USC University of Southern California

Individual Report for Instructor Lototsky (39625-20133 : MATH-407 Probability Theory)

USC Student Course Evaluations
Project Audience 68
Responses Received 45
Response Ratio 66.18%

Subject Details

Name	MATH-407 Probability Theory
Section	39625-20133
Course Type	Lecture
Course Department	MATH
First Name	Sergey Vladimir
Last Name	Lototsky
Email	lototsky@math.usc.edu

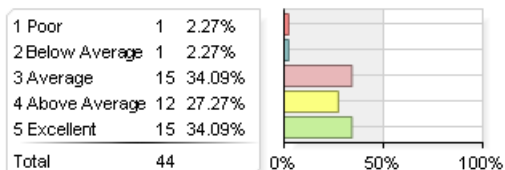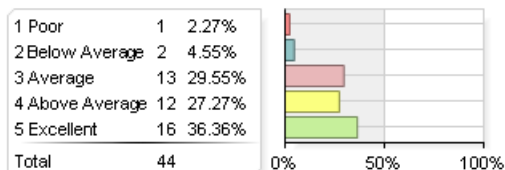**Creation Date**   Thu, Jan 09, 2014

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How would you rate instructor Lototsky's effectiveness on the following items?
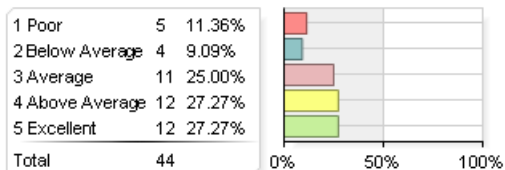
1. Clearly articulated course goals.

1 Poor	1	2.27%
2 Below Average	1	2.27%
3 Average	15	34.09%
4 Above Average	12	27.27%
5 Excellent	15	34.09%
Total	44	

Statistics	Value
Mean	3.89
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.99

2. Organized course to achieve those goals.

1 Poor	1	2.27%
2 Below Average	2	4.55%
3 Average	13	29.55%
4 Above Average	12	27.27%
5 Excellent	16	36.36%
Total	44	

Statistics	Value
Mean	3.91
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-1.03

3. Carefully explained difficult concepts, methods, and subject matter.

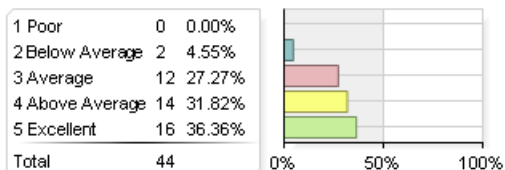|		
1 Poor	5	11.36%
2 Below Average	4	9.09%
3 Average	11	25.00%
4 Above Average	12	27.27%
5 Excellent	12	27.27%
Total	44	

Statistics	Value
Mean	3.50
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-1.30

4. Encouraged students to participate in their learning (e.g., through discussion, projects, study groups and other appropriate activities).
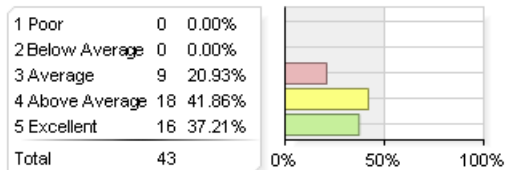
1 Poor	1	2.27%
2 Below Average	7	15.91%
3 Average	9	20.45%
4 Above Average	13	29.55%
5 Excellent	14	31.82%
Total	44	
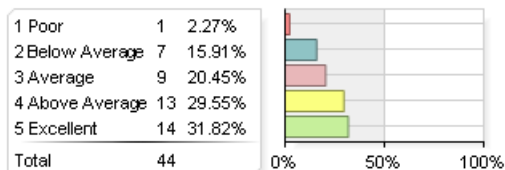
Statistics	Value
Mean	3.73
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-1.15

5. Was accessible to students (e.g., during office hours, before and after class, etc.).

1 Poor	0	0.00%
2 Below Average	2	4.55%
3 Average	12	27.27%
4 Above Average	14	31.82%
5 Excellent	16	36.36%
Total	44	

Statistics	Value
Mean	4.00
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.91

