



Course and Instructor Evaluation Summary Department of Computer Science and Engineering

McAuley, Julian John
CSE 158 - Recommender Sys&Web Mining (A)
Fall Quarter 2020

Number of Students Enrolled: 396
Number of Evaluations Submitted: 101

PLEASE COMMENT ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. Your class level is

1 (1.0%):	Freshman
0 (0.0%):	Sophomore
6 (5.9%):	Junior
94 (93.1%):	Senior
0 (0.0%):	Graduate
0 (0.0%):	Extension
0 (0.0%):	Visitor

2. Your reason for taking this class is

72 (74.2%):	Major
9 (9.3%):	Minor
0 (0.0%):	Gen. Ed.
12 (12.4%):	Elective
4 (4.1%):	Interest
4:	[No Response]

3. What grade do you expect in this class?

46 (47.4%):	A
40 (41.2%):	B
9 (9.3%):	C
1 (1.0%):	D
0 (0.0%):	F
1 (1.0%):	P
0 (0.0%):	NP
4:	[No Response]

GENERAL QUESTIONS

4. I learned a great deal from this course.

4 (4.0%):	Strongly Disagree
7 (7.1%):	Disagree
10 (10.1%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
47 (47.5%):	Agree
31 (31.3%):	Strongly Agree
0 (0.0%):	Not Applicable
2:	[No Response]

5. How many hours a week do you spend studying outside of class on average?

0 (0.0%):	0-1
3 (3.1%):	2-3
13 (13.3%):	4-5
21 (21.4%):	6-7
24 (24.5%):	8-9
16 (16.3%):	10-11
11 (11.2%):	12-13
5 (5.1%):	14-15
0 (0.0%):	16-17
2 (2.0%):	18-19
3 (3.1%):	20 or more
3:	[No Response]

6. How often do you attend this course?

15 (15.5%):	Very Rarely
37 (38.1%):	Some of the Time
45 (46.4%):	Most of the Time
4:	[No Response]

COURSE MATERIAL CSE 158

7. The course material is intellectually stimulating.

2 (2.2%):	Strongly Disagree
7 (7.5%):	Disagree
7 (7.5%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
46 (49.5%):	Agree
31 (33.3%):	Strongly Agree
0 (0.0%):	Not Applicable
8:	[No Response]

8. Assignments promote learning.

5 (5.2%):	Strongly Disagree
6 (6.2%):	Disagree
5 (5.2%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
47 (48.5%):	Agree
34 (35.1%):	Strongly Agree
0 (0.0%):	Not Applicable
4:	[No Response]

9. Required reading is useful.

2 (2.1%): Strongly Disagree
6 (6.2%): Disagree
20 (20.6%): Neither Agree nor Disagree
15 (15.5%): Agree
12 (12.4%): Strongly Agree
42 (43.3%): Not Applicable
4: [No Response]

10. This course is difficult relative to others.

1 (1.0%): Strongly Disagree
5 (5.2%): Disagree
21 (21.6%): Neither Agree nor Disagree
39 (40.2%): Agree
31 (32.0%): Strongly Agree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
4: [No Response]

11. Exams are representative of the course material.

6 (6.2%): Strongly Disagree
9 (9.3%): Disagree
13 (13.4%): Neither Agree nor Disagree
49 (50.5%): Agree
18 (18.6%): Strongly Agree
2 (2.1%): Not Applicable
4: [No Response]

12. Do you recommend this course overall?

79 (79.8%): Yes
20 (20.2%): No
2: [No Response]

13. Course CSE 158:

- The hardest class I take this quarter.
- During the quarter I took this class, it was joined together with the graduate course 258. I think this made the class harder than what it should have been. There was no prerequisite for a machine learning class for this course, only one statistics course. In this class, we used no knowledge of the statistics prerequisite I took, and upon entering the class the professor said that a background of some sort in machine learning was useful, but not necessary to succeed in the class. However, throughout the class this did not seem right. I felt that as it was a course with graduate students the professor did not always take the most time or do the best job of explaining more basic concepts. There were a lot of complicated math equations that were extremely hard to understand and it just felt like I was not prepared for how difficult this class would be.
- The grading policies of this course does not encourage learning at all, since all we were being graded on are 4 homework and 2 assignments, and each point deducted on homeworks and assignments corresponds to 1 percent overall grade of the course. Also, project1 grading criteria

is based on how out homework rank against the entire class, rather than how well we understand the knowledge, inducing unnecessary competitiveness and stress.

