.
Providing Office Hours.

Please comment on how respected, valued, and included you felt as a participant in the course.

Comments
very!
I felt completely respected, valued and included in the class.
Very respected, valued and included
I felt respected, valued, and included in the course.
I felt respected, valued, and included .
Very valued and respected!
Extremely
Incredibly included. James wanted class participation as much as possible and he is always very respectful to give every question a thoughtful answer.
Loved this course! He says this often but I think Turk takes his role seriously in playing the role of a more experienced colleague rather than a professor which is an amazing fit.
James encourages participation a lot during the quarter in class and by adding some optionals requirements that further encourages participation. The class feels like a super safe space where people can participate.
I really enjoyed this class and felt like James' investment in our growth.

Please include the name of the TA you are evaluating. What aspects of the TA's teaching contributed most to your learning? What could the TA modify to help you learn more? Please include any additional feedback for the TA.

Comments
Michael Plunkett; Michael was the best at answering my group's questions! I appreciate that he took the time to explain concepts to us and was always available to answer our questions/come to our group meetings.
Michael Plunkett – He was very responsive and always had helpful tips. It took us some time to figure out how to bring him into meetings effectively but I think that was just our team and project manager figuring out how our meetings were best structured. He did a great job.
Divij was amazing! He knew so much and was very good at explaining things
Michael Plunkett
Divij and Michael. Both TAs did an excellent job and went above and beyond in supporting our class.
Michael Plunkett was very helpful whenever we had a question for him to answer. We could have structured our meetings better to make better use of his assistance though, especially on certain salient aspects where we could have used greater input and advice. At times we did not know what we did not know and found out these missteps too late.
The TA could have helped us uncover unknown unknowns a little better — it felt like we were sometimes wandering in the dark . In hindsight, I wish that the TA could have joined all of our group meetings and chimed in when there was something that we were missing
Michael Plunkett. He was the TA attached to our group. Really thankful to have him as our TA because he made time and effort to join team meetings when possible. He has a lot of software engineering experience so whenever we had questions he could provide very useful guidance and suggestions, as well as access to resources on how to solve common front–end and back–end problems.
Michael is a great TA! He is very knowledgeable and provided constructive feedback during office hours/on Slack.
Divij Sinha and Michael Plunkett are both excellent people who are graduating this year and won't be back
Divij was assigned to my project, and his experience in the field was good knowledge to have as a guiding reference. I appreciated his insight the most when he was very blunt/up front about sticking to the MVP, and moving us away from stretch goals that could hinder the completion of the MVP. i.e., I very much appreciated when he kept us on track during meetings. To improve, I might recommend that he gives a glance at our repo once a week and suggest any modifications or questions he sees. Nothing too time consuming or hands on, but generally providing more feedback about our repo and coding practices.
Michael was mostly super helpful – i think it was hard in the beginning to not get sidetracked into a lot of random topics which would make us pretty overwhelmed.
Divij was an incredible resource and we learned a ton from him!
My TA for the project was Divij. He was incredibly helpful during the quarter, meeting with our team weekly and being super available during the week when we needed him.

