Thank you to the students who took the time to submit comments about CE361 and me. I read the comments, looking for ways to improve the course.

This year, for the first time, I have decided to post the comments made on Questions 19 and 20 of the Standard CE Lecture Survey. I do this for two reasons. (1) To show you how opinions can vary drastically. (2) To demonstrate why I wish could have a conversation with students to clarify what they mean by their comments, to offer my viewpoint, and to get concrete examples and suggestions for me to consider. Instead, all I can do is add replies to some of the comments.

If nothing else, students considering taking CE361 in future Fall semesters will have the benefit of comments --- complimentary and critical – about how I conducted the course in Fall 2012.

---Prof. Fricker

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **CE Standard Lec Survey  FA12 2012** | **Purdue University   West Lafayette** | |

format image

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Course:** | CE36100 001 - Transportation Engr | **Department:** | CE | |  | | **Resp. Rec'vd / Expected:** | 50 / 85 | | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q19 - We welcome your written comments below. What is something/are some things that the instructor does well, e.g., something you hope that the instructor will continue to do in the class in the future?** | |
| **Faculty:** | **Fricker, Jon D** |
| **Response Rate:** | **48.00**%   (**24** of **50**) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **-** | He does know his stuff very well and is always prepared...has a daily outline on his course website. |
| **-** | Having all the grades entered with an idea of where we stood on a letter grade scale just before the final was really helpful. |
| **-** | Knows material |
| **-** | gets to personally know the students, gets everyone involved in class, homework assignments are fair, open book/note tests, real world examples |
| **-** | Relating problems to real world examples |
| **-** | He gives way too much homework. I normally don't say that either. |
| **-** | He is very organized and very well prepared for class. Everyone is scared to be called on so they make sure to pay attention and try to keep up with the reading. The assignments are given well in advanced. |
| **-** | Professor Fricker does a good job of prioritizing the material that the class would like to review as the first topic covered in lecture. |
| **-** | Love the way the class is set up. Homeworks really make you think and apply what you learn in class to real world situations. |
| **-** | I liked that students where captains of material. I also liked the selection method of asking question, with picking people at random. |
| **-** | The exams are graded fairly |
| **-** | Good teacher |
| **-** | Does his best at teaching a subject that relies heavily on equations and memorization of rules. |
| **-** | I really like the music that is played before class and the outline of what is going to be covered in class that day. I also like how this professor uses real world examples or shares his experiences. That really helps to show you how what you are learning is applied in what engineers do. |
| **-** | I definitely felt motivated by the passion that Prof. Fricker has for transportation. I didn't mind having homework due every week, even though some of the questions really required you to dig into the reading. And although they required a fair amount of outside class work, the bicyclists counting assignments made it feel as though the class had real world applications. |
| **-** | I enjoyed the class examples. I also liked that you knew, or tried to know everyone in class. It always kept me on my toes to make sure I was ready with the correct answer. Also made me feel more than just a face in the crowd to you. |
| **-** | Very passionate |
| **-** | Good amount of examples were helpful |
| **-** | I enjoy that professor Fricker shows interest in his students' lives. He knows everyone by name, where they are from, and their hobbies. He is a really kind person. |
| **-** | I appreciate your enthusiasm for this class. |
| **-** | You are very well prepared for class and you bring enthusiasm to subjects that are at times mundane. |
| **-** | I really enjoyed that the teacher made a constant effort to make the class as interesting as possible. It was a very pleasant atmosphere and class. |
| **-** | I enjoyed doing the out of class assignments (for example, bike counting). It was interesting while also pertaining to the subject at hand. |
| **-** | He really wants you to get transportation and understand the topics.  He used a lot of real life examples which was great.  I liked how we had the option of working in groups for homework.  Good music before class  Really good teacher |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q20 - Make a suggestion(s) for improving the course (a criticism alone is not helpful; tell your instructor how you would fix any problem).** | |
| **Faculty:** | **Fricker, Jon D** |
| **Response Rate:** | **50.00**%   (**25** of **50**) |