- I felt like the assignments made us only make predictive models and did not help us learn techniques specific to recommender systems.
- I think it is way too similar to CSE 258, especially since it cannot be petitioned for graduate credit. We have the same lectures, the same midterms, and the homework assignments are almost exactly the same.
- This course is the most frustrating course I have taken in UCSD ever. The course design is unreasonable and doesn't promote peer learning. I barely learned anything from watching the lecture and solve most of the homework question with the knowledge I learned in COGS108. I will strongly recommend anyone who want to take this course to find a different option. COGS108 is honestly much better. If I learned anything from this course, it would be to never take any course related to this field. Taking this course is the worst choice I have made in 2020. This course is so discouraging and have made up most of my stress this quarter that I almost want to give up Computer Science and go studying visual art. The worst part is that the context of this course is not difficult at all but just because of the unreasonable course design.
- recommender systems and ML is useful
- The worst class at UCSD. Nitpicking tutors and TAs who design rubrics contradictory to their answers on piazza and to the writeup, and take points randomly without explaining why. They just say that the points they take off are not "significant" so they refuse to give points back, but they do not explain what's wrong with my submission.
To alleviate awkwardness, the instructors overwrite or even delete piazza posts where they give wrong answers to students.
- interesting course but barely about web mining and recommender systems and more like an intro ml course.
Goes way too fast and topics are barely introduced so it is quite difficult to keep up without any prior ml experience.
Assignments are interesting in theory but not really good. They are way too open ended and are designed to favor experienced students even though there is no ml pre-req for this class.
Like you can ask for help from TA's but not with the specifics of implementing models which sucks because this hurts students without much experience.

Also strongly dislike having this class combined with cse258. some topics are only relevant for grad level

- Course is fun.
- Excellent runthrough of how real life recommender systems are developed, and how they function. Course material was intellectually stimulating and I genuinely feel like a more rounded programmer after taking 158. Grad school material was made accessible to those students who had extra time to pursue those aspects of assignments.
- I think the material covered in this class is very interesting and provides a good introduction of machine learning techniques to students who might not have been exposed to it before
- I thought the class could've been better as far as homework write-ups and some logistics. For example, homework writeups were always never fully clear which made it difficult as I always had to ask a question for piazza. Also, the disabling of private posts made it even more difficult as I would have to go to office hours for help. Lastly, running lecture on Twitch was not a good idea as everyone would spam in the chat and others not even in the class from outside would join in.

- This course taught me a lot about ML and its core focus of text mining and recommendation. I learned a lot about data science as well.
- hard asf course
- I feel like a lot of data science classes are really dependent on your previous experiences with data science classes and python. I always feel a little out of my element in python classes because so many other students really know how to use python and data science python tools.
- I recommend taking CSE 158 after taking other AI/ML classes here at UCSD. It would make CSE 158 a lot easier and less cumbersome.