6. Evaluated student work in fair and appropriate ways.

1 Poor	0	0.00%
2 Below Average	0	0.00%
3 Average	9	20.93%
4 Above Average	18	41.86%
5 Excellent	16	37.21%
Total	43	

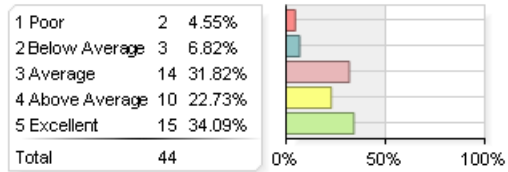| Statistics	Value
Mean	4.16
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.75

How would you rate instructor Lototsky's effectiveness on the following items? (continued)

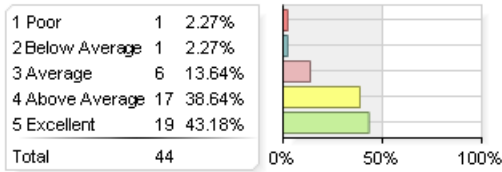7. Was enthusiastic about communicating the subject matter.

1 Poor	0	0.00%	
2 Below Average	2	4.55%	
3 Average	9	20.45%	
4 Above Average	12	27.27%	
5 Excellent	21	47.73%	
Total	44		
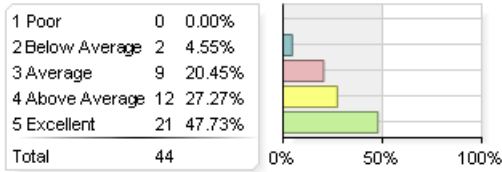
Statistics	Value
Mean	4.18
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.92

8. Stimulated student interest in the subject matter.

1 Poor	2	4.55%	
2 Below Average	3	6.82%	
3 Average	14	31.82%	
4 Above Average	10	22.73%	
5 Excellent	15	34.09%	
Total	44		

Statistics	Value
Mean	3.75
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-1.14

9. Presented subject matter in ways that were academically challenging.

1 Poor	1	2.27%	
2 Below Average	1	2.27%	
3 Average	6	13.64%	
4 Above Average	17	38.64%	
5 Excellent	19	43.18%	
Total	44		

Statistics	Value
Mean	4.18
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.92

10. Provided students a valuable learning experience.

1 Poor	1	2.27%	
2 Below Average	5	11.36%	
3 Average	12	27.27%	
4 Above Average	13	29.55%	
5 Excellent	13	29.55%	
Total	44		
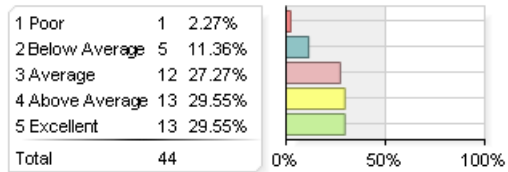
Statistics	Value
Mean	3.73
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-1.09

Overall, how would you rate instructor Lototsky?

1 Poor	3	6.82%	
2 Below Average	3	6.82%	
3 Average	9	20.45%	
4 Above Average	16	36.36%	
5 Excellent	13	29.55%	
Total	44		
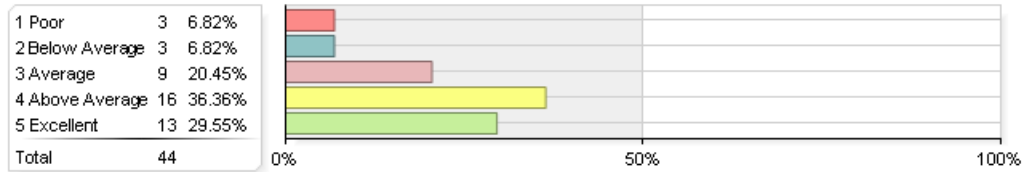
Statistics	Value
Mean	3.75
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-1.16

Overall, how would you rate this course?

Individual Report for Instructor Lototsky (39625-20133 : MATH-407 Probability Theory)

-2-

1 Poor	2	4.44%	
2 Below Average	4	8.89%	
3 Average	9	20.00%	
4 Above Average	23	51.11%	
5 Excellent	7	15.56%	
Total	45		
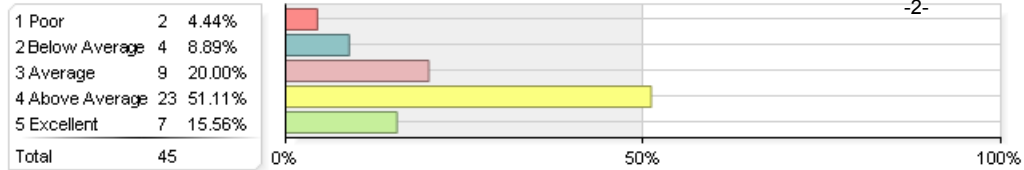
Statistics	Value
Mean	3.64
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-1.00

What were instructor Lototsky's main strengths?

