

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

CSE 258 - Recommender Sys&Web Mining
Section ID 61314
Section Number C00
Fall 2021

Number of Evaluations Submitted: 72
Number of Students Enrolled: 171

1. The Instructor displayed proficient command of the material.

57 (85.1%): Strongly Agree
8 (11.9%): Agree
1 (1.5%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
1 (1.5%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
5: [No Response]

2. The Instructor was well-prepared for class.

57 (86.4%): Strongly Agree
8 (12.1%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
1 (1.5%): Disagree
0 (0.0%): Strongly Disagree
6: [No Response]

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

55 (84.6%): Strongly Agree
8 (12.3%): Agree
1 (1.5%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
7: [No Response]

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

55 (84.6%): Strongly Agree
7 (10.8%): Agree
2 (3.1%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
7: [No Response]

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

56 (86.2%): Strongly Agree
8 (12.3%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
7: [No Response]

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

51 (78.5%): Strongly Agree
13 (20.0%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
7: [No Response]

7. The Instructor promoted and encouraged questions and discussion.

51 (78.5%): Strongly Agree
12 (18.5%): Agree
1 (1.5%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
7: [No Response]

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

47 (72.3%): Strongly Agree
17 (26.2%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
7: [No Response]

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

42 (65.6%): Strongly Agree
17 (26.6%): Agree
4 (6.3%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.6%): Strongly Disagree
8: [No Response]

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

49 (75.4%): Strongly Agree
15 (23.1%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
7: [No Response]

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

54 (83.1%): Strongly Agree
10 (15.4%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
7: [No Response]

12. The Instructor was clear about course expectations.

52 (80.0%): Strongly Agree
12 (18.5%): Agree
0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
7: [No Response]

13. The Instructor was clear about standards for evaluation.

47 (72.3%): Strongly Agree
13 (20.0%): Agree
2 (3.1%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
2 (3.1%): Disagree
1 (1.5%): Strongly Disagree
0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
7: [No Response]

14. I would recommend this instructor overall.

58 (80.6%): Strongly Agree
12 (16.7%): Agree
1 (1.4%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%): Disagree
1 (1.4%): Strongly Disagree

15. What is your overall rating of the Instructor?

62 (86.1%): Excellent
8 (11.1%): Above Average
1 (1.4%): Average
0 (0.0%): Below Average
1 (1.4%): Poor

16. General comments about the Instructor's performance

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

- Amazing class! I was very very intimidated about taking the graduate version as an undergraduate, but you explained all the concepts very well. I was worried that the graduate-level stuff on assignments/hw/midterm would be too challenging, but I genuinely felt like I understood even the advanced concepts. As someone with minimal ML experience and not that much experience with Python, this class was amazing: definitely learned a lot of stuff that I can use in my research/projects
- EXCELLENT
- Generally he was doing well!
- Great instructor! Conducted lectures very clearly and answered many questions in class
- Great! Expectations for assignments were a little vague at times, but in general that didn't matter much in the end (I don't think).
- Overall I thought Dr. McAuley did a great job teaching a class of this size and scope. The lecture material always felt very accessible, and he was open to discussion and receptive to students questions. I had to contact him about taking the midterm at a different time and he was incredibly responsible and accommodating which I really appreciated!

- Prof is awesome, and the class is cool too
- Prof. McAuley was awesome! His lectures are always interesting and full of relevant examples and case studies of how the machine learning techniques we are studying have been applied in the real world. He is caring about student's understanding of the material, encouraged friendly competition, and always stays after lecture and takes the time to answer student questions. I enjoyed taking his class this quarter and learned a ton about building predictive models on real datasets.
- Professor McAuley is an extremely courteous and pleasant instructor. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to take his course.
- Thank you for being so easy to reach on Piazza and over email when any issues with the class came up.
- The course is well structured and formatted.
- Well knowledgeable in the complete evolution of the field. Great content and slides.

17. The course material was intellectually stimulating.

44 (69.8%): Strongly Agree
 17 (27.0%): Agree
 1 (1.6%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 0 (0.0%): Disagree
 1 (1.6%): Strongly Disagree
 0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
 9: [No Response]

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

41 (65.1%): Strongly Agree
 18 (28.6%): Agree
 0 (0.0%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 0 (0.0%): Disagree
 1 (1.6%): Strongly Disagree
 3 (4.8%): Not Applicable
 9: [No Response]

19. Grading was constructive and assisted learning.

40 (63.5%): Strongly Agree
 17 (27.0%): Agree
 4 (6.3%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 1 (1.6%): Disagree
 1 (1.6%): Strongly Disagree
 0 (0.0%): Not Applicable
 9: [No Response]

20. What is your reason for taking this class?

20 (32.3%): Core Course Requirement
7 (11.3%): Subject Area Requirement
19 (30.6%): Elective
16 (25.8%): Interest
10: [No Response]

