Some Feedback on
My SETE Comments from
CSCE 2100.001, Spring 2012
Ian Parberry

Introduction

Thanks for all of your SETE comments sharing your experience in my CSCE 2100.001 class in Spring 2012. It may come as a surprise to you that I do in fact share your major concerns. I have taken all of your SETE comments, your personal comments over the course of the semester, and my observations, and come up with the following recommendations for improvement the next time the class is taught.

1. No quizzes
2. More lecture material on programming
3. Work on the program submission system to make the process more smooth
4. More material at the interface between the math and the programming to integrate the theory and practice parts of the class better
5. Compulsory labs scheduled at the time of enrolment
6. Three examinations, one a programming examination in a lab that is isolated from the Internet, the other two theory-based.

Here are my detailed responses to your individual comments. Read and enjoy!

Comments on the examinations

Quizes - difficult Midterm - easy

The questions on the quizzes and the exams were in fact very similar. The difference, I think, is that many of you become somnolent in class and don’t really pay attention to the material, so you’re not prepared for the quizzes. You’d studied up on the material by the time the midterm came up so it seemed easier. Context is everything.

In retrospect, I don’t think that quizzes really serve any useful purpose in this class, so they are going to be eliminated.

Difficult, 2

The person before you thought that the midterm was easy. Yes, there were 2 exams, a midterm and a final. We can both count to 2.

The tests were very fair. Everything was covered in class and the questions were similar to examples in class.

Thank you for noticing. Dr. Schneider and I made an effort to make sure that this would be the case.
Coincided well with what we were told was going to be on them, so good I like when those two things match up.

Again, thank you.

The exams were very understanding and the difficulty has been fair enough for me to get a good grade without having to stress over specific topics

I don’t want to stress you in class, but I do want to encourage you to stretch yourself to the limit.

We've had two exams thus far. They are challenging enough to make sure you understand the material, but not frustratingly difficult. They’re fine

By the time you wrote this you would have had only 1 exam, the midterm. Are you thinking of the quizzes?

Exam graded kind of fairly. Review for the exam could have been a lot better

“Kind of fairly?” That’s a back-handed compliment if ever I saw one.

I do hope that you weren’t expecting me to reteach the material during the review. Remember that I did give a list of the things that were examinable, and I did point out a few things that you should specifically make sure that you know. I described the structure of the exam and the kind of questions to expect. I’m wondering in what way the review could be better?

One exam besides the final was pretty refreshing. I felt I was prepared well in class for it

The person before you didn’t like the review, but it looks like you did. I wish I had more details on what worked and what didn’t in the exam reviews.

too few exams

The person before you liked the fact that there weren’t more exams. I can’t make everybody happy.

The number and frequency of examinations was adequate. The programming assignments were way beyond the scope of the material being taught in class

I’m concerned that you feel that way about the programming assignments. If you’d been taught programming properly in the two classes leading up to this one, then you should have had less trouble adapting from C to C++. In this class I assumed that everybody was a competent C programmer and only needed a little help to transition to C++.

well explained

Thanks.

Exams were fair

Thanks.

The exam was fair

Thanks.
Exam was fair. Mostly test on theories

Thanks.

Tests were very straightforward, no trick questions

Thanks. Personally, I hate trick questions in exams.

He was fair with the examinations

Thanks.

all fine, wish there were more questions on quiz rather than just a few

Thanks. More questions on the quizzes would have meant less time for teaching. It’s hard to strike the right balance.

Fair, if you know the material then you will be ok

Exactly. That should be true of all classes

Homework and test were perfect. Challenging but not too hard. Could have been more programming assignments

Thanks again. Dr. Schneider and I were conscious of the non-programming workload in class and tried not to load you down with too many things at the same time. We tried to lighten the load on programming when you had an exam, a quiz, or a difficult homework. That said, I think we could have squeezed in one more program.

Comments on course content

Great successor to CSCE 1040. Reviewed some topics well and introduced new, successive ones well

Exactly. Thanks for noticing. ☺

I'm not sure what the relevance of being able to perform mathematical inductance is, but hopefully it will be useful in the future

It’s “induction”, not “inductance”. I thought I made the connection between induction and recursion clear in class. Did you miss that one?