Comment

Thorough knowledge of the material; willing and certainly capable of helping answer questions... answered questions in a polite manner; homework was challenging but doable... tests were good for evaluating our understanding of the material

Unbelievable understanding of the material.

everything

Professor Lototsky was highly enthusiastic about the subject, and how lecture was typically interesting - if not entertaining to attend.

His grading system is really fair.

very helpful.

Knowledgable about the subject

He is very knowledgeable of all things related to mathematics. I have not met a professor who is as intelligent.

He loves math and clearly understands it pretty well.

The professor knew what he was talking about. Very knowledgeable on the material and it's application

enthusiastic, knew material very well, and explained clearly and in-depth. Didn't just teach from the book, brought in examples from history and practical applications to enhance the learning.

Very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about subject matter, great professor

Clearly enjoys the subject matter. Very knowledgeable. Eager to help students and answer questions.

Really smart professor with many challenging concepts presented in class

Enjoyed the side material on math history or useful applications. Tests were always fair.

I enjoyed his enthusiasm for the subject matter and that his exams were fair and fairly graded given the difficulty of the course content.

he is very nice to students and very helpful

fairly evaluate student work

One of the best math professors at USC

helping us prepare for the exams

He is a nice guy who clearly knows quite a bit about the field. Very accessible to students, and always willing to help.

Prof. Lototsky knows the history of math very well and he starts almost every lecture with an interesting story about math, which makes the lecture more intriguing.

He cares about his students and providing valuable experience for them.
He stimulates students' interest about the subject matter.

Nothing, he's literally the worst teacher i have ever had, the fact that he hasn't been fired yet is an absolute joke, he's a jerk to talk to, very arrogant, and does an absolutely putrid job of explaining material, the class felt like it had no direction, and I honestly don't think I learned anything from the class

Lototksy brought an exceptional level of enthusiasm to every lecture. In particular, I especially enjoyed his math stories that he used to start off the class. Such an approach is quite unique and a notable strength of this professor. I think this style is a strength because it fosters a sense of engagement and gets interested students more exited about math.

Great examples, great job at relating real world math history and current ongoings

made resources available to assist with the homework, which was awesome. Did an excellent job at grading work on time and updating BB. It was especially nice to see our weighted average before going into the final. Thank you a lot for that.

He was very passionate about the material and the field of mathematics itself. I enjoyed the little historical tidbits he would include in his lectures from time to time. He structured the course in a way that allowed the students to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the material between the homework assignments, quizzes, exams, and project.

Professor's Lototsky's enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject were very inspiring and I would regard those as his main strengths.

Knew everything

He knows well and a lot.

How might instructor Lototsky improve his or her teaching effectiveness?

Comment

No need for improvement. I believe he's the best professor our Math department has.

Could pull student's into the material better with a strong opening two weeks focused on the macro view of probability.

he is great

While the lectures were interesting, professor Lototsky tended to lecture about subjects that either had little or nothing to do with the material students were required to learn. As a result, the majority of what I learned that was applicable to quizzes and tests was done on my own outside of class.

A better explanation of difficult mathematical concepts will help a lot.

keep doing what you're doing. Thanks.

He gave a lot of stories of Mathematics in class, to boost up our interest. These are all neat stories, but not that relevant. As a result he didn't have spend enough time on difficult concept and examples.
The exams he gave are also ridiculous. They are extremely elementary, and a hundred times easier than regular homework and quizzes. Then what's the point of suffering from the HW and quizzes in the end? The exam should be ideally as difficult as the HW, or he should make the HW easier. He should be more consistent on what are the concepts he expect us to know.

If the class was at least an hour later in the day, not 9am, i could probably walk out with enough knowledge for a Ph.D but since most college students do not function well in the mornings the class is a waste of time.

I don't really know where to begin. I had no idea what was going for about 90 percent of the semester, and didn't even feel as though I could go to him for help because I didn't even know what questions to ask. The examples he gives at the beginning of class, although interesting, make the lectures even more hard to follow. Need to show examples so that students actually know how to do problems rather than just write formulas. That way he can test us on our knowledge rather than our ability to memorize homework questions line for line without understanding anything. Consider using a different textbook.

