

# University of Michigan

## Fall 2020 Instructor Report With Comments

### EECS 481-001: Software Engin

#### Westley Weimer

30 out of 147 students responded to this evaluation.

#### Responses to University-wide questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	Univ-wide Median	School/College Median
This course advanced my understanding of the subject matter. (Q1631)	18	7	2	1	0	0	4.7	4.6	4.5
My interest in the subject has increased because of this course. (Q1632)	16	8	1	2	1	0	4.6	4.2	4.2
I knew what was expected of me in this course.(Q1633)	17	11	0	0	0	0	4.7	4.5	4.4
Overall, this was an excellent course.(Q1)	18	7	2	1	0	0	4.7	4.4	4.3
I had a strong desire to take this course.(Q4)	16	10	3	0	0	0	4.6	4.1	4.1
As compared with other courses of equal credit, the workload for this course was (SA=Much Lighter, A=Lighter, N=Typical, D=Heavier, SD=Much Heavier). (Q891)	1	4	19	2	1	0	3.1	2.9	2.8
How did you participate in this course? (Q1854)	26	3	0	0	0	0	4.9	4.7	4.5

#### Responses to University-wide questions about the instructor:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	Univ-wide Median	School/College Median
Overall, Westley Weimer was an excellent teacher.(Q2)	24	2	1	0	0	1	4.9	4.7	4.6
Westley Weimer seemed well prepared for class meetings.(Q230)	24	4	0	0	0	0	4.9	4.8	4.7
Westley Weimer explained material clearly.(Q199)	24	3	1	0	0	0	4.9	4.7	4.6
Westley Weimer treated students with respect.(Q217)	24	4	0	0	0	0	4.9	4.9	4.8

#### Responses to questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	University-Wide Median
Prerequisites provided adequate preparation for this course. (Q61)	20	7	0	0	0	0	4.8	4.5
The textbook made a valuable contribution to the course. (Q64)	10	2	3	0	1	11	4.7	3.9
I felt included and valued when working with other students. (Q253)	18	4	1	0	0	4	4.9	4.7
I felt comfortable asking questions in class. (Q521)	18	7	1	0	0	1	4.8	4.4
I developed confidence in my abilities as an engineer. (Q1769)	18	7	1	1	0	0	4.8	4.2
I developed the ability to solve real world engineering problems. (Q1770)	19	6	0	2	0	0	4.8	4.2
The discussion section was a valuable part of this course. (Q1771)	9	5	6	2	2	3	3.9	4.0

The medians are calculated from Fall 2020 data. University-wide medians are based on all UM classes in which an item was used. The school/college medians in this report are based on classes that are upper division with enrollment of 75 or greater in College of Engineering.

## Written Comments

**Given the format of the course (e.g., fully online, in-person, etc.), what teaching methods worked well? (Q1855)**

Comments
Fully online worked pretty well for this class.
Writing notes during lecture with breaks
Synchronous lectures
The synchronous lectures were very nice, i appreciated getting to hear from people in real time and have some interaction. The zoom participation
N/A
The recording worked well.
Kevin and Wes tag teaming material and zoom questions was a great way to tackle online learning!
Very interactive class with professors reading the chat frequently for any questions
optional labs
Having two professors on the call, so one could monitor the chat made class feel more fun and conversational. Stretchy trivia was a well-needed break before heading back into course content. The forum was great for getting help on homeworks, as well as life advice.
Projects and lecture
Mandatory attendance kept us here and allowing a certain amount of lawlessness in the chat helped me pay attention and enjoy class.

**What were the greatest challenges to your learning in this course format? (Q1856)**

Comments
Just wish the lectures were earlier. Tend to lose focus near the end of the day.
Not interesting material
I think that the online format dampened some discussions or made it harder to get input from as much of the class.
n/a
N/A
cannot watch rec in time
It's super easy to be unmotivated.
Reading quizzes at times were challenging, but very informative reads regardless
maintaining interest in remote learning
Motivating myself to go to discussions was difficult. When I went, I found it well worth my time. The lecture times also weren't the best time for them to be for me to focus, so I struggled focusing and often had to go back to lecture recordings.
COVID related distancing and tech issues
I learned really well in this format—but maybe bringing up the readings a bit more in lecture?

