POL 345: Quantitative Analysis and Politics - P06 - Tolya Levshin

Department, division and career level statistics are survey-specific (i.e. the main survey, FRS, Writing Program, and graduate program surveys). Statistics below are based on responses of the course population that completed the same survey questionnaire as this course.

Course Questions - Score Analysis

1. I think that the overall quality of the written assignments was:

2. I think that the overall quality of the readings was:

3. I think that the overall quality of the course was:

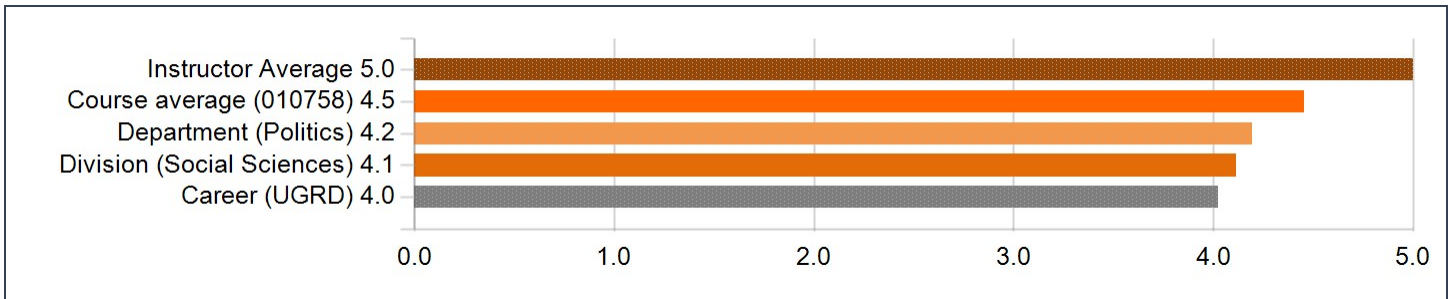|	Resp%	Invited	Resp
I think that the overall quality of the written assignments was:	100 %	12	12
I think that the overall quality of the readings was:	100 %	12	12
I think that the overall quality of the course was:	92 %	12	11

Would you recommend this course to other students?
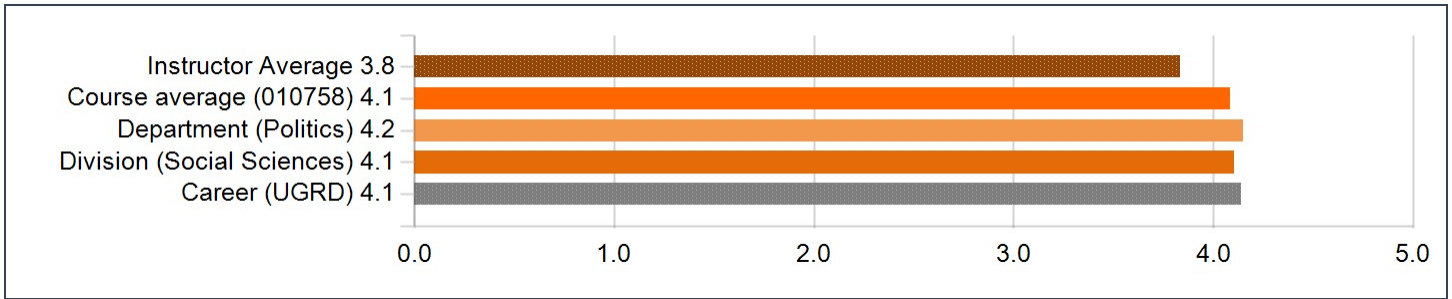
Resp%	Invited	Resp
100 %	12	12

Instructor Questions - Score Analysis

I think that the overall quality of the precepts was:

Resp%	Invited	Resp
100 %	12	12

Course Questions - Frequency Analysis
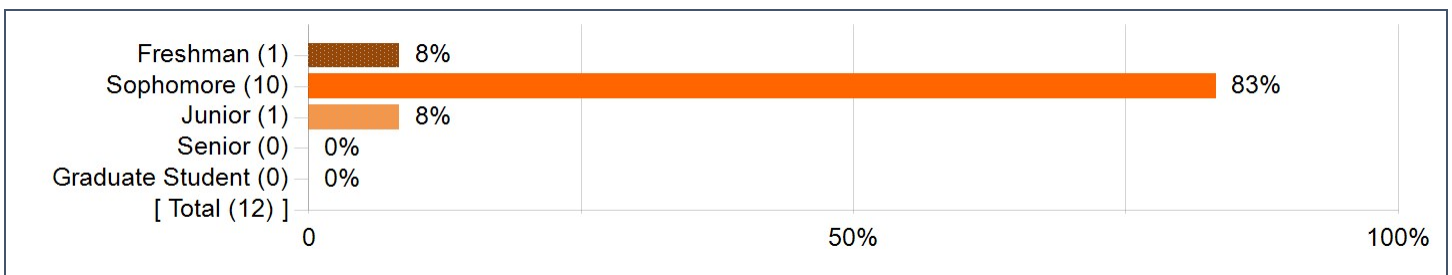