Not everyone is taking this course as a MATH major. Thus not all of the students are interested in material for a PhD program.

Provide past exams to give a better idea of grading style.

Please present the course in a little easier understanding way for the students to understand, since the professor is too smart

Like many math professors, the professor assumes to much on the part of students' prior knowledge. Often taught as if discussing with graduate students/fellow professors. His teaching style was over the heads of many students. Simpler explanations, repetition, and analogizing variables/problems to more concrete and comprehensible examples would be greatly appreciated.

I really wish we could have spent more time in lecture on material directly pertaining to the course. I would have preferred to gone over concepts more thoroughly (step-by-step) and worked example problems rather than known the history behind the concepts or more difficult/not relevant applications of the course material.

n/a

a little condescending to students who ask questions, make people nervous to ask questions

Having lectures that are more relevant to homework concepts so that students find it more helpful.

relate his lectures to our textbook - we haven't used it once

Smaller Lecture Size.

I often found myself lost in his sometimes overly esoteric explanations. He explains things in a very confusing manner.

I understand he tries to keep the course manageable, but also academically challenging at the same time.
However, I think it would be great if he tries to balance out the two in a different way such as making sure that the students understand the basic concepts first, then providing further information.

Find another profession

Convince the department head to restrict the number of students that can take this class. We had a lot of econ folks who never showed up to lecture and did not particularly care about math. These students brought down the energy of the class .

Keep it up

explain concepts more clearly. The lecture should be less about proofs and more about application

I wish he was clearer in regards to the project. It seemed to be a bit too involved, especially for those individuals who had no previous programming experience.

Professor Lototsky should aim to make the material a little more accessible to his audience. I felt that the class was geared towards Math majors which a 400 level class often is but upon asking my fellow classmates I found out that a lot of the students were Economics and Mathematics majors. In lieu of this, I hope that he will alter his teaching style to incorporate more examples and give students a better understanding of the material instead of merely going through mathematical proofs.

Didn't take the time to explain what he already knew. He talked a lot about what we were not going to be tested on.

Have that we are "undergraduate students" in mind,
Spend more time explaining please. Honestly, most of us do not know what he is talking about.I took survey before! What he added to the class is so complicated that we can hardly understand!

Additional comments?

Comment
Great professor and great class. I learned a lot!
No
Please give reasonable hw assignments so that the TA could answer them. The TA is incredible but some of the questions are even beyond his ability.
Saw at least four students clearly cheating on the last midterm. I feel as though I will end the semester with a good or at least decent grade, but I haven't learned anything and don't deserve it.
407 and 408 should have no more than 30 students per session to be more efficient. Strongly recommand to add more sessions!!
course would've benefitted from a smaller class size
Smart professor

Smaller class sizes would help with instructional effectiveness.

I appreciated that this course stimulated an interest in the subject matter. Overall, this may have been offset by my frustration that the course required much more self teaching (hours of working book problems with a classmate outside the classroom each week and hiring a tutor) than I would have wanted.

annoying how final project utilized matlab when we did not use it at all throughout class (also not prerequisite classes that use matlab)

There was a big discrepancy between the lecture/homework and quiz/exam.
For example, lecture was often vague and unclear because the professor tries to provide academically challenging ideas for students to think about. However, it is difficult to try homework problems just based on the lecture for that reason.
Students often learn about concepts after the quiz and homework (by reviewing them) rather than before working on them.
(The TA tries to help a lot, but it is difficult to go over the concepts, review homework and quiz all at the same time. There was a lot of burden for him.)

this course is extremely important to math/econ majors, for the sake of next semester's students, find a better professor to teach the class

Less students would optimize the learning environment.
Lototsky can give a great lecture, even if you don't understand 1/4 of the material.

Too many students in one class. Upper level course with 60+ students in one room and only 1 professor. Split lecture size in half, 2 sections of 30 for every current section of 60+?

I wish that the size of the class was smaller due to the nature of the material taught. This was the first 400-level math class in which the class size was greater than 20 or 30 students and I would say this did more harm than good. The course material is very delicate and at times challenging to comprehend, so I wish the class size was smaller so that there were more opportunities available to students to ask questions, raise concerns, and have face-time with the professor. I felt like I was just a number, which is not preferred considering this is an upper division math course.

If not for the TA, I would definitely drop this class.