

Teaching Evaluations

Simon Hoellerbauer

In this document, I collect summary statistics as well as selected student statements from student evaluations of classes for which I was the primary instructor during my time at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, including two semesters in which I was TA and taught the lab component of the second course of the graduate political science methods sequence, and courses I have taught at Vassar. Please feel free to reach out for additional information, including full evaluations.

I am teaching or have taught the following classes:¹

- UNC:
 - POLI 130: Introduction to Comparative Politics
 - POLI 281: Data in Politics I: An Introduction
 - POLI 291: Undergraduate Learning Assistant Practicum²
 - POLI 784: Regression Models (Lab Component)
- Vassar:
 - MATH 290: Community-Engaged Learning (CEL): Political Data Analysis³
 - MATH/CMPU 144: Foundations of Data Science
 - MATH/CMPU 280: Intermediate Data Science
 - Through <https://lacol.net/>: Applied Machine Learning⁴
- UMass Amherst:
 - DACSS 601: Data Science Fundamentals
 - DACSS 756: Machine Learning for Social Sciences

UNC

Summary of Numeric Evaluations

In student evaluations, UNC asks students whether they agree or not with a series of statements about the course and about the instructor. All questions are on a 1-5 scale, where 1 indicates “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicates “Strongly Agree.”⁵

¹Evaluations for UMass Amherst courses not available yet.

²No evaluations available because class was too small.

³Because CELs are One-on-One classes, Vassar does not release course evaluation data for them to CEL supervisors.

⁴No evaluations released by LACOL.

⁵There are some NA values in the table because UNC has used a variety of instruments over the past five years, and not all questions were consistently asked. Where possible, I re-labeled similar questions.

Question	SSII 2018 POLI 130	SP 2019 POLI 784	SSII 2019 POLI 130	FA 2019 POLI 130	SP 2020 POLI 784	FA 2020 POLI 130	SP 2021 POLI 281	FA 2021 POLI 281
Overall, this course was excellent	4.27	4.9	4.23	3.9	4.67	4.22	4.03	3.86
Overall, I learned a great deal from this course	4.36	5	4.54	4.14	4.47	4.26	4.33	4.1
Overall, this instructor was an effective teacher	4.27	4.9	4.67	4.46	NA	NA	NA	NA
Demonstrates enthusiasm about teaching	4.82	4.9	4.85	4.69	NA	4.89	4.87	4.69
Promotes a climate of mutual respect	4.82	NA	4.92	4.72	NA	4.59	4.77	4.52
Encourages student questions	4.73	NA	4.77	4.69	NA	4.56	4.77	4.52
Is well-prepared for instruction	4.8	NA	5	4.57	4.93	4.74	4.79	4.62
I know significantly more about this subject than before I took this course	4.55	NA	4.77	4.29	NA	NA	NA	NA
% Responded	84.62%	76.92%	86.67%	69.05%	88.24%	62.79%	90.91%	69.05%
Total Number of Students	13	13	15	42	17	43	33	42

Selected Student Comments

POLI 130: Introduction to Comparative Politics

- The use of the Thursday current political events are a fantastic way to flesh out and apply the themes of the course to the real world. It really supplements the apt case studies given in class, but in a more expedited and summarized way. Fantastic organization of the syllabus. The knowledge disseminated builds and compounds upon each other leading to an excellent framework for understanding democratization on your own.
- He is an excellent communicator. Very personable and I really enjoy his teaching style. He treats everyone fairly. he also takes the time to explain theories during and after class.
- Very passionate, open, and knowledgeable. truly cares about teaching.
- He truly enjoys teaching this subject and knows a great deal about it.
- I feel like the essay assignments provided an excellent opportunity to apply our learned knowledge and receive feedback on our progress. Additionally, the lectures helped in summarizing the most important parts of the readings.
- This course is very informational and interesting. I loved taking this course and it made me very interested in the concept of comparative politics.
- I think the time we spend going over the readings in class is excellent. Specifically because we don't only summarize the readings but apply them to what we're currently learning. The paper also does a great job at encouraging us to apply what we've learned, and definitely through the writing process has helped me get a better grasp on the subject material.
- I think that Simon communicated the topics and concepts of this course in such a manner that someone like me, who is not a political science major and is taking their first political science class, was able to clearly understand. Additionally, the feedback I received from each essay assignment was tremendously helpful in shaping how I wrote the next essay.
- The flow of the class has been very clear throughout the entirety. This has been imperative due to the fast pace of summer courses. The clarity has also helped when asking questions and participating in class discussion. Providing much support, the teacher is incredibly helpful during class and in office hours.
- Mr. Hoellerbauer makes for an excellent professor. He makes all the information in the course easy

to grasp and if not he is ready to help. Understands the needs of the students and makes the class very interesting.

- Simon is a wonderful instructor. I strongly admire how encouraging he is. He creates an environment in which students are not afraid to participate and be wrong. I have had instructors before that make students feel bad for not saying the "right" thing, but Simon does the opposite of this. Even if what we say is a little off-target, Simon is continuously supportive. He also makes himself readily available to us if ever we have questions. I have found his office hours to be extremely helpful. He really is a great instructor!
- Simon was a very good professor. He was very knowledgeable and organized, and was excellent at answering questions. Simon also provided brought professional enthusiasm to the course which made each of the lectures more enjoyable.
- Simon is an incredible teacher who truly brings every ounce of his comparative politics passion into the course. Although his field of study as a grad student is very specialized, Simon expresses clear interest and excitement for all aspects of comparative politics. Even with the setback of many uninterested or non-major students, Simon manages to keep everyone participated and learning about political science. By focusing on case studies and different aspects of democratization, students get a far broader understanding of one of the most important aspects of comparative politics, while simultaneously getting real-world examples that make it easier and easier to deeply analyze current events across the world, which Simon makes a priority in the class through a wonderfully open and creative essay prompt and biweekly current events.
- Really enjoys what he is doing and talking about. Very easy to talk to and makes sure he is available as much as possible.
- Simon is a great instructor. You can tell he really loves comparative politics and is always able to answer your questions. Even when it's like pulling teeth to get people to talk, he's always encouraging us to share our thoughts and check our understanding of the material through class participation. He also promptly responds to emails and will follow up via email if you have questions he didn't have time to fully answer after class/you can't make office hours.
- Simon is very enthusiastic about teaching. He is always friendly, helpful, and willing to help students learn. One thing that stood out to me is the way that Simon corrects students. He never belittles students or discourages them from talking again, he gives praise on correct aspects of an answer and prevents students from feeling dumb for answering wrong in front of a class. Simon is a great teacher and he greatly facilitates the learning of his students.
- A very approachable and kind instructor. Very constructive in lecture, and encourages participation, even if you say the wrong thing he tries to help you understand and doesn't criticize or embarrass you. Overall wants students to succeed in the class.
- Very available! Definitely my favorite instructor during my time here. Hoellerbauer is very understanding and supportive, and has been an excellent teacher.
- Simon Hoellerbauer taught in an effective manner and allowed input from students. It was not just a constant hour and fifteen minutes of lecture, which I appreciated it.
- Mr.Simon is very patient and supportive. He would like to help his students to succeed. The course is a little bit harder than I thought. I was overwhelmed in the beginning. However, I got relieved when I got some very useful suggestions about the two papers and exams from Mr.Simon. I really appreciate his ever help.
- He was consistently available via office hours or email. He expressed near infinite patience for questions and encouraged students to ask them, as well as took the time to explain things thoroughly using either an online whiteboard or elaborating on various subjects.
- He is very patient and can explain difficult concepts very well. He is also very supportive. He gives students a lot of opportunities to ask questions. He is quite responsive to emails. In short, Mr. Simon is one of the best instructors I have met at UNC.
- excellent! very organized and clear. so easy to work with and he is so kind and understanding. I could tell he really wants his students to succeed and understands the crazy outside world can affect our education right now.
- Enthusiasm for the subject, helpful, and timely responses to questions via email, timely feedback on

assignments, put a lot of energy and effort towards feedback on assignments so students understood their grade and could improve.

- Simon is an understanding instructor and his lectures are easy to follow. Not only does he draw diagrams/come up with simple scenarios that relate to specific theories, he also explains case studies of different political systems and various semocratization paths to show how those theories are relevant. Simon gives excellent feedback as well. His comments are pretty straightforward and they tell me exactly what I'm missing in my paper.

POLI 281: Data in Politics I: An Introduction

- Professor Hollerbauer consistently encouraged engagement on Piazza and in class, making the discussion feel a bit more normal than other remote classes have been so far. He also utilized different methods of teaching through the textbook, Datacamp, and homework assignments.
- He taught in multiple ways and was SO flexible with answering questions, office hours and lending himself to students in any way he could.
- Provided plenty of resources from which to get help and feedback, such as in Piazza or through returned assignments. All slides and recordings were available and useful. Many different avenues for absorbing the necessary information such as Datacamp, lectures, textbook, exercises, and assignments.
- Simon could explain some difficult concepts or questions very well. When I asked him questions, he always tried to guide me to the right track with a lot of patience. Moreover, he always encourages his students to ask questions. He has dedicated a lot of time and efforts to help students. He is also very flexible with deadlines and very responsive to emails. The course is definitely extremely difficult. Fortunately, Simon is a life saver! Without his support and help, I would have failed in the course.
- He's very understanding of his student's limitations and understood extensions. He gave good explanations and provided a lot of help in office hours. It is obvious that this is a course that Simon is passionate about and cares about his students caring about his field
- Simon made learning possible by giving us an immense amount of useful information and examples of how to apply it to homework assignments and the final project.
- Extremely communicative and clear
- Simon really helped me out when I was really behind. Amazing professor. Thank you so much for everything.
- Due to the course content, Instructor Hoellerbauer's combined use of traditional lecture and lots of in-class collaboration helped me better grasp the course material, especially as an introductory computer science course. He would primarily remain consistent with the syllabus, making it easy for students to keep up on course material and readings. Instructor Hoellerbauer also made great use of office hours each week, and even offered extended hours around major due dates. Between office hours and workshops, students had a variety of opportunities to reach out with questions regarding the assignment or material.
- This course provided a comprehensive foundation to R code and truly considered the introductory nature with which many students approached it. The course utilized a variety of mediums, including DataCamp and in-class assignment to go over many basic concepts and their methodology to ensure students understood how their code worked and could comment on it properly. Leaving this course, I am much more confident in a ability to approach computer science topics as well as analyze data.
- Even though I found the content very difficult, Professor Hoellerbauer was quick to answer questions and was often free for help. I think that he understood how some Political Science majors may have trouble with this class and was very empathetic about it. You can tell that he really cared about what he was teaching and also created an inclusive environment while talking about identity in the datasets.

POLI 784: Regression Models (Lab Component)

- Simon has so many strengths as a TA, that the space here is inadequate to fully describe the full extent of what incredible of a TA he has been in 784 – but I shall do my best. First, Simon is one of the most patient people I have met, which is so important for a TA in a methods course. He is willing to sit with any student for a half hour to walk through issues with R, etc. He is incredibly responsive when students ask for help – whether it his immediate response to emails (no matter what time of day it is), his willingness to spend time after lecture to discuss issues with problem sets, or allowing us to set up extra office hours with him, since his office hours are always full. One of his greatest strengths – which was critical to his success as a TA – was that he always made students feel comfortable to ask him questions, no matter how basic we thought the question was. He made sure that we never felt incompetent by asking him questions, which is one of the reasons his office hours were always packed. It's a true testament to his teaching ability and his quality of character that the students always felt that we could go to him for questions. He made going through an intense course so much more manageable. I am incredibly grateful to have had him as a TA and could not have asked for a better TA. He consistently went above and beyond the call of action to support our learning.
- Also the instructor was the biggest strength! Simon is an absolutely fantastic instructor. He was always available outside of class – he met out of office hours and was incredibly accessible via email. He went above and beyond what was necessary to ensure we learned the material and were successful in our assignments.
- Simon is extremely helpful in office hours. Especially when we struggle with the math, he makes sure we understand the course material. He would not discriminate people based on their arithmetic abilities, as he will slowly walk us through if we do not understand the math. He is willing to host voluntary, additional office hours too if we could not make it to the regular ones, or if there are too many people in the office hours.
- Simon's extensive knowledge of not only the application of statistics in R but, more importantly, what's going on under the hood is the course's greatest strength.
- Simon was an incredible TA and deserves a teaching award. He was always willing to meet with us outside of his office hours and on very short notice. He greatly enhanced my understanding of the course material. He was able to effectively explain complicated topics in a very accessible way. He also was extremely patient and found multiple ways to explain the same topic until I understood it, which often took a few tries. He had more patience with me than I had for myself at times. When we had an issue with our R code, Simon also made sure that we could explain what was going wrong, which me less likely to repeat the same mistakes.
- Simon is the most accessible instructor that I've had. He goes above and beyond to work with students, including going over-time for office hours and constantly available over email. He cares deeply about the material and helping us learn new methods to approach statistics. He goes beyond the basics.
- Simon is amazing. He is incredibly accessible outside of class. Simon has a talent for making complicated concepts accessible. Overall, Simon is unquestionably the most helpful teaching assistant of my academic career.
- Simon did a great job both early in the semester and later in the semester when having to adapt the course. The labs provided a great resource, both for the assignments and for my future research. I have referenced the material multiple times throughout the semester for my own research. Further, Simon was always strong at having a pulse on issues students were struggling with and made sure to address those issues during lab in a productive way while also getting to the other material.
- Simon was always enthusiastic and available for help responding to emails no matter the time. Simon is a very encouraging instructor that shows passion for the subject matter.
- Simon was always extremely generous with his time, and always made himself available for questions when needed. He has a true talent for explaining things in a way that would make the most sense to that specific audience, given their background and experience with the topic at hand. He never made us feel as though we were asking obvious questions or wasting his time, which was particularly

comforting given the difficult nature of the course material.

- Simon went above and beyond the call of duty in helping us with the materials. Office hours almost always ran over time, and Simon always helped us work through complicated proofs and detailed examples to bolster and build on our understanding of the subject matter.
- He literally is the reason we all survived this class. Made every effort to help us learn both over email and in office hours.
- Simon is the best lab instructor I have ever had. Aside from his incredible ability to make highly complex topics seem simple, Simon went out of his way to help students in the class.
- Simon did a great job both inside and outside the classroom. He went above and beyond for all students and was an incredible resource throughout the semester. The labs he provided were clearly written in a way that they can serve as a template for future research we are all doing. A really great job by someone teaching a difficult subject in a form (online) that is nearly impossible to teach in.
- Simon's energy and clear enthusiasm for the subject matter make him a wonderful resource for this class – not to mention his vast knowledge of the material and talent for relating it in a comprehensible way. I cannot overstate the value of his help and support throughout the semester.

Vassar College

Summary of Numeric Evaluations

In course evaluations, Vassar asked students to rate a series of statements on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is high and 1 is low.

After the Spring 2023 semester, Vassar revamped the student feedback mechanism after review because of known issues with course evaluations. The new student feedback questions are different from the original course evaluation questions. Therefore, there are two tables below, one for the 2022-2023 school year and one for the 2023-2024 school year.

Question	FA 2022	SP 2023
	MATH/CMPU 144	MATH/CMPU 280
Organization	4.5	4.52
How well the course met its objectives as stated by instructor	4.28	3.95
Effectiveness of lecture or presentation	3.94	3.52
Ability to illuminate difficult material	3.72	3.52
Openness to students' point of view	4.71	4.29
Helpfulness of comments on coursework and individual consultation	4.61	3.86
Overall effectiveness of instructor	4.5	3.86
As a result of this course, how much have your knowledge and understanding of the subject matter increased?	4.44	3.95
% Responded	90%	84%
Total Number of Students	20	25

Table 1: Vassar Fall 2022–Spring 2023 Course Evaluations

Question	FA 2023	SP 2024
	MATH/CMPU 144	MATH/CMPU 280
This course expanded my intellectual interest in the subject matter.	3.95	4.44
I clearly understood what was expected of me in the course.	3.95	4.22
I understand how different parts of the course contributed to my learning of the subject.	4.1	4.33
This course increased my understanding of the subject matter.	3.95	4.44
The work I was asked to do facilitated my learning in the course.	4.19	4.22
I had opportunities in this course to demonstrate what I have learned.	4.19	4.22
I received feedback that supported my learning.	4.14	4.33
I found that the instructor provided help if I requested it.	4.48	4.75
% Responded	95.45%	81.82%
Total Number of Students	22	11

Table 2: Vassar Fall 2023–Spring 2024 Course Evaluations

Selected Student Comments

MATH/CMPU 144: Foundations of Data Science

- It is just a very very well designed class with such an amazing professor. I know that these are his first years of teaching but he is so so good and cares about you so so much that you feel interested in the class. The constant work that we had to do -which was fair- definitely furthered my interest and kept me thinking about the material!
- don't know what to say... He is just a great professor and did his best to accommodate everyone's needs... Everyone had different experiences with coding and data science. I had no experience whatsoever but didn't feel left behind. He just made everything really really accessible!
- He is a nice and kind instructor, and in every class, he is eager to teach us the things he knows about Data Science. Also, for all of the assignments he gives to us, the requirements are clear and he is willing to help when students are in trouble.
- Overall, I really enjoyed this course. There were definitely aspects of it that I found difficult, but I thought that all of the material was really interesting. This was my first experience with coding, and it could get really frustrating at times, but Dr. Hoellerbauer and the coach were always available for help if it was needed. Additionally, it is always really rewarding once I can get my code to run without errors.
- I really did enjoy this course. Professor Hoellerbauer was very helpful and kind during and outside of his lectures with understanding difficult material, and his flexibility within the class when there was a communal problem made many aspects of the class less stressful than they had to be.
- Great course. The fact that there was an interactive exercise to accompany nearly every lecture was amazing. This act of actually putting it into practice is so important when it comes to something like computer science and I and I'm sure many others really appreciate that you took the extra time to make that possible.

MATH/CMPU 280: Intermediate Data Science

- I loved this class. The material was challenging but the professor did an amazing job at explaining topics. He was very accessible outside of class and was always willing to set up time to help. I wish he was teaching other courses!

- This class was very structured and organized and I like that about this class. I had fun and felt like I learned how to do something and feel like the application of sci kit will prove useful in my future so thank you for that. One thing I still feel lost about is all the math behind any of the methods that we learned, but overall, you did a good job explaining ml methods and neural networks. I feel like showing more application to the real world would make the class more engaging
- I especially liked the topics related to AI.
- Dr. Hoellerbauer was a great teacher and I'm very glad I took this class. I felt that some of the content was very difficult to understand and I would've liked more time to dive deeper into some of the models to get a better sense of how each one was working. Overall though, I feel like I have a pretty good sense of a variety of different machine learning methods and I would definitely like to continue studying data science in future classes.
- Dr. H is so so accessible and sweet and nice. It's a boring class because of the topic and I am personally not a data or computer person. The only reason I took this class was getting ready to use these programs in grad school. However, he is just really really kind and does his best to help you understand the topic. The beginning of the semester was tough since everyone was trying to get used to using Python or R and what he did was like a fast forward which was difficult. But towards the end of the semester the workload got easier because I think he saw how much we were struggling haha. I genuinely learned and enjoyed his class though. I loved him as a professor last semester as well! Vassar should've kept him!