14. Exams/Quizzes/Papers:

- The exam is very long. The rubric is super weird that it takes points off for something we didn't do and was not asked by the question. For example, there's a question asking us to compare two regression models, and I got 1 point off because I didn't mention a third model, which is not even mentioned in the question. I sent a piazza post asking why we need to include a third model as it's not mentioned in the question, an instructor replied that the rubric is just designed that way, and that they need to give awards to students who did mention a third model; I copied and pasted the original question on the midterm and told the instructors that it's not reasonable to take points off for something we didn't do and the question didn't force us to do, then the instructor deleted the post.
- The midterm exam is too hard. I know since it is open book and 24 hours, but it is still too hard. Also, I spend a whole day on it and sleep for only two hours that day. I don't think that is the form professor and students want for an exam.
- Assignment 2 would have been really really stressful if I did it by myself and I normally do assignments by myself because it's really hard to make friends in the CS department, especially later in your education.
- I hated the 24 hour midterm. It's ridiculous. We are literally doing timed PA.
- There was one midterm exam which was mostly standard fare. It was delivered as a homework assignment meant to be completed in 24 hours, which is one of the best options for evaluations given our asynchronous nature currently. The two other major assignments consisted of a competition, which was a fun and engaging way to make students quickly draft and iteratively improve their own systems with the information they have been given (although directly tying performance to grade leaves me slightly uneasy, as it means not every student has the opportunity to score high; introducing artificial scarcity into grades tends to rub me the wrong way), and a final paper, which was an excellent final project and a good introduction into the formal writing world for recommender systems, as it required students to interface with the wider writing in the field to complete.
- The midterm is really really hard. I pulled an all nighter and spent 20 hours working on it and still didn't get a good grade. I know some people in class do well but I really don't feel the help and attention the teaching staff is trying to give. All the questions are always phrased in such a vague way that there will always be many Piazza posts asking about the same question for clarification. Students have to COMPETE with each other to get a good grade for the Assignment 1. This is so stressful and makes me feel so useless after because no matter how hard I try or how many hours I put, I can't seem to reach the top. Way to promote a healthy learning environment in the middle of a global pandemic.
- I liked the format of a coding/understanding exam that we had this quarter. It felt very representative of what we were supposed to learn in addition to the material that we had in our homework.

- The midterm is too time consuming. Even though it has 24hr, it is not like we have not thing to do during this 24hr. The exam is designed as to use all 24hr and we can only finish it without sleep or eating or doing anything else. The rubric is ridiculous that it required us to do thing that is not a part of the question.
The assignment wording is very ambiguous that required students to read every post on piazza to finally figure out the meaning. The TA/Tutor's responds on assignment interpretation are irresponsible and unprofessional that I doubted if they even read the questions. The competition in Assignment1 discourage the peer learning and made the classroom a dark forest that everyone are enemies. The fact that we have to run 160k data is unfair because some of us have more powerful computer that can get the result faster and improve the code more efficiently while the other can suffer from bad internet connect and dead kernel. I have waited for 3 hr and still get no result.
- The midterm was a take-home midterm like a homework assignment. It was terrible. It was supposed to take 3-4 hours, but instead took around 10-12 hours due to the difficulty of the questions and the feeling to be through with answers to very vague questions, it was stressful and not a good measure for a midterm
- The midterm was okay although I found some questions unnecessary and the midterm was too long.

15. Reading [title(s) and comments]:

- I don't feel like there were enough example code of like what tools in python to use and like not enough overview. There's just a bunch to sift through and the equation explanations don't feel very connected to the example code.
- Most of the recommended reading was the papers or articles concerned with anecdotes used in class to illustrate principles. They did their job.

INSTRUCTOR Julian McAuley

16. Instructor displays a proficient command of the material.

2 (2.2%):	Strongly Disagree
1 (1.1%):	Disagree
2 (2.2%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
31 (33.7%):	Agree
56 (60.9%):	Strongly Agree
0 (0.0%):	Not Applicable
9:	[No Response]

17. Instructor is well prepared for classes.

2 (2.1%):	Strongly Disagree
2 (2.1%):	Disagree
4 (4.2%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
31 (32.3%):	Agree
57 (59.4%):	Strongly Agree
0 (0.0%):	Not Applicable
5:	[No Response]

18. Instructor's speech is clear and audible.

2 (2.1%):	Strongly Disagree
2 (2.1%):	Disagree
6 (6.3%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
27 (28.4%):	Agree
58 (61.1%):	Strongly Agree
0 (0.0%):	Not Applicable
6:	[No Response]

19. Instructor explains the course material well.

3 (3.2%):	Strongly Disagree
6 (6.3%):	Disagree
12 (12.6%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
31 (32.6%):	Agree
43 (45.3%):	Strongly Agree
0 (0.0%):	Not Applicable
6:	[No Response]

20. Lectures hold your attention.

4 (4.2%):	Strongly Disagree
14 (14.7%):	Disagree
16 (16.8%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
35 (36.8%):	Agree
25 (26.3%):	Strongly Agree
1 (1.1%):	Not Applicable
6:	[No Response]

21. Instructor's lecture style facilitates note-taking.

4 (4.2%):	Strongly Disagree
13 (13.7%):	Disagree
23 (24.2%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
28 (29.5%):	Agree
25 (26.3%):	Strongly Agree
2 (2.1%):	Not Applicable
6:	[No Response]

