TEACHING EVALUATION SUMMARY

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Each course that I have taught (as the instructor of record only, so TA work as a graduate student is omitted) is listed here, along with some numerical data from student evaluations, and sample comments from student evaluations (in some cases edited for grammar).

1. TEACHING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

I am currently (in spring 2020) teaching Math 215 (Introduction to Advanced Mathematics) and Math 313 (Analysis I).

In fall 2019, I taught Math 181 (Calculus II), a coordinated large lecture course.

Evaluation data (average of 60 responses; note that the survey prompts are not the same as in previous semesters, because the form was redesigned):

- “Instructor’s overall teaching effectiveness”: 4.65/5
- “Overall quality of the course”: 4.45/5
- “Students were encouraged to ask questions and were given meaningful answers”: 4.55/5
- “In-class learning activities stimulated critical thinking about course material”: 4.54/5

Sample student comments:

- “One of the best one-to-one explainers ever. Overall one of the best professors.”
- “Very passionate when it comes to discussing course materials, and explains the topics clearly.”
- “It was also great that the professor was very outgoing with everyone.”

In fall 2019, I also taught two sections of Math 210 (Calculus III), a coordinated course with small lecture sections.

Evaluation data (average of 11 responses in one section and 10 in the other; note that the survey prompts are not the same as in previous semesters, because the form was redesigned):

- “Instructor’s overall teaching effectiveness”: 4.73/5 in one section, 4.80/5 in the other
- “Overall quality of the course”: 4.55/5 in one section, 4.70/5 in the other
- “Students were encouraged to ask questions and were given meaningful answers”: 4.64/5 in one section, 4.80/5 in the other
- “In-class learning activities stimulated critical thinking about course material”: 4.36/5 in one section, 4.70/5 in the other

Sample student comments:

- “The professor made sure everyone understood his written examples and thoroughly explained everything in his lectures.”
- “Very good at explaining and clarifying.”
- “Writing on blackboard is organized and explanation is great.”

In fall 2018, I taught Math 520 (Commutative and Homological Algebra), a graduate course.

Evaluation data (average of 7 responses):
In spring 2018, I taught Math 310 (Applied Linear Algebra).

Evaluation data (average of 42 responses):

- “Instructor’s overall teaching effectiveness”: 4.54/5
- “Overall quality of the course”: 4.51/5
- “Course materials were well prepared”: 4.66/5
- “Instructor made students feel welcome in seeking help in or out of class”: 4.71/5

Sample student comments:

- “Nick was happy to discuss the course material, of which he clearly has a great depth of familiarity, and was quite effective in communicating the material succinctly.”
- “This was one of the most useful mathematics courses I have ever taken... The instructor’s exposition was exceptional, and made the subtleties in the material much clearer through his explanations.”
- “I would have attended all the lectures of this class even if it had had twice as many lectures per week as it does now.”

In spring 2016, I taught Math 325 (Elementary Analysis), which also functions as the “introduction to proof” course for math majors.

Evaluation data (average of 13 responses):

- “What is your overall impression of the quality of instruction?” 3.54/4
- “Are the instructor’s presentations and explanations helpful in understanding the subject matter?” 3.54/4
- “Do the classroom procedures and discussions seem well-planned?” 4.00/4
- “Could a student get individual help from this instructor?” 3.77/4

Sample student comments:

- “A great professor who made a very difficult class less painful.”
- “Dr. Switala is an incredible mathematics professor... the class exceeded my expectations and I am excited to continue my education in mathematics.”
- “He was very determined to present the larger ideas of the course to the class in such a manner that everyone could succeed.”

In fall 2015, I taught Math 314 (Linear Algebra).

Evaluation data (average of 16 responses):
• “What is your overall impression of the quality of instruction?” 3.06/4
• “Are the instructor’s presentations and explanations helpful in understanding the subject matter?” 2.94/4
• “Do the classroom procedures and discussions seem well-planned?” 3.69/4
• “Could a student get individual help from this instructor?” 3.56/4

Sample student comments:
• “Covers material more efficiently and in-depth than the book, making attendance a priority... give this man a raise, seriously. I’m not easy to impress.”
• “He challenged us enough to push us, but not so much that we were unable to understand.”
• “He actually took our concerns and adjusted things to better suit student success in the class.”