### Comment on the quality of instruction in this course. (Q900)

Comments
highest quality
Very good
great
They are great!!!!
The instructors are clearly passionate and explain things well, but I found it hard to pay attention to lecture
Very high. This class was all around excellent.
good
Great.
Pretty good. Very clear. Like the visualization. The jokes are good. Very passionate professors
Kevin and Wes are great teachers. I was interested in the material because I'm about to graduate and enter this workforce, but I still wanted to take this class mostly for the profs.
The quality of instruction was good, but the content seemed lacking. Without internship experience in large companies it is very difficult to grasp how important certain topics are, how exactly they are used, when they are used, and how often.
Amazing course that develops students for future work environments
it was excellent
This is one of the best taught classes in the U-M CS dept and has the best professors teaching it. I was always excited for this class and seeing what we would learn. It was directly related to my internship experiences, and yet continued to teach me new things. The readings, while hard to get through, were all pertinent and important to lecture. While I dreaded the quizzes, they did ensure I stayed on top of my readings. Lecture attendance, too, was a bit annoying, since they hit at a time where my focus is usually not great during the day, but even if I didn't get all the material the first time, I was able to get enough out of it to more effectively review the lecture a second time.
Professors Weimer and Leach were AWESOME. Can tell they loved the material and weren't above joking around with the class or each other
This was an amazing class. I adored the instruction (webcomics make anything 750% better) and both instructors were amazing.

### How might the class climate be made more inclusive of diverse students? (Q910)

Comments
Most inclusive class i've taken
Already very inclusive. Maybe a bit more political inclusivity, seemed like the class definitely had a left leaning bias.
honestly idk.
it is already inclusive
N/A
It's hard to say in an online format.
N/A
it was fine as far as i can tell
Being upfront at the start of class about what topics might be mentioned throughout the course would prepare students for facing these during lecture. I was often thrown off by certain topics coming up in class, such as a drink being roofied, to explain an in-class concept. In hindsight, I can understand the usefulness of bringing in real-world examples, which may be controversial but, in the moment, it made me lose focus on what I was supposed to be getting out of the lecture. In addition, there was a message on the Piazza acknowledging that the chat should be welcoming and semi-professional. Sending something out like that at the beginning of the semester might prevent insensitive comments when controversial issues come up.
N/A
I thought it was pretty inclusive as is

### What were the strengths of the course ? (Q953)

Comments
Wes.
professors and course content
professors
The psychology segments (stretchy trivia time)
The lectures and readings were very useful. The projects were a bit of a mix frankly with some more useful than others.
opportunities to listen to real world software engineers and pms
Inclusivity and listening to the students.
Very cool prof. Very interesting material.
The professors are great. The homeworks also felt very relevant and useful, which isn't always the case for EECS.
Good feeling of community
The range and applicability of the course content were unparalleled.
Instructors, staff, and just the overall willingness to help people in/out of class for both academic and mental well-being
industry insight on computer science
The course staff is wonderful and open about all topics. They struck a great balance between being profs (authority figures) and feeling like friends. That's what I wish all my previous classes had felt like.
Projects, lecture material, professors
Interesting topic, relevant projects, amazing staff, great exams.

### What suggestions would you make for improving the course ? (Q955)

Comments
n/a
some hws were vague
My biggest suggestions would be to the professors. It seems to me like they pride themselves on being "advocates for students" and that may be true in many spaces, but it did not feel like that in the course itself. Student complaints seem to be heard but not listened to with very few changes made in my view based on student feedback. The class had several projects and a midterm all due within 4 or 5 subsequent weeks of each other. During a busy time of the semester, where every other EECS class I was aware of was offering project extensions with no questions asked, the 481 project was extended 48 hours at a 5% grade cut. None of the work was particularly difficult but it became hard to put 100% effort into each of these projects with what felt like little break and guidance.
I think making the discussions mandatory might be beneficial to get more engagement.
n/a
N/A
Too much work. Way too much work. Very time-consuming. The exams are also a bit too hard. Need to be above the median by a lot to get an A
I have none
The class seemed very abstract but not because of the content. The content is about real world practices. However, real world experience with large software projects in industry seems to be needed to understand the scope of the topics.
N/A, amazing course as is
none
Feedback is a gift, so I wish I had more to say, but I honestly do not. Please continue doing what you are doing.
N/A
Maybe tying the readings more into the lectures?