Programming assignments were a bit difficult for those not familiar with the language

Which is a good thing, imho.

Excellent

Thanks.

I wish there was more teaching of c++ programming
I agree.

Some of the course content was irrelevant. They taught so much math and very little C++ programming. The class is supposed to be a mix between the two and we learned next to nothing on programming. We are mostly computer science and IT majors we need to know more about programming than some of the math we learned because there was no relevancy to it.

I’m not going to argue the relevancy of mathematics to a programmer because clearly you are opposed to it. Let me just make a more practical argument. To get ABET accreditation we need to teach the math integrated with programming. ABET accreditation adds to the value of your degree. That’s why we’re doing things this way.

This course used to be two: Comp Sci 3 and Discrete Math They should have left it two. We have literally had one lecture giving us a quick overview of transitioning from C to C++ and some (very basic) explanations of data structures Considering we’ve then had four programs in addition to other homework assignments entirely in C++, this is not nearly enough. Dr Parberry does his best and grades us fairly, but anything I’ve learned about C++ this semester, I’ve done on my own. Regarding the discrete math portion, it really should be taught by a math professor, not a computer science professor.

On our last ABET accreditation visit they faulted us for not having the discrete math more integrated with the CS content. The math professors taught the discrete math class more the way that math majors needed it, with no relevance to programming or algorithm design. This class is the department’s attempt to address the deficiencies pointed out by ABET so that we won’t lose our accreditation this year. That would be a Bad Thing.

I think this is the first semester that discreet math was combined with comp science 3 so that transition wasn’t great I didn’t particularly like the discreet math and still think it should be a separate class. There wasn’t as much "computing foundations" as I expected.

It’s the second semester, I believe. See my response to the previous comment.

Subject matter occasionally difficult

Which is a good thing, right? 😊

The course content has been evenly layered out and nice planned

Thanks. Most of the credit for the organization should go to Dr. Schneider. As I told you in the first class meeting, I was assigned to teach the class only 2 days before it started, so I had to rely on a lot of her hard work and preparation. I think she did a great job. There are things I had to change, of course, but that’s because I like to fine-tune things.

This course should not be required for Information Technology majors as it is way too technical to be applicable in our job field. This is coming from experience.

I agree, but I’m not in charge of the IT major requirements, I’m just the Content Delivery Specialist. I just show up and lecture on what I’m told to. I will pass your comment up the line to my superiors though. I’ve grumbled to them already, but I don’t think they agree with us.
Course content is interesting and useful

Thanks, some of your classmates found the material irrelevant, but I’m glad you thought it interesting and useful.

Relevant but difficult to understand at times

The material is difficult in places. I hope I made it easier to understand, rather than harder.

Was not expecting this. Diverge too differently from CSCE 1040

Change is good. Sometimes you need to be shocked out of your preconceptions.

Wish there was more programming

Me too. 😊

All over the place

Not true. Class was held in the same room every class period. 😊

Comments regarding the instructor.

Parberry is a pretty good professor. He covered all of the material fairly clearly and made most of it interesting

Thank you.

Could have done a better job at explaining difficult areas and gave more examples to further help

True. But as I said many times in class, different students have different learning styles. More examples would have taken time away from my explanation of principles, which would have annoyed students who learn better by just being given “the facts” rather than examples. I tried to strike a balance between the two. But I hear you.

Dr Parberry is knowledgeable and experienced, however, he should have worked more example problems in class to show us how he expected us to answer the problems

How about if I post more solutions instead? It’s not a case of how I expect you to answer the problems though, it’s more a case of the form that I expect the answer to take.

Prof Parberry is a really cool person. It just seemed like he did not care to teach this lower level class

Thanks for the compliment, but I don’t understand why you believe that I don’t care to teach lower level classes. This is the first one I’ve taught in years so, granted, it took me a little while to get up to speed.

Relied too much on Powerpoints. Grading could be more fairer on quizzes and homework
Were you in the first class? The one where I explained that I have MS, and one accommodation to my disability is that I have to teach mainly from Powerpoints? You may have forgotten how I apologized for the fact and explained that any comments like this on my teacher evaluation would be a violation of my rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act. You really should be more accommodating to people with disabilities, including people with hidden disabilities like mine.