https://courseval.itap.purdue.edu/etw/eti/spacer.gif

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **-** | The grading on the exams was too harsh. The answers were graded as right or wrong, there was no gray area partial credit. Although this works in mathematics, this style of grading seems unreasonable in an engineering course. |
| **-** | Examples seem very random and sporadic, making it difficult to take down notes and a continuous, detailed form. This becomes especially a problem when exam questions then focus in detail on questions that were mentioned in a very aloof, scattered fashion in class. I realize there is merit in trying to give a one-up to students who attend class on a regular basis, but many of the questions that seem to be shooting for this purpose seem to be getting missed by many of the students, in fact, present in every class. Also, in many of the problems on homeworks and exams, the wording is often very ambiguous and unclear, making it very difficult to assess what is being asked. It often feels like very open-ended questions are asked with very specific answers in mind that are not conveyed clearly to the students answering the questions.  **If HW wording is unclear, give me a chance to clarify it. I was surprised how few students came to my office to ask questions.** |
| **-** | Make the homeworks less vague, don't expect us to have read, students are way too busy to read on time  **This is a big problem, because students who come to class having at least glanced at the assigned reading are better prepared to understand what is said and ask questions on what I may not have guessed needed to be covered.** |
| **-** | exams are extremely difficult even if material is known well |
| **-** | More examples similar to homework assignments during lecture and less story-telling, please. |
| **-** | The class had good examples. However, yeah, we aren't going to read the book and there is a lot of information... all of which have a corresponding hw problem. A lot of it I learned going this is just the set value for the problem and plugged and chugged instead of learning it thoroughly and why the values used were used.  **I wish I could ask you what you mean. Do you want to make up (or acquire) your own value instead of a “set value”?** |
| **-** | Less homework. |
| **-** | The basic examples shown in class need to become more involve and reflect the homework problems. Try to understand no one else lives and breathes transportation like Dr. Fricker. |
| **-** | The exams seemed too difficult compared to the homework assignments because there were some questions that weren't 100% clear. |
| **-** | Too many homeworks, made for a lot of work. |
| **-** | I would have liked the slides at the being **(beginning?)** of class on the website. I found them helpful for knowing the relevant equations and material. They are a quick reference, for studying and doing homework. You still may have to go to the book to find out what the equation is used for or what the symbols mean but you could at least know what equation number you are looking for. **The objectives are shortened versions of those shown in the book and on the day’s web page.** |
| **-** | Using slides for this class might be really helpful **PowerPoint? No way!**  Exams are really hard |
| **-** | Boring and really silly course |
| **-** | Homework due dates were very unpredictable. Maybe it's more realistic to keep things unpredictable, but I do prefer a more regular homework schedule. |
| **-** | Notes that students could access from the lectures would be useful when doing assignments. Although the tests are open book, the questions are often much too specific for most students to answer. This instructor seemingly looks for things to count off for on homework even if the answer is acceptable. This instructor needs to find a way to be more engaging in class because the material is so dry and uninteresting. I would never take a class with this professor again.  **I also teach CE560, CE566, and CE512.** |
| **-** | Some of the test questions seemed to be worth a lot of points for just writing down a few words or were too long for the time allotted. I also suggest giving out less homeworks, just because the instructor had extra time to develop more homeworks this semester doesn't necessarily mean we have extra time to do them. Class was much harder than I thought an introduction class would be. |
| **-** | I have a few suggestions for Prof. Fricker in the future:  1. I was not a big fan of his tests. It seemed that a lot of the questions that he tested us on were very subjective and it seemed like your score on particular questions had to do with your opinion. I feel that more calculation style questions would be more appropriate.  **I wish you had provided an example. Some test questions had required that judgment be applied and supported, but pure opinion was not asked for this year. On 2010 Test 3, I asked students if they liked roundabouts, but they also had to give a rational engineering reason why.**  2. His attendance quizzes that were few and far between did not accurately test whether students were at lecture. I remember one of them where almost every one ended up with around 20% on the quiz, because nobody knew what his questions were asking. I attended every lecture except one, so I feel that simply taking attendance would be a better measure.  **Five quizzes counted toward your grade. Q1 = diagnosis/prescription of I65 workzone; Q2 = bring in topics for Test1 review; Q3 = pre-announced quiz on the six topics in Chap 8; Q4 = Transit riding and if you voted; Q5 = online survey of HWs, etc. Which quizzes were “attendance quizzes”?**  3. I wish the class dealt with more with non-highway transportation modes. It seemed that at the most, we would spend three days on a few topics other than highways. It seemed like half the semester we were dealing with cars.  **We had chapters on Transit, Airports, and Freight (10 classes). Chapters 1, 4, 5, and 13 (10 classes) were generic, leaving 6 of 13 chapters on highways. It’s a good thing you did not take the Spring semester version of CE361. It is totally Highway Engineering.**  4. His presentation style, I thought, was not the most effective. I think his use of the overhead projector is obsolete. He sometimes would use colors on the chalkboard that were hard to read. It was sometimes hard to pay attention when he would only stand up in front of the class. Not everyone is a auditory learner. I think that having more visuals would be effective.  **Without using an overhead with erasable markers, how would I demonstrate use of (for example) pavement design nomographs or windroses? Please tell me how. I suppose I can always use more visuals, but even after a student drew a 2x4 barge tow on the board (and I drew another one) in class, I had a surprising number of students ask me during Test 3 what a 1x5 tow looked like.** |
