

**Graduate Course Evaluation for Julian John McAuley
Department of Computer Science and Engineering**

CSE 258 - Recommender Sys&Web Mining
Section ID 19030
Section Number A00
Fall 2020

Number of Evaluations Submitted: 73
Number of Students Enrolled: 231

1. The Instructor displayed proficient command of the material.

63 (86.3%): Strongly Agree
10 (13.7%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable

2. The Instructor was well-prepared for class.

58 (80.6%): Strongly Agree
14 (19.4%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
1: [No Response]

3. The Instructor's voice was clear and audible.

62 (86.1%): Strongly Agree
9 (12.5%): Agree
1 (1.4%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
1: [No Response]

4. The Instructor was accessible to students outside of class (office hours, e-mail, etc.).

55 (77.5%): Strongly Agree
11 (15.5%): Agree
5 (7.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
2: [No Response]

5. The Instructor was approachable, courteous and showed interest and concern for students' learning and understanding.

55 (76.4%): Strongly Agree
15 (20.8%): Agree
1 (1.4%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
1 (1.4%): Not Applicable
1: [No Response]

6. The Instructor presented material in an intellectually stimulating way that gave students deeper insight into the material.

53 (74.6%): Strongly Agree
13 (18.3%): Agree
4 (5.6%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
1 (1.4%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
2: [No Response]

7. The Instructor promoted and encouraged questions and discussion.

57 (79.2%): Strongly Agree
10 (13.9%): Agree
4 (5.6%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
1 (1.4%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
1: [No Response]

8. The Instructor organized class activities in a way that promoted learning.

49 (68.1%): Strongly Agree
15 (20.8%): Agree
6 (8.3%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
2 (2.8%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
1: [No Response]

9. The Instructor provided feedback (written/oral) in a way that promoted learning.

46 (63.9%): Strongly Agree
18 (25.0%): Agree
6 (8.3%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
2 (2.8%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
1: [No Response]

10. The Instructor is actively helpful when students have difficulty with course material.

51 (70.8%): Strongly Agree
16 (22.2%): Agree
4 (5.6%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
1 (1.4%): Not Applicable
1: [No Response]

11. The Instructor interacted well with students and treated them with respect and courtesy.

58 (80.6%): Strongly Agree
13 (18.1%): Agree
1 (1.4%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
1: [No Response]

12. The Instructor was clear about course expectations.

52 (72.2%): Strongly Agree
17 (23.6%): Agree
2 (2.8%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
1 (1.4%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
1: [No Response]

13. The Instructor was clear about standards for evaluation.

50 (69.4%): Strongly Agree
17 (23.6%): Agree
2 (2.8%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
2 (2.8%): Disagree
1 (1.4%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
1: [No Response]

14. I would recommend this instructor overall.

49 (69.0%): Strongly Agree
22 (31.0%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
2: [No Response]

15. What is your overall rating of the Instructor?

52 (72.2%): Excellent
19 (26.4%): Above Average
1 (1.4%): Average
0 (0.0%): Below Average
0 (0.0%): Poor
1: [No Response]

16. General comments about the Instructor's performance

Please keep your comments constructive and professional, abiding by the Principles of Community

- Awesome lecture and instructor!
- Best class I've taken at UCSD! Professor McAuley made Machine Learning seem so easily-understandable and accessible! Coming into the class, I was really anxious and nervous, but by the end of it I was confident and had learned technical skills that were super important in the real-world. Thank you, professor!
- Classes were a bit slow and boring
- Expectations for grading are not clear. Instructions and posts are oftentimes framed in a lenient fashion, but then TAs will dock lots of points off for minor mistakes. Assignment 1 (Kaggle challenge) is stressful and grading is arbitrary (especially the cutoff to define what makes a score "significantly" better than the baseline). Expectations are unclear, and TAs made it even more difficult.
- Great class!