21. What were the particular strengths of this course?

- Content is very unique compared to other ML courses across different universities. Highly practical makes it more attractive.
Initially was not planning to take the course since previous versions had only 3-4 weeks of RecSys content that I didn't know. Modifying the content to have 80% RecSys and introduction to sequential, visual aspects made it very unique.
- Content is very useful, and the professor strikes an excellent balance between theory and practical application: this was a great class and I got a lot out of it. Everything is also explained really well, so nothing really went over my head.
- course content is very good and the teaching is also very good.
- Did a great job of letting you explore the data.
- Homeworks were kept simple allowing students to grasp the fundamentals and allowing students to focus and spend more time on assignments that build directly off the homeworks. Unlike many other courses, the homeworks and assignments served as very good study material for the midterm.
- I liked that new and practical methods in industry were mentioned.
- I love that the course was organized in such a way that stress to achieve a high grade never interfered with my learning.
- Jupyter notebooks setting for homework and example code
- The course was well organized and all the materials were easy to access. Overall it was interesting material too and I enjoyed working with it and thinking about recommender systems.
- The kaggle competition and open ended assignments are awesome. People may complain, but this is what DS is like in the real world.
- The lectures were engaging and the slides were concise and informative. I also liked that Prof. McAuley provided his textbook to supplement the course; I enjoyed reading and felt that it supplemented my understanding of the course content nicely along with the lectures. The course is very hands-on, which I liked a lot since it gave me a lot of practice with building pipelines to make predictions on a dataset and gave me exposure to the strengths and weaknesses of different techniques. I was taking CSE 250A at the same time, so it supplemented a more theory-heavy course with lots of implementation!
- USEFUL, GOOD COURSE, LEARNT A TON

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

- 1. I understand the practicality of the course but maybe, make an assignment mandatory to write latent factor models (the heart of the course) or some variation of it from scratch in TF/PyTorch. This makes the learning more applicable. The access to many one-line use packages may abstract away the concepts learned in the class.
- 2. Somehow introduce Neural CF or ideas behind combining/translating latent factors into embeddings + NN-based approaches like using 1-2 case studies. I am talking about this since the last 3-4 years papers are completely on DL-RecSys and maybe students may have a gap jumping right into these papers to understand them.

Also, I understand it is tough to implement the above two since there are no course prereqs. Maybe make the Basic ML course + Calculus optimization mandatory for this course?

- Add more intuition about methods. Like where to use a method and not the other one and why. Some suggestions for the homeworks were not tested before and they didn't work. A better suggestion could be more useful and teaching.
- assignments can be more harder i think.
- Can't think of anything!
- I found the class got much harder in the second half than the first. I think this was partially because the workload really picked up in the second half and also because the material got more complicated to implement. I thought there were too many assignments close together in the last month of class. If you want us to do a good job on a group final project we need some more uninterrupted time to work on it; not an assignment and homework due while we're trying to work on it. Additionally, the material also became mainly implementing very complicated machine learning and other library's. Although the professor had reference material for this none of it was commented or annotated and sometimes it had errors. So this made it extremely difficult to understand how to use it and I really struggled with the final assignments and homework.
- I know this is a bit out of your control, but picking datasets which work better with some of the ML algorithms we learned rather than the baseline being one of the best models would be useful for getting to apply tools learned in class better.
- It would be nice to see a larger emphasis on regularization.
- NO MORE KAGGLE
- Restructure the course to separate the graduate and undergraduate class.
- Some of the libraries and approaches explored toward the latter part of the course were difficult to get working. It would be beneficial if we were provided an environment (maybe on datahub) where these libraries were pre-installed so students can focus on build from the starter code provided, rather than just trying to get it to work.
- While I really enjoyed the course, I do wish we had more time to complete the assignments. While the assignments were released well in advance for us to get started, there were always other homework assignments due at the same time, which made it difficult to start early on the assignments. I also joined the class at the end of Week 2 due to being on the waitlist for a long time and not being sure I would get in, so I was playing catch-up from the beginning of the course. In the future, it would be nice if we had until start of finals week to submit Assignment 2 and a few more days on Assignment 1; I feel with a bit more time, I could have put more time into producing my best work for the two assignments (in terms of exploring more techniques, playing around with the data more, testing more hypotheses, etc). That being said, I do think the assignments were posted in advance. Some of the directions also for assignment 1 felt a bit

unclear - for example, private vs public leaderboard (I was not sure what the distinction was exactly and how it factored into grading).

23. I would recommend this course overall.

55 (76.4%):	Strongly Agree
15 (20.8%):	Agree
1 (1.4%):	Neither Agree Nor Disagree
0 (0.0%):	Disagree
1 (1.4%):	Strongly Disagree

24. What is your overall rating of this course?

52 (72.2%):	Excellent
18 (25.0%):	Above Average
1 (1.4%):	Average
0 (0.0%):	Below Average
1 (1.4%):	Poor

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

- Design principles of machine learning models
- Different methods for recommender systems
- I learned the insight of recommender system and how it is different from normal classification or regression problem.
- Latent Factor Models and Matrix Factorization Techniques
- Lot of Rec Sys, lot of Latent factor models, applications to real world
- Machine Learning, Applications of machine learning, in depth look at the reasoning behind ML models
- recommendation system
- Recommender Systems
- Recommender Systems, Adapting Fundamental Models for different recommendation scenarios (e.g. dating, social networks, fashion recommendation, etc), evaluating models, building a data pipeline from exploratory analyses to validating predictions, and text mining
- Regression, classification, latent factors, temporal/sequential data
- Unique aspects of recommender systems as compared to other model paradigms

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 don't like the hunger-game-like kaggle contest!
- Really appreciate Prof and TAs standing up for academic integrity. This is a SERIOUS(!!!!!) problem at this school and in particular the CSE/ECE departments, cheating cheapens our education and institution and it needs to be stopped
- Thank you for a wonderful quarter!

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.