22. Instructor shows concern for students' learning.

6 (6.3%):	Strongly Disagree
4 (4.2%):	Disagree
11 (11.6%):	Neither Agree nor Disagree
44 (46.3%):	Agree
30 (31.6%):	Strongly Agree
0 (0.0%):	Not Applicable
6:	[No Response]

23. Instructor promotes appropriate questions/discussion.

2 (2.1%): Strongly Disagree
4 (4.2%): Disagree
13 (13.7%): Neither Agree nor Disagree
34 (35.8%): Agree
41 (43.2%): Strongly Agree
1 (1.1%): Not Applicable
6: [No Response]

24. Instructor is accessible outside of class.

2 (2.1%): Strongly Disagree
2 (2.1%): Disagree
16 (16.7%): Neither Agree nor Disagree
34 (35.4%): Agree
32 (33.3%): Strongly Agree
10 (10.4%): Not Applicable
5: [No Response]

25. Instructor starts and finishes class on time.

2 (2.1%): Strongly Disagree
3 (3.2%): Disagree
6 (6.3%): Neither Agree nor Disagree
40 (42.1%): Agree
40 (42.1%): Strongly Agree
4 (4.2%): Not Applicable
6: [No Response]

26. Instructor is effective in promoting academic integrity.

2 (2.1%): Strongly Disagree
1 (1.1%): Disagree
10 (10.5%): Neither Agree nor Disagree
40 (42.1%): Agree
39 (41.1%): Strongly Agree
3 (3.2%): Not Applicable
6: [No Response]

27. The instructor practiced effective teaching strategies that acknowledged and valued differences among students, including differences of race and gender identity.

3 (3.2%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
16 (17.0%): Neither Agree nor Disagree
34 (36.2%): Agree
33 (35.1%): Strongly Agree
8 (8.5%): Not Applicable
7: [No Response]

28. Instructor Julian McAuley:

- The professor is very prepared for class and does take his time to read through questions in the chat as we go through the slides. The math for some of the algorithms can be a bit dry at times. He also does do a good job of preparing us for the homeworks and the assignments. There is plenty of basic code he has that is available to help students with them or at least start them.
- The baby stream was ??????
- best stream quality @ucsd

only major gripe is that prof is way too stiff with deadlines. like wont even consider pushing a deadline back to accommodate students which is very disappointing.

- The instructor made the perhaps bold decision to hold lectures via Twitch instead of Zoom. This incentivized more interaction via the chat feature (Zoom's chat feature is rather out of the way, and mentally not something most instructors keep in mind, whereas Twitch's chat system is half of a whole system) and, after a rocky start (chat moderators are essential on Twitch), ended up being a vital tool for communicating with the professor that lead to much more interactive engagement with the class than could even be done in person. I do not recommend every professor move off of Zoom onto Twitch - but it would certainly benefit many of them. Aside from this, prof. McAuley was an engaging and at times genuinely funny professor. I generally have great trouble holding my attention to lecture for 80 minutes, but found the task considerably easier for his lectures. Much better than most of the CSE lectures I have had the pleasure (or displeasure, Cottrell) of attending.
- The twitch streams felt very nice since I was able to have some notification system on when lectures were being held. However, I didn't like how sometimes there were ads that would pop up seemingly randomly, and I would miss some portion of the lecture. Other than that, the professor did a great job in teaching and helping understand the material and made the class feel a bit more interactive.
- Cool teacher. I feel like he is too smart for me.
- He is a nice professor.
- He's a nice professor though the way he runs the course is questionable in my opinion. Also, his choice with the assignments and grading I found a bit unfair.
- He is a nice person, but not a great professor. His lectures are always filled by baby cries and are noisy, and he didn't explain concepts to us; rather, he just told us the concept and tried to let us remember the concept without even understanding it. Besides, the competition thing seems to tell us to not "start early, start often", as even if we start early enough, when our score is competed by other classmates, we'll have to start again for better prediction.
- I was extremely disappointed with the way this class was run. The professor showed no empathy whatsoever towards his students. It is an extremely difficult quarter for EVERYONE because of COVID. Despite this, the professor showed no flexibility whatsoever. For example, the Monday before Thanksgiving there was an assignment due and also there was another assignment due the Monday after Thanksgiving. This would mean students would probably have to work on these assignments when they are supposed to be taking a break and relaxing with their families. This quarter is already extremely stressful on students (and professors) and I understand that there is a certain amount of curriculum we need to get through, but when some students asked the professor to push back the due date by a day or two so we would not have to do too much work over the holiday, he refused. I found this to be very inconsiderate because we as students now have to take time away from our families to work on assignments when we should be taking a break to deal with the general burn out that everyone experiences with