- Great class, really enjoyed it.
- I do not like the Twitch format of this class. There are many off-topic discussions, and the instructor is behind schedule.
- I think he did well at teaching the material. He answered questions from the chat regularly.
- I think the professor can go deeper into the proof of the theorem.
- Professor is extremely kind, funny, and has great grasp of the material.
- Professor McAuley was a clear speaker. I liked how he used the green screen so that we could see both him and the slides at the same time, mimicking the experience one would get in-person. He used clear slides and I was able to understand most of the topics.
- The professor understands students very well such as procrastination and tech complaints. But sometimes he responded not positively. For example, when students complaint about technical difficulties on Twitch such as ads and chat bomb distractions, he first questioned these were individual exceptions rather than starting acting early to look into these problems and solve them.
- Twitch is the least interactive platform for online course delivery.
- Very fun and easy to understand in his lectures. He was also easy to reach and was always quick to respond.
- Very good prof. Extremely patient and goes out of his way to answer students' questions. He is also very clear and reasonable about the expectations of the course.
- Very nice and humble instructor. Excels in explaining AI concepts in simpler terms so that everybody could understand the course on a basic level. Very clearly separates what we need and do not need to know for this course.

17. The course material was intellectually stimulating.

49 (69.0%): Strongly Agree
 18 (25.4%): Agree
 4 (5.6%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 0 (0.0%): Disagree
 0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
 0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
 2: [No Response]

18. The materials for the course (textbooks, handouts, etc.) were useful and well organized.

46 (64.8%): Strongly Agree
 19 (26.8%): Agree
 4 (5.6%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 1 (1.4%): Disagree
 0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
 1 (1.4%): Not Applicable
 2: [No Response]

19. Grading was constructive and assisted learning.

45 (64.3%): Strongly Agree
16 (22.9%): Agree
6 (8.6%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
2 (2.9%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
1 (1.4%): Not Applicable
3: [No Response]

20. What is your reason for taking this class?

15 (21.1%): Core Course Requirement
16 (22.5%): Subject Area Requirement
26 (36.6%): Elective
14 (19.7%): Interest
2: [No Response]

21. What were the particular strengths of this course?

- A fun introduction to many AI concepts and recommender systems. Homeworks are light but educative, projects are heavier but are educative and fun nonetheless. Twitch instruction was very nice in my experience.
- Assignments are great for coding practices.
- I learned a lot of stuff about recommender systems and text mining.
- I think a strength of this course is that it gave us an opportunity to code and practically apply the concepts we were learning.
- Interesting material and assignments
- Know basic of recommendation system.
- Professor McAuley's patience in answering all the students' questions during class, clearly walking through all the concepts with interesting and relatable examples, and the interesting and useful homeworks.
- Relevant projects
- Strong hands on component.
- The assignments and projects taught me a lot about how to use machine learning models on practical problems.
- The course started from the basics and gradually evolved. The homework assignments were all about direct application and reinforced the material.
- The homework assignments go hand in hand with the material being covered. There is also a sense of gradual build up of topics. Also, the midterm was fun in the online format.

- The lectures on Twitch, which made everyone watching anonymous. It made it easier to ask questions and even the professor said there were a lot more questions than usual. He answered the questions effectively. The lectures also went over example code for the concepts he covered, which helped me understand and visualize how everything worked. He also provided many helpful examples on the course webpage and his own Coursera page.
- This course introduces many models related to machine learning especially for recommender system. If you have already had the knowledge of ml, you will find this course very interesting and you could do great on assignments.
- Very applied. I liked all the programming and demos in class. Those were very useful.
- Was well adapted for online learning. Assignments and homework were spread across the 10 weeks well. I especially liked that assignment 2 was due at the beginning of week 10, so that it would not interfere with other finals.

22. What suggestions do you have for making this course more effective?

- Although I had attended every lecture, the last part of the class was difficult for me to follow, especially the case studies. I did not have a good grasp on latent factor models.
- Didn't like having to compete. I understand the purpose and that you technically compete in all classes, but I wasn't a fan of it being so blatant.
- Expectations for grading are not clear. Instructions and posts are oftentimes framed in a lenient fashion, but then TAs will dock lots of points off for minor mistakes. Assignment 1 (Kaggle challenge) is stressful and grading is arbitrary (especially the cutoff to define what makes a score "significantly" better than the baseline). Expectations are unclear, and TAs made it even more difficult. TA selection needs to be more selective, and instructors should align expectations with his TAs.
- Give some large "topics" for the second assignment. It is hard for some students to identify a good task for the assignment.
- I don't have any really.
- I really did not like combining the lectures for 158 & 258. The class seemed more tailored towards undergraduates, which resulted in very limited learning for graduate students. The classes should be split up and made more rigorous for 258 students.