As for the comment about your perceived lack fairness in grading, I’m a little offended by that. My graders and I bent over backwards to ensure that the grading was fair. Other student comments in this document attest to that. Are you sure that you aren’t just saying that in retaliation for my giving you low grades for underperformance?

The instructor figures out ways to relate to you on the student level so he can better understand how to teach the course better

Thanks for noticing! I tried especially hard to do that because you students are a new generation and we need to understand how you learn best and to adapt our teaching methods accordingly.

This instructor is great. Covers very complex topics easily. Lectures are easy to follow. Assignments are challenging. Seriously, you rock

I’m red-faced. Seriously, thanks for the compliments. 😊

Brings humor into the classroom which is a big plus. Really works at engaging students

Sometimes I’m a little concerned that students won’t get my humor, but in any case I think humor is a great way to get key points to stick inside your head.

Instructor explains in fairly abstractly high-level language, if not given a marker to scribble on the board. Most of the time, I have trouble making those said abstract stuff into codes

I agree, we need to work on the part of the class where the abstract problems are put into code. Perhaps the prerequisite classes could also do a better job of preparing you for this.

instructor was ok but not great, felt like I was given a list of topics rather than being taught those topics

What, you had to do some learning on your own? What a concept! Wait until you get to upper division CS courses where you are no longer spoon-fed and you are treated as a mature adult capable of self-directed learning. I thought you were OK too.

good interesting instructor

Thanks.

The instructor was adequate, but I believe that we as the students would have benefited much more if the curriculum was defined by the Dr Parberry instead of by Dr Schneider

There’s a little cognitive dissonance here in that you thought I was only adequate, but you want me to be more in charge of the curriculum. Huh. This is the first time I’ve taught this class, but I have now been made Course Coordinator so I will have greater say in the curriculum. That said, I think Dr. Schneider has done a great job.
Very knowledgeable about the subject, easy going, good sense of humor, and explains things in different ways to make sure everyone gets them. I'd recommend the instructor to other people

I’m blushing again.

Smart instructor. Seemed irritated at times by particular students

Thanks for the compliment. I was irritated a couple of times, I admit. But the students I was irritated with were very irritating. You would rather I be an emotionless robot?

Dr Parberry is a very good, understanding professor. His lectures are helpful and his explanations are clear. He also makes himself available for help outside of the class

I’d red-faced again.

Professor seemed uninterested to help outside of class

Did you come to my office hours? Seriously? The comment before yours seems to contradict yours. Maybe you saw me outside office hours on a bad day, or you were expecting special treatment, or you were one of the weaker students who came to complain that they got no points for a program that doesn’t compile, or I caught you cheating code from a website. One of my problems is that if you are not interested in your education, then I am not interested in you. It’s a personal thing.

Comments regarding the course structure.

none

I hope that means that you have no comments, rather than meaning that the class had no structure. 😊

Pretty balanced. Wish the programming would’ve been split up into smaller assignments

I understand your second comment, but you are at the stage in your education where you need to start writing larger programs.

Programs were too difficult and minimally taught

If you go Google similar classes you’ll find that the programing assignments are similar in size and difficulty. We’re going to increase the programming content of the class in the future.

The course structure was as expected and well executed

Thanks!

The course structure was horrible. Need more programming instructions for students

I wouldn’t say it is horrible (the previous student didn’t think so either), but I agree we should add more programming content.

I wish there was more teaching of actual c++ programming. I felt like I had to spend hours teaching myself how syntax to write the programs, and then I would be penalized for not writing the code in a specific way.
If you are still hung up on the syntax of a programming language then I have grave concerns for your education. You are like an English major who is supposed to be analyzing Chaucer but doesn’t know what an adjectival clause is. Your statement about being penalized for not writing code in a certain way says to me that you completely did not understand the material on programming style. I would guess that you’re not ready for it if you’re still hung up on programming language syntax. You should go back and retake CS1 and CS2 or better still, take as many of the programming tutorials that are available online as you can. You are way behind and you’d better take positive action to catch up. Once you understand the basics of programming, come by my office and we can talk again about programming style.

well structured

    Thanks.

again more programming or at least relating the other material to programming more effectively

    Agreed.

