University of Michigan
Winter 2025 Instructor Report
EECS 498-012: Special Topics
Nicole Hamilton

19 out of 23 students responded to this evaluation.

Responses to University-wide questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	School/College Median	Univ-Wide Median
This course advanced my understanding of the subject matter. (Q1631)	16	2	0	0	0	0	4.9	4.5	4.5
My interest in the subject has increased because of this course. (Q1632)	14	4	0	0	0	0	4.9	4.2	4.3
I knew what was expected of me in this course.(Q1633)	12	3	3	0	0	0	4.8	4.4	4.6
I had a strong desire to take this course.(Q4)	13	4	1	0	0	0	4.8	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)	0	0	9	6	3	0	2.5	2.9	3.0

Responses to University-wide questions about the instructor:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	School/College Median	Univ-Wide Median
Nicole Hamilton seemed well prepared for class meetings.(Q230)	14	4	0	0	0	0	4.9	4.7	4.8
Nicole Hamilton explained material clearly.(Q199)	12	4	2	0	0	0	4.8	4.6	4.7
Nicole Hamilton treated students with respect.(Q217)	12	6	0	0	0	0	4.8	4.8	4.8

Responses to questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median
Overall, this was an excellent course. (Q1)	14	3	1	0	0	0	4.9
I felt included and valued when working with other students. (Q253)	14	2	1	0	1	0	4.9

Responses to questions about the instructor:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median
Overall, Nicole Hamilton was an excellent teacher. (Q2)	15	2	1	0	0	0	4.9

I think this class may help me help me get a job.

(custom question added by the instructor)

SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median
11	7	0	0	0	0	4.7

Working on a team of 6 or 7 was a great experience and not like other classes.

(custom question added by the instructor)

SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median
12	4	1	1	0	0	4.8

This class caused me to think about graduate school and the career I would like.

(custom question added by the instructor)

SA	A	N	SD	D	N/A	Your Median
10	5	2	1	0	0	4.6

The medians are calculated from Winter 2025 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 16 to 74 in College of Engineering.

Written Comments

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

Comments
Nicole did a very good job explaining operating systems concepts and search engine concepts at a very high level of depth that increased my understanding.
I feel like other than the sometimes wall–of–text presentations, the teaching was very good
Professor Hamilton is very enthusiastic about the topic, and takes the time to re–explain concepts over multiple lectures which is amazing. The exams also felt very fair.
This course is excellent. One of the best courses I take in umich
Amazing, Nicole does a great job explaining topics and making sure students actually understand the content. Probably one of the best teachers I have had during my time so far at Umich.
This class enabled me to pursue thinking about going deeper into computer science. Might to PhD, but will definitely do low–level programming. I loved learning how things actually work instead of having to use python wrappers that I don't understand.
Fantastic. Professor Hamilton is very knowledgeable and it shows
Absolutely my favorite class of all time and the most I've ever learned in a semester. My team has frequently talked about how the project is the coolest thing we have ever built!
I loved this course. I have learned so much in a short amount of time. These skills will stick with me forever.
Professor Nicole is very helpful, enthusiastic, and always willing to provide guidance—whether it's on the course project or academic planning.
Great class! I really learned something pratical in this class. I like it.

What were the strengths of the course ? (Q953)

Comments
Overall intrigue of the project
The sheer scope and variety of subprojects that allowed me to refresh and learn a vast amount
The course provided just the right amount of support to get the search engine finished by the end of the semester, we didn't feel too overwhelmed the entire semester, and it also didn't feel like we were being given too much of the code for how to finish the project. Having a team of six was a unique experience because most classes are teams of 2–4. This project definitely felt larger in scale compared to any other I've completed at Michigan. I also like how we learned about every component of a real–world system, instead of just the parts relevant to the specific cs area for other courses.
Independence in working and project design.
The application method of learning. I learned everything in this course by doing, rather than memorizing information I learned a majority of the content just by doing my part in building our search engine.
Low–level programming, felt like a true MDE because incorporated elements from networks, operating systems, distributed systems, etc. All a collection to build a really cool project.
Greatly applicable, learned a great deal.
The large team and sheer size of the project teach you so much that you won't learn any other way. Also, the lack of a formal spec and open decisions that each team gets to make teaches you so much about how to work in industry and be an efficient engineer.
The experience of building a search engine from scratch as part of a team made this course one where the effort I put in truly matched the knowledge I gained.
Learning something and trying it in practice is great!

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

Comments
Grading criteria for tests and assignments could be clearer from the outset
I think if we were allowed to reasonably use code from the standard library it would've made things significantly less tedious.
Provide a little bit more support for building the crawler. No need for an autograder assignment, but please give us a more comprehensive starting list of cases to consider when writing the crawler. And please completely drop the requirement to write our own data structures and c++ libraries, we all passed eecs 281 and know how it works, nobody in the real world re–writes those libraries and we would not have finished the project if we did.
Nothing, it is great as it is.
Teach distributed systems more, especially deploying to cloud, as we took forever to figure that out.
Teach how to work effectively as a team, its surprisingly unintuitive.
None
I think the t–shirt assignment should just be scrapped. It was in the middle of when we were making our engines so it caused some unnecessary stress. Also, given the fact that most of the students in this class are more interested in systems–level / backend / infrastructure, it makes sense most of the students aren't good frontend people with artistic / creative skills and most of the t–shirts were lackluster.
None, I absolutely loved it!

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

Comments
I'm not entirely too sure – I feel like this involves literal general cultural shifts and that's difficult and not within the scope of this class.
I don't know.
Already inclusive.
It's already very inclusive
N/A

Was this class what you expected? Did anything surprise you?

Comments
It surprised me how much the instructor valued having students in the class and genuinely cared about keeping them engaged— truly cherishing every teaching opportunity.
Yes, and no
The design of a search engine is less complex and hard to understand than I was expecting, but we ran into more challenges building the search engine than I was initially expecting.
1 Yes, 2 no.
Professor Hamilton is excellent. She designed this course very well and helped us with general idea of search engine.
I was surprised how much I gained from this class. I feel a lot more confident taking on large scale projects because of this class.
Everything that I expected, but on a more deep scale. I never thought we would be able to make a search engine that could really search the web.
Pretty close to what I expected, not much surprised me, expectations were made clear from day 1
It was more work than I expected, but I was pleasantly surprised by the kind of work we were doing and it is most definitely my favorite project/class of all time!

What will your memories be of this class?

Comments
Watching our search engine come to life for the first time was a moment of pure excitement and pride.
Having fun working with my group in the library
Finding excellent new friend(s) to debug until sunrise with...
Connecting our frontend to the finished backend and querying the engine on my laptop for the first time. Working together as a team and getting lots of work done, then getting food right after.
Building a whole search engine myself.
Those late nights in the final week to make the whole system work
Getting our crawler to work distributed across our laptops for the first time
The three weeks, where me and my team spent 10 hours together per day trying to get our project working was so fun and gave the vibes of an early–stage startup. I'll always remember how hyped we were when we were in the ugly and finally got our crawler working after weeks of debugging, and promptly went out to eat to celebrate. I think the other people studying that day were a little mad after all the noise we made.