**Among the courses you have already taken, which proved the most (or least) effective in preparing you for this course, and why? (Q1098)**

Comments
this course was unique. it helped to have upper level experience but dont think any are necessary prerequisites
Honestly not many courses supremely helped, maybe EECS 280.
This class was very different from a lot of the other coding-heavy classes, given that it was largely based on readings, conceptual understanding, and writing skills. The technical portion was i guess best covered by 281, but that is just because it is the most generally useful course.
n/a
N/A
281 and 476. Good basics and also 476 taught me some python.
Probably 281 I guess. Maybe 370 because they stress testing too.
EECS201 taught by Marcus Darden. A whole lot of EECS481 is handling the weird interfaces of libraries and using your tools effectively, and EECS201 gave me a lot of tools in my toolbox right off the bat.
Not too many courses can really prepare anyone for this kind of material. It is sort of "new" because it teaches us more about real-world applications whereas all the other EECS courses will rely on academic knowledge. I wish this was an introductory course (or required) because it seems way too helpful to not take.
no other EECS course is like this one
My internships probably prepared me the best. This course formalized things I learned during those experiences and validated that they were important things to know. EECS 203 and 376 material frequently came up, though it wasn't essential to the course. Otherwise, I would say having a combination of upper levels was helpful for contributing to discussions about using different languages and being able to complete the open source homework assignment.
EECS 281
Honestly, some of the humanities classes such as Great Books prepared me for longer readings

# University of Michigan

## Fall 2020 Instructor Report With Comments

### EECS 481-002: Software Engin

#### Westley Weimer

18 out of 90 students responded to this evaluation.

#### Responses to University-wide questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	Univ-wide Median	School/College Median
This course advanced my understanding of the subject matter. (Q1631)	10	7	0	0	0	0	4.7	4.6	4.5
My interest in the subject has increased because of this course. (Q1632)	8	5	1	3	0	0	4.4	4.2	4.2
I knew what was expected of me in this course.(Q1633)	11	4	2	0	0	0	4.7	4.5	4.4
Overall, this was an excellent course.(Q1)	10	3	4	0	0	0	4.7	4.4	4.3
I had a strong desire to take this course.(Q4)	7	7	2	1	0	0	4.3	4.1	4.1
As compared with other courses of equal credit, the workload for this course was (SA=Much Lighter, A=Lighter, N=Typical, D=Heavier, SD=Much Heavier). (Q891)	3	2	10	2	0	0	3.2	2.9	2.8
How did you participate in this course? (Q1854)	14	3	0	0	0	0	4.9	4.7	4.5

#### Responses to University-wide questions about the instructor:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	Univ-wide Median	School/College Median
Overall, Westley Weimer was an excellent teacher.(Q2)	15	1	0	0	0	0	5.0	4.7	4.6
Westley Weimer seemed well prepared for class meetings.(Q230)	16	0	0	0	0	0	5.0	4.8	4.7
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Westley Weimer treated students with respect.(Q217)	15	1	0	0	0	0	5.0	4.9	4.8

#### Responses to questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	University-Wide Median
Prerequisites provided adequate preparation for this course. (Q61)	9	5	1	0	0	1	4.7	4.5
The textbook made a valuable contribution to the course. (Q64)	2	0	2	1	1	10	3.0	3.9
I felt included and valued when working with other students. (Q253)	9	3	2	0	0	2	4.7	4.7
I felt comfortable asking questions in class. (Q521)	9	5	1	0	0	0	4.7	4.4
I developed confidence in my abilities as an engineer. (Q1769)	10	5	1	0	0	0	4.7	4.2
I developed the ability to solve real world engineering problems. (Q1770)	10	6	0	0	0	0	4.7	4.2
The discussion section was a valuable part of this course. (Q1771)	6	1	3	2	0	4	4.5	4.0

The medians are calculated from Fall 2020 data. University-wide medians are based on all UM classes in which an item was used. The school/college medians in this report are based on classes that are upper division with enrollment of 75 or greater in College of Engineering.