online learning. In conclusion, I was extremely disheartened by this professor's complete lack of empathy and consideration for his students.

- Is a good professor with a great command of the course material and has a good structure over the class.
- I know the opinion about this may be diverse, but I think it would be more helpful if the professor can provide more code examples during the lecture. But overall professor McAuley is great!
- Adequate professor. I felt he did not do a good enough job tailoring the class towards undergrad students who had no ML experience, which was not required, and made the class more advanced and to the speed of graduate students and those with ML experience.

This made the class very difficult for me, as well as other undergraduate students that discussed their concerns/confusion in the chat during lectures.

- I won't recommend Professor McAuley or CSE 158 even to the enemies I hated the most. Taking CSE158 with Professor McAuley is the worst decision I have made in 2020. It has devastated my mental health that I started having symptoms of depression and cannot my tear every time I think of this course.
- Professor McAuley is an excellent instructor. I wish he taught other classes besides 158/258 as I'd love to have another class with him.

29. Do you recommend this professor overall?

84 (84.8%): Yes
15 (15.2%): No
2: [No Response]

Custom Question 5

30. Please provide examples of the ways the instructor did or did not create a learning environment that welcomed, challenged, and supported all students.

- I know teachers like when students ask questions and are curious, but it's stressful when most of the questions I don't even understand. I guess that is also just a facet of a data science class where everyone has vastly difference experience in it.
- Aforementioned use of Twitch to create a hyper-responsive learning environment that most other professors fumble through doing on Zoom. Periodic discussion of ideas for the different assignments to help give students direction. Quick turnaround on grades.
- The instructor made Assignment1 graded heavily based on one's ranking in peer competition. That heavily discourage peer learning. I understand that the instructor might want to use the ranking to push independent learning but this benefit is outweighed by the negative effects. The competition added pressure on everyone. I have worked for hours to improve 40 for the ranking and found that my rank drop 50 when I waked up next morning. It just makes me feel that hard working is meaningless and worthless.
- The homework is so time consuming and vague. Piazza clarification is always needed for EVERY assignment. The aspect of competing for your grades is just so stressful and totally unsupportive. Even though I thought I did well, grades are always having such a high and strict rubric that you never get enough credit for your work. Cant wait to see what the instructors nitpick on our final paper which my team and I spent weeks working on it.

- He did NOT create a learning environment "that welcomed, challenged, and supported all students." by asking us to submit our model prediction result onto Kaggle for competition AND relating our final letter grade to it instead of as an extra credit. Some of us were able to afford much more expensive and hence much more powerful cloud servers which allowed them to run multiple trials of their model before making the final submission which I was not able to do so.
- The class was hosted on Twitch, which had the unfortunate side effect of forcing students to sit through ads before watching recordings or live lectures. While I understand the necessity of a platform that can support a class as large as this one, I don't think showing ads before lecture is a good practice to promote, and even though the professor and school did not profit from it this time I am concerned that the possibility has some dangerous implications for the future.
- In his lectures, his voice is always overridden by baby cries. It's super distracting to hear baby cries when studying.
- He wasn't very lenient or understanding of the need to be flexible with the situations and need of students, but otherwise was good at helping students with understanding the course.
- I thought making quite a big portion of our grade on one of the assignments be based on us competing against other students was harsh.

Please note that any responses or comments submitted by evaluators do not necessarily reflect the opinions of instructors, Computer Science and Engineering, Academic Affairs, or UC San Diego. Responses and comments are made available without auditing or editing, and they may not be modified or deleted, to ensure that each evaluator has an opportunity to express his or her opinion.