In fall 2015, I also taught Math 221 (Differential Equations).

Evaluation data were very favorable for this course (for example, 4.00/4 on “What is your overall impression of the quality of instruction in this course?”) but so few students (only four) submitted evaluations that the results are not statistically significant.

Sample student comments:
• “Always provided the necessary background to allow us to understand how the methods for solving DEs worked, rather than giving the impression they worked by luck or magic.”
• “I would love to have a teacher like him for the rest of my math courses.”
• “He broke up lectures with funny asides, presented information in a very clear manner, and never spoke over students’ heads.”

3. Teaching at the University of Minnesota

In summer 2013, I taught Math 4281 (Introduction to Modern Algebra).

Evaluation data (average of 12 responses):
• “Well prepared for class”: 5.92/6
• “Presented subject matter clearly”: 5.58/6
• “Treated me with respect”: 6.00/6
• “Would recommend this instructor to other students” (yes/no): 12/0

Sample student comments:
• “Answers all questions clearly and extremely helpful.”
• “As a future teacher, I’ve learned not only math from you, but skills to add to my own teaching.”
• “Taught with such enthusiasm that it was impossible not to become just as enthralled as the lecturer.”

In summer 2012, I taught Math 4242 (Applied Linear Algebra). I also taught (most of) this course again in spring 2014, under unusual circumstances: I took over teaching after a third of the course was complete when its instructor suffered a serious injury. I only have evaluation data for the complete course in summer 2012.

Evaluation data (average of 21 responses):
• “Well prepared for class”: 5.71/6
• “Presented subject matter clearly”: 5.38/6
• “Treated me with respect”: 5.62/6
• “Would recommend this instructor to other students” (yes/no): 20/1

Sample student comments:
• “He’s born for math! Full of passion and love for teaching.”
• “Easily the most inspiring math instructor I’ve ever had.”
• “I really appreciated the amount of preparation he put into his lectures. He made sure to give us examples and in-depth explanations for important concepts.”

In spring 2012, I taught Math 1001 (Excursions in Mathematics), a survey course in modern mathematics for humanities majors. Topics included fractals, graphs and networks, probability, voting theory, and methods of fair division.

Evaluation data (average of 35 responses):
• “Well prepared for class”: 5.80/6
• “Presented subject matter clearly”: 5.51/6
• “Treated me with respect”: 5.66/6
• “Would recommend this instructor to other students” (yes/no): 33/1

Sample student comments:
• “First math class I’ve taken at the U where I’ve actually been able to understand the material.”
• “I’ve never liked math, and I dreaded taking a class in it again, but the subject matter and how it was presented removed some of the fear.”
• “He explains math in different ways so that I can ‘see’ it.”

In summer 2011, I taught Math 4603 (Advanced Calculus).

Evaluation data (average of 8 responses):
• “Well prepared for class”: 5.75/6
• “Presented subject matter clearly”: 5.00/6
• “Treated me with respect”: 5.63/6
• “Would recommend this instructor to other students” (yes/no): 6/1

Sample student comments:
• “Made class interesting with anecdotes, and presented all material with energy and enthusiasm.”
• “The homework was set up to really help grasp ideas and not to just churn out problems.”
• “Material was hard... but he was reasonable with his expectations.”

In summer 2010, I taught Math 1142 (Short Calculus), a one-semester calculus course intended for business majors. It covered differentiation and integration in one variable, and partial derivatives in multiple variables, but without transcendental functions.

Evaluation data (average of 20 responses):
• “Well prepared for class”: 6.00/6
• “Presented subject matter clearly”: 5.85/6
• “Treated me with respect”: 5.90/6
• “Would recommend this instructor to other students” (yes/no): 20/0

Sample student comments:
• “Amazing. Did so much to make an impossible subject human.”
• “I definitely have grasped a better understanding of this class because of how he teaches.”
• “I cannot say enough good things about Nick other than I wish all math teachers, or teachers in general, cared about the class they taught as much as he did.”