

Teaching Evaluations

Jacob Bower-Bir

I am an energetic and experienced instructor, having taught graduate and undergraduate courses in political science, economics, public policy, and global studies at MIT, Indiana University, at the Norfolk and Framingham Correctional Institutions through Boston University's Prison Education Program, and as an assistant professor at the American University in Cairo. I have syllabuses prepared, tested, and ready to go for courses on a range of topics, including introductory through advanced statistics and statistical programming, political and moral philosophies of justice, theories of the policymaking process, policy monitoring and evaluation, introductory microeconomics, government in market-oriented economies, and economic theories and political realities of environmental sustainability. Student reviews of these courses are exemplary, as are their reviews of my performance as a teacher.

On the following pages are student reviews of two standard courses of the type most faculty prefer to avoid but often have to teach. The first is Making Public Policy (11.002/17.30), which I taught to undergraduate students at MIT. The course was offered jointly through the Department of Political Science and the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. In it I introduced students to leading theories of the policymaking process, and to related theories of politics and cognition. Students then applied these theories to explain real-world events of direct interest to them, deepening their appreciation of academic research and its limitations.

The second class is Statistical Analysis for Effective Decision Making (V506), which I taught to masters student at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs. This was a graduate course on the statistical analysis of issues studied by policy and social scientists. In it students learned the skills necessary to interpret and undertake statistical analysis, as well as the basic theories that enable and constrain the application of statistics to real-world data. I emphasized fundamental statistical concepts, the practical application of statistics to social science questions, the interpretation of statistical data, and the use of the contemporary statistical software.

You can find summaries of my ratings on the top-halves of pages 2 and 4. My overall instructor rating was 6.6/7 at MIT and 4.6/5 at IU. I am especially pleased with the students' written comments, which you can read on pages 2-3 and 8-9. (Student references to my leaving MIT refer to my spending a semester teaching at Massachusetts state prisons through Boston University.) Overall, the reviews for these courses are representative of all the courses I have taught. As a graduate course, however, V506 had significantly fewer students than most of my undergraduate courses, which usually ranged from 20-80 students. Some introductory courses I have taught had over 400 students enrolled, while graduate courses frequently had fewer than 10 student. I am happy to provide my evaluations for any or all of these courses upon request.

11.002 Making Public Policy
 17.30 Making Public Policy
 Survey Window: Fall 2015 End of Term

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Bower-Bir, Jacob S., Instructor - Overall rating: 6.6/7

Teaching in Lecture

Quality of Teaching

Rating Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 4=Neutral, 7=Strongly Agree, N/A=Not Applicable (7 is best)

	AVG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	RESPONSES	MEDIAN	STDEV
Stimulated interest	6.6								22	7.0	0.79
Displayed thorough knowledge of subject material	6.7								22	7.0	0.55
Helped me learn	6.3								22	7.0	0.94

Rating Scale: 1=Very Poor, 7=Excellent, N/A=Not Applicable (7 is best)

	AVG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	RESPONSES	MEDIAN	STDEV
Overall rating	6.6								22	7.0	0.8

Comments on teaching (strengths, areas for improvement)

[Student 1201](#) - Super awesome! Very engaging lecture style. Always looked forward to his classes.

[Student 6291](#) - Engaging lecturer and stimulating essay prompts, but seemed to have a negative attitude towards students

[Student 7258](#) - If you were staying I would definitely take more of your classes.

[Student 17015](#) - There should be a chance for class discussion for 30-15 mins at the end of lecture to reinforce the readings and get people thinking.

[Student 22392](#) - Really great sense of humor that made lectures interesting and also helped create a web of connections between issues and key terms.

[Student 32378](#) - You should become an official faculty/teach more classes at MIT!

[Student 45331](#) - I like his humor in class and in his emails. Honest to a point and understanding of students.

[Student 45712](#) - Very well versed in subject. Loved his teaching style (witty, teaches theory clearly, illustrates with anecdotes).

[Student 46085](#) - You are a great professor, I wish you weren't leaving MIT after this semester!

[Student 46096](#) - Very charismatic lecturer, I enjoyed lecture a lot! You shouldn't make generalizations about MIT students though! MIT is a very unique school and we definitely do not have grade inflation (just look at my gpa).