| **-** | I thought the tests were not extremely fair. I did well on all of the math parts, but I had trouble with the written sections. I was at all the classes, but I just cannot write and absorb everything that is said. The points I thought you brought up on the tests were sometimes very minute. **Almost always, the short answer or essay parts of a test are based on things I emphasized in class by repetition (a stop sign needs an ordinance) or by class participation (rail car “knuckles”).** |
| **-** | do a more thorough recap of all "topics in the reading during the lecture. I understand the reading better after having a general idea of what the theory is from class. **Is this a good use of class time? I should tell the students who did not do the assigned reading what they did not read? Some of the material in the reading may need to be clarified, but it builds on the easier material that should have been read.** |
| **-** | The textbook is not easy to read and repeatedly uses terms or variables that are not clearly defined.  **Didn’t the glossary help? Did you ask me for clarification in class or by email? I can fix the textbook if you give me a chance.**  The book is confusing and hard to follow because too many tables and pictures break up the text portions and make it hard to read.  **There are a few places where exhibits disrupt the flow (e.g., p. 380-381), which I hope to fix if I can create a second edition. This must be a matter of taste, because I don’t like long stretches of unbroken text without illustrations.**  The book was written by the instructor, so class lectures are basically the same as reading the book and provide no clarification.  **In most cases, I try to avoid “reading the text” to the students. If you needed clarification, I hope you asked me.**  The instructor seems to treat the class as himself against the students; he often asks trick questions in class to unprepared students and the tests are very very difficult and are at times unfair.  **Sometimes I ask questions with answers so obvious, I assure the student that “this is not a trick question”. For more difficult questions, I may alert the student that it may be “a trick question”, meaning that there will be no shame in being unable to answer correctly, but let’s get the discussion going. I guess you misunderstood me. Maybe others did, too.**  The homweork and tests are very inconsistently graded, and no explanations are ever given for points taken off.  **Didn’t the posted solutions help? Providing personalized comments on so many HWs and Tests would be quite an undertaking.** |
| **-** | I thought the homework was very difficult to figure out on my own, even though I attended class and took accurate notes. I really liked the homework where answers were given for milestones of a problem. That should be given more.  **I agree. It worked well on the one HW I tried it on after it was suggested in class. I should have done it on the Airport HW.** |
| **-** | Some test questions were far too specific. The questions on tests should involve broad topics and specifics should only be involved on topics that were both discussed in class and part of homework problems.  **So, I am not allowed to ask a specific question on any topic not covered in class discussion and a HW problem? What about class discussion or a HW problem? I wish you had given me an example of a question on a broad topic.** |
| **-** | I really do not have any criticism, I don't really know how to do it better. |
| **-** | The exams Prof. Fricker gave were NOT 1 hour exams; they were more like 1.5 to 2 hour exams. There was not enough time to finish each question, and some of the questions that were finished were finished hastily. Please increase the test time and you will see an increase in the average exam score from just above 50 to probably in the 70s. |
| **-** | 1) Don't use test compensation days at the beginning of the semester. We need those for dead week.  **The comp days were days that I had to be out of town. They were not moveable.**  2) The homework directions for a few assignments were very confusing. (ex: ESALS).  3) I don't think coming to class asking "what should i cover?" really helps us. You should go over topics that you know are difficult for students, topics that will appear on an exam, or even do example problems that are similar to homework problems. **You may recall that I did take note of cases where students commonly make mistakes (e.g., the straight line to the Rigid Pavement design grid), but getting guidance from the captains or other prepared students helps me meet the needs of those students. The unprepared students get to “go along for the ride”.**  4) I ended up liking the airport section a lot, maybe going over the whole chapter would be more interesting. I don't think CE 563 goes over terminal design.  5) Maybe not spend so much time on automobiles and highways. I know they're a big part of transportation but after 7 weeks of that stuff it kind of got boring. Maybe spend a few weeks for each kind of mode. I felt a lot of students were the most engaged when we talked about high speed rail and railroads, not highways.  **We had chapters on Transit, Airports, and Freight (10 classes). Chapters 1, 4, 5, and 13 (10 classes) were generic, leaving 6 of 13 chapters on highways. It’s a good thing you did not take the Spring semester version of CE361. It is totally Highway Engineering.**  6) It wasn't fair for us to have homework due during deadweek. Maybe instead of 13 homeworks throughout the class, have only 10. And don't have homework due during a test week for CE 361. |