The Professor also spent WAY too much time during lecture answering questions / comments from Twitch chat to the point where it was extremely distracting during some lectures. The professor should have designated times that he answers questions from the chat. And again, splitting 158 & 258 lectures would be beneficial here.

- I think 2 assignments make this otherwise very nice course a bit too heavy, especially in a term with multiple graduate classes. I would say while the Kaggle assignment was great, maybe it should be dropped and students should be encouraged to start assignment 2 early.
- I think another project would be better than a take home mid-term.
- I would have liked to have a bit clearer instruction regarding best practices of developing ML models. E.g. how to choose which models are appropriate, normalization/scaling of data, feature selection.
- Maybe just reduce the weight given to leaderboard rank for the Kaggle competition?

- Nothing I can think of
- Peer pressure for assignment1. We need tons of outside or prior knowledge in order to achieve good scores for the assignment1. If we only use what have learned in class, it does not help a lot. Also, the material after midterm does not have enough exercise and most of the exercise is about first few chapters. For assignment2, to open ended for students who do not have prior experience. Although it is great that we could do whatever we want, it is hard to do something good within limited time and knowledge.
- proof more
- We spent a lot of time in lecture going over the derivations for various models. Prof. McAuley would show us how to take the derivative of the error metric and then go through the math for setting it equal to zero and solving. But these derivations were difficult to follow for two reasons: first, being handwritten and using unfamiliar symbols (I know, we're supposed to know them all already, but I'd forgotten most of them since I hadn't seen them in years), and second, we didn't see many graphical representations of what the math actually looked like. For example, when explaining why sigmoid functions are used in logistic regression instead of linear functions, it would be helpful to see a sigmoid function and see why it fits a 0-or-1 classifier better than a straight line. This would be useful for more complex math as well, but I can't give specific examples because I didn't understand that math very well. It would be helpful to a) give graphical representations of the math so that we know why it's important, b) remind us of what symbols mean as you write them, and perhaps even re-remind us in case we miss it once, and c) perhaps type out derivations instead of hand-writing them. i's and j's were particularly difficult to distinguish.

23. I would recommend this course overall.

47 (65.3%):	Strongly Agree
21 (29.2%):	Agree
1 (1.4%):	Neither Agree Nor Disagree
3 (4.2%):	Disagree
0 (0.0%):	Strongly Disagree
1:	[No Response]

24. What is your overall rating of this course?

49 (68.1%):	Excellent
18 (25.0%):	Above Average
5 (6.9%):	Average
0 (0.0%):	Below Average
0 (0.0%):	Poor
1:	[No Response]

25. What are the most important concepts that you learned in this class that you expect will be useful in the long term?

- All of them
- Applied ml

- How to take a question that might be solvable via ML, and try to solve it.
- I understand why a training, validation, and test sets are necessary when creating a machine learning model.
- Implementation of recommendation algorithms
- Latent factor models, time based models
- Learning from papers not just lecture.
- Reading, parsing, visualizing, and organizing data, supervised learning
- Recommender Systems, Classification, Linear Regression
- recommendation system
- recommender systems techniques
- regression and classification skills
- The core principles behind designing recommender systems

26. Do you have any other comments to add to your evaluation?

Please keep your comments constructive and professional, abiding by the Principles of Community

- I loved the twitch streaming method for lectures!
- Love the piano before Thanksgiving!
- One criticism about the hw: the links to the data were often difficult to use and inconsistent, I know they may have seemed like no big deal, but just getting the correct data/started code downloaded and running often took almost as much time for me as the hw itself
- Overall, professor is great, but I would not recommend the combined course with undergraduates to fellow graduate students.
- Professor is nice and great. There are too much to learn in this course, could delete some topics.
- Take-home midterm - told it would probably take 4 hours, I spent upwards of 8 hours on it. Since I practiced using all the previous in-class tests, I probably would have preferred a in class test. However, I think since the test was take-home and open notes, I was able to do much better on it.
In-person or online - I enjoyed the online format. I do not have to be on campus late at night. While I do like in-person classes, for large classes like this there isn't much benefit for being in-person
Other topics - Would like graph based stuff! The beer dataset was not my favorite.
Assignment 1 - I was stressed by the competition and the lack of clarity of how it would be graded.
Assignment 2 - This was a good length project. Do-able in a week, project suggestions were appreciated but so was the ability to choose a different dataset.

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.