[Student 48354](#) - Jake is really sarcastic, but in a way that makes the class more comfortable and conducive to conversation. I really enjoyed the mix of theory and anecdotes in his lectures - it was good to have the vocabulary to describe things while also understanding how certain aspects of political theory fit into and influence well known policy issues.

[Student 56303](#) - Passionate and funny guy that was fun to hear teach. A little disorganized at times and scatterbrained but makes the topics incredibly engaging and quirky.

[Student 58082](#) - Really cool, fun teacher. Learned a lot. Posting the slides on Stellar would be helpful.

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Bower-Bir

Stat Analys For Eff Dec Making (V506-13008)

Spring 2013

No. of enrollment = 22, No. of responses = 9,
Response rate = 40.9%

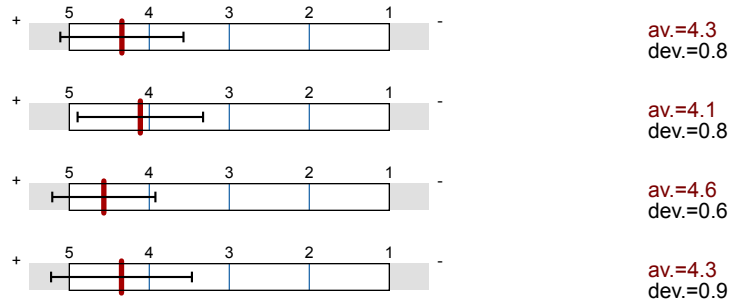
Overall indicators

Global Index

Course Information

Instructor Information

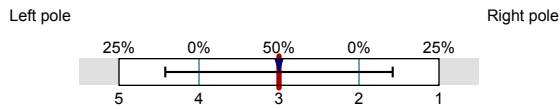
Overall Ratings



Survey Results

Legend

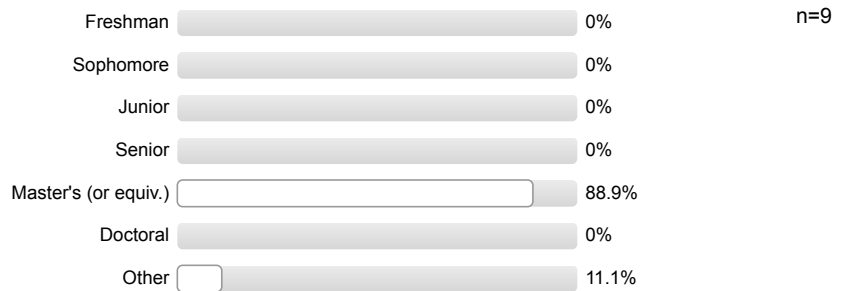
Question text



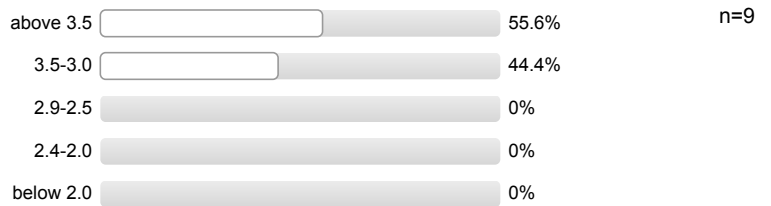
n=No. of responses
av.=Mean
md=Median
dev.=Std. Dev.
ab.=Abstention