## Written Comments

**Given the format of the course (e.g., fully online, in-person, etc.), what teaching methods worked well? (Q1855)**

Comments
Having a professor managing the chat was great
n/a
I liked the lectures with a professor answering the chat.
The teachers did a good job during lectures.
Fully online worked well
homeworks were very good

**What were the greatest challenges to your learning in this course format? (Q1856)**

Comments
I fell behind on reading and really struggled to catch up.
The quizzes were overly stressful and led to me locking up and not reading at all because I felt that not reading at all == not dissecting the reading for 3 hours under a microscope.
Easier reading quizzes would've encouraged me to at least briefly review the paper, take some notes, etc. Not sure if I'm the only one impacted like this, but the difficulty of the quizzes actually inadvertently made it so reading wasn't worth it at all.
n/a
motivation
It was very hard to learn remotely in all classes.
N/A
did not pay attention sometimes in sync lecture, didn't do many readings

**Comment on the quality of instruction in this course. (Q900)**

Comments
High-quality lectures.
very very good. Weimer certainly has a way with words. Leach is great too.
I liked both professors
The teachers were great
The instructors are amazing. They genuinely care about the students and make the course interesting.
Great
best

### How might the class climate be made more inclusive of diverse students? (Q910)

Comments
I mention in my suggestions a particular issue of leniency vs fairness. I think overall the climate is OK for diverse students from different backgrounds, less so for students who are working on their mental health.
I will say there is one phrase Professor Weimer used that rubbed me the wrong way for some reason: "You have my sympathies". Something feels condescending about this phrase, and I've thought about it a few times. I doubt there was any malintent in saying that, and it may just be me.
n/a
I liked that Wes talked about Romance Novels something that not many CS students read a lot of but I was discouraged by the number of nonsupportive comments in chat. I guess trying to discourage that moving forward.
It was inclusive of diverse students
It's very inclusive already
pretty good already, but not many ppl know about 481 to begin with so making more students aware of it might help.

### What were the strengths of the course ? (Q953)

Comments
The assignments were a great way to get hands-on experience!
covered very practical material. The guest lecturer were really cool as well!
This gives real world engineering problems in a high level.
I like that we could work on the HW with a partner but it was annoying when some people used the same approaches but got widely different scores and IAs often didn't really have a way of helping without giving the answer so it was easy to get discouraged and stuck.
It was a good course.
The professors and guest lecturers. Good community during live lectures and on piazza.
The profs
profs 100%



## What suggestions would you make for improving the course ? (Q955)

Comments
This course didn't feel inviting for SSD students due to lack of communication between staff and students. I reached out multiple times and received no reply or acknowledgment, therefore leaving me feeling left in the dark regarding if my accommodations were even validated.
It felt like at times Professors were not flexible and understanding of COVID. The argument of fairness seemed to supersede the fact that COVID has seriously disrupted the world right now. Consider the following very small subset of disruptions: people getting kicked out of housing, family members getting sick, having to be caretakers, living in unsafe/bad home environments, etc.
The usual argument of fairness I saw was that "other students may have planned their schedule around X and it would not be fair to them".
My input on that argument: the people requesting additional time and extensions are the ones struggling most during COVID (and likely have the bottom 25% of grades in this course). By showing more empathy and being flexible during COVID, you can help reach these students who could use this extra support.
The people who would be upset by an extension because they planned ahead of time are most likely the top performers of your course. By being so rigid, you are catering to people who are already thriving in this environment and disproportionately hurting those who aren't.
I offer a compromise solution that I implore the staff to adopt for future semesters: leniency on a case-by-case basis. You did offer to work with students individually, but required 'proof' of struggling with therapist receipts, CAPS appointment logs, etc. That isn't fair; it makes it harder to reach out for help and is unnecessary. The fear of being audited doesn't warrant this: if you are going to have repercussions for supporting students during COVID times, then maybe it's worth standing up to that. I don't see an issue working with students individually without requiring proof.
The problem is definitely more nuanced than something I can single-handedly propose a solution to in a feedback form. All I want to do is point out that I personally felt there was plenty of room for improvement, and I hope there is a discussion around creating a better climate addressing this issue.
none.
I like that we could work on the HW with a partner but it was annoying when some people used the same approaches but got widely different scores and IAs often didn't really have a way of helping without giving the answer so it was easy to get discouraged and stuck.
I have no suggestions
More design patterns
shorter or easier readings? i didn't gain much from them even when i did read them (rarely)

## Among the courses you have already taken, which proved the most (or least) effective in preparing you for this course, and why? (Q1098)

Comments
EECS281 gave me a good amount of data structures experience and I had previously played around with testing and coverage there.
EECS370 was useful in being able to understand the few lower-level things we discussed.
no prerequisites are really required. Having scripting/what I call lowkey sysadmin skills (unixy terminal confidence) helps a lot for the homework.
All courses(major) were equivalently useful in this class.
They were all helpful.
N/A
least: 203 that class sucks forreal
not a class but i think having a prior internship helped me a ton