The class is set up ok

    I’m OK with that.

As stated above, not the biggest fan of the combination of discreet math with comp science 3

    It’s “discrete math”, not “discreet math”. See my response to your other comment above.

Structure was fine

    Thanks.

The only thing I didn't like was having quizzes before any homework was due on the material I scored lower than I should have because I never practiced the material before the quiz

    Agreed. We’re doing away with the quizzes, as I mentioned above.

Wish there would be a coding supplementary session going on. But the course requires you to be fluent in C++ in one lecture

    A supplementary coding session is a good idea. We’re going to have mandatory lab sessions where there will be more hands-on coding instruction.

Aside from what I already said in the course content box, the structure of the class is fine. The pop quizzes don’t really help with our understanding of the material and tended to just hurt my grade. The homework does help me, however

    Agreed.

WE NEED LABS IN CS CLASSES!

    Agreed.
First of all this course needs to decide on which course it is going to be, either Computer Science III or Discrete Mathematics. The instruction given in class is all discrete mathematical theory with examples. Students are evaluated by homework, quizzes, and tests on these mathematical theorems. Then there are programming assignments which are done outside of class. These assignments require the student to make the transition from whatever programming language the student is versed in to C++. This may not have been an issue if this class had actually taught students how to program in C++. Plus the discrete mathematics is being taught to students as if they are all Computer Scientists even though the class consists of Computer Science, Computer Engineer, and Information Technology majors. In order to rectify this the class should have one class for the Discrete Mathematics and one class for Computer Science III as it has been in the past.

See my comment above about ABET requiring better integration between math and computer science.

**Evaluate the quality of your own work in this course**

Be more ready for discreet math is something I could've done to be more prepared for this class I guess.

That’s interesting. I’m not sure how you would go about that.

I could improve on my programming which I plan on studying more this summer I will do so because I have a feeling that they will not teach it but expect you to know it.

Excellent! You will go far in life with this attitude. You’ve been spoon-fed enough programming by now that you should be ready to start crawling and start toddling. You are right, you will be expected to learn new programming languages yourself soon. Best of luck!

I have done well on the tests.

I’m glad to hear that.

I struggled on the math sections, it was as if we should have known the material beforehand but it has been a while since I studied those topics. I did well with the programming and felt like that is where I learned the most during this course, doing the programming assessments.

Excellent!

I have done well on the programs. Study more for the tests.

Good idea. Studying is a good thing.

I did well, could have done the homework ahead of time.

It sounds like this class was a little too easy for you. We have a mix of students from hot-shot programmers to noobs who can’t see why void main(){return 0;} won’t compile. I’ve tried my best to teach to both kinds of students, but time in class is limited and we had a lot of new material to cover. On the plus side, you can probably look forward to being more challenged in your future classes.
I think I could have made better effort on the programs given but the turn-in method was the biggest frustration to deal with.

The automated turn-in was new this year, and I agree that it needs a lot more work to reduce the amount of frustration.

I've done well on the programs and fair on the tests and homework I've done abysmally on the pop quizzes I understand the programming aspect of the class (what little there is) but I struggle with the math its very foreign to anything else I've dealt with and thats why I think it needs its own course again

See my comments on ABET above.

I scored much lower on quizzes and homework than I would have like, but I've done well on the test and programs assigned

OK.

I have not done as well as I think I should have in this class. I think seeking help earlier in the semester would have helped. I also wished to refer to a better text book when the slides were difficult to understand

Help was available. I understand your comment on needing another textbook. Suggestions would be welcome.

Did well at paying attention in class and using what I learned in there on assignments. Slacked and got lazy by not doing some programming assignments

Now you know what to do better next time you take this class, assuming you failed.

I could have done a better job at completing the homework when I understood it

Clearly.

Could have done better

Honesty rocks.

good amount

I’m not sure what to make of this.

I could have done better, experiment more, code more, if not because I am taking three math classes and working at the same time

You have chosen a difficult path.