General Student Information

1. Please give your class year:



2. Please estimate your cumulative (overall) Grade Point Average at the beginning of the semester.

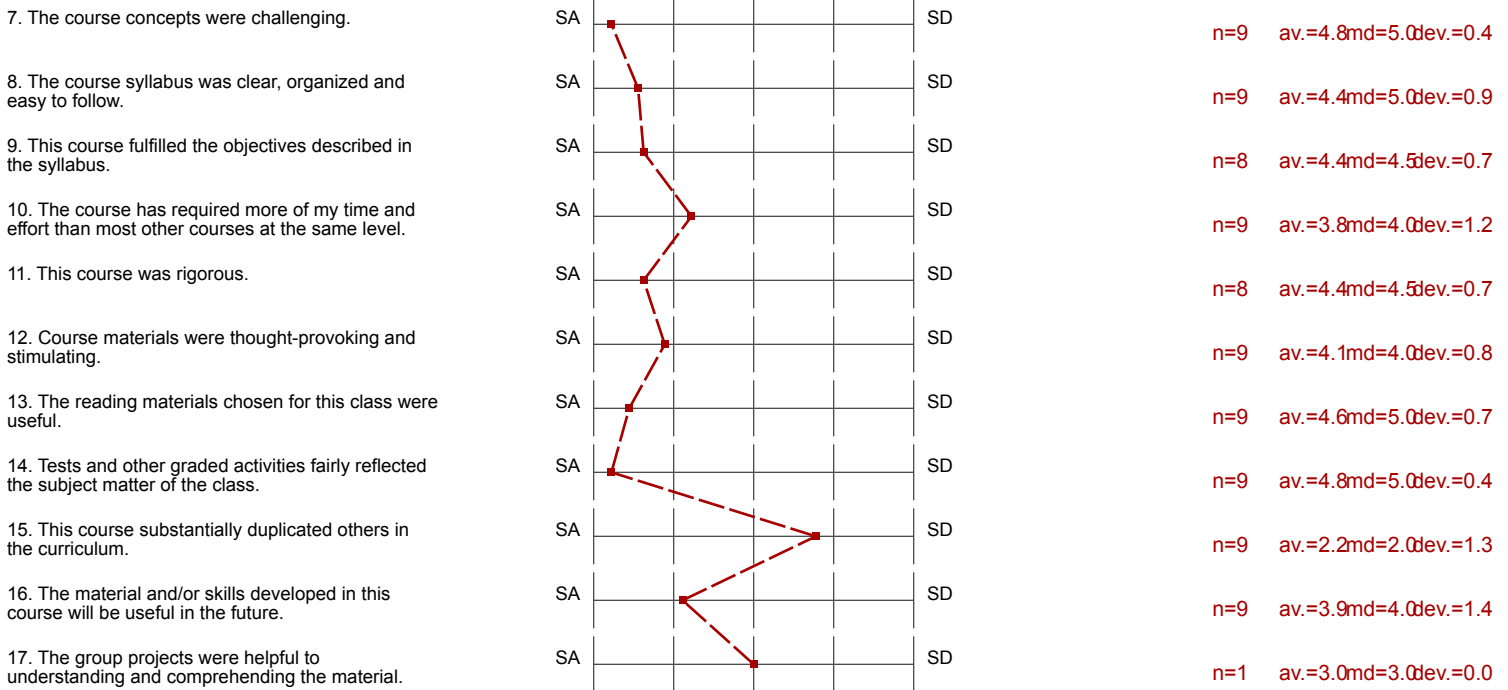


Profile

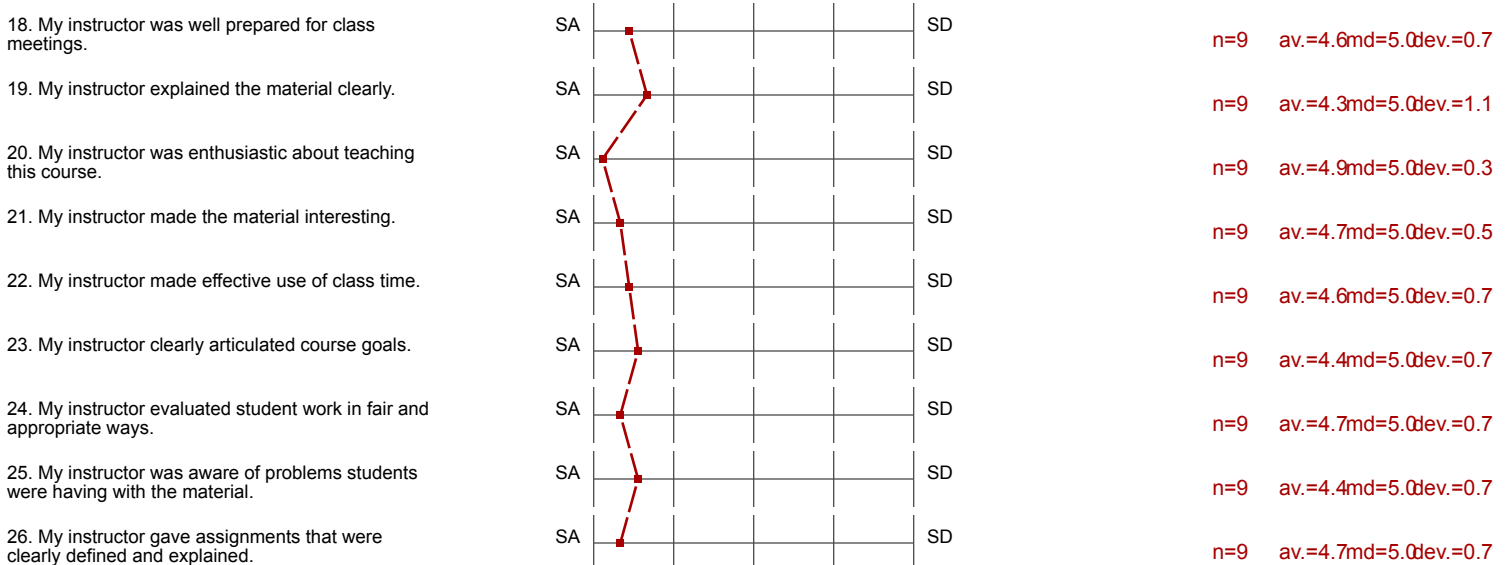
Subunit: SPEA-Indianapolis
 Name of the instructor: Bower-Bir
 Name of the course: Stat Analys For Eff Dec Making
 (Name of the survey)

Values used in the profile line: Mean

Course Information



Instructor Information



27. My instructor's grading system was clearly defined.	SA		SD	n=9	av.=4.4md=5.0dev.=0.7
28. My instructor created an environment in which students felt comfortable asking questions and expressing their views.	SA		SD	n=9	av.=4.9md=5.0dev.=0.3
29. My instructor was helpful to students outside of class.	SA		SD	n=9	av.=4.4md=5.0dev.=0.7
30. My instructor was willing to make appointments to see students.	SA		SD	n=9	av.=4.7md=5.0dev.=0.5
31. My instructor encouraged students to participate in their learning (e.g. through discussion, projects, study groups, or other appropriate activities).	SA		SD	n=9	av.=4.7md=5.0dev.=0.7
32. My instructor was effective at promoting productive class discussions.	SA		SD	n=9	av.=4.6md=5.0dev.=0.7
33. My instructor presented effective lectures.	SA		SD	n=9	av.=4.6md=5.0dev.=0.7
34. My instructor kept the announced office hours.	SA		SD	n=8	av.=4.3md=4.5dev.=0.9
35. The Teaching Assistant for this class was helpful in assisting students in understanding the material.	SA		SD	n=1	av.=4.0md=4.0dev.=0.0

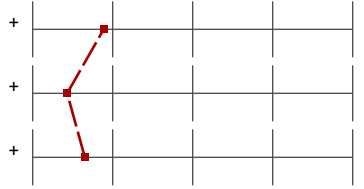
Overall Ratings

36. I learned a lot in this course.	SA		SD	n=9	av.=4.3md=5.0dev.=0.9
37. Overall I would rate the quality of instruction in this course as outstanding.	SA		SD	n=9	av.=4.7md=5.0dev.=0.7
38. These were helpful to understanding and comprehending the course concepts.	SA		SD	n=2	av.=4.0md=4.0dev.=1.4
39. These were well-integrated with other elements of the course.	SA		SD	n=1	av.=3.0md=3.0dev.=0.0
40. Overall, I would rate the quality of instruction in the laboratory, field work, or discussion section (whichever applies) as outstanding.	SA		SD	n=2	av.=4.0md=4.0dev.=1.4

Profile

Subunit: SPEA-Indianapolis
 Name of the instructor: Bower-Bir
 Name of the course: Stat Analys For Eff Dec Making
 (Name of the survey)

Course Information



av.=4.1 dev.=0.8

Instructor Information

av.=4.6 dev.=0.6

Overall Ratings

av.=4.3 dev.=0.9

Comments Report

Open-Ended Questions

1. What did you like best about this course and/or instructor?

↳ really the willingness of the instructor to explain and re-explain what was not understood.
 ↳ also liked the concept and technique of decision making learned from the class

This was my 4th stats class and the first time I understand mult. regression. Great class, awesome instructor.

The material was presented in a way that made it easy to understand

Instructor was down to earth and could relate to his students.

He was effective in his teaching style to masters students. He also simplified the more complex theories for all to understand.

- he was very excited about the ~~subject~~ subject, which showed in his lectures
- he was very helpful & provided a lot of helpful resources

Finally had an instructor that related stats to everyday concepts!!!

The Instructor was well prepared and willing to work w/ students until he was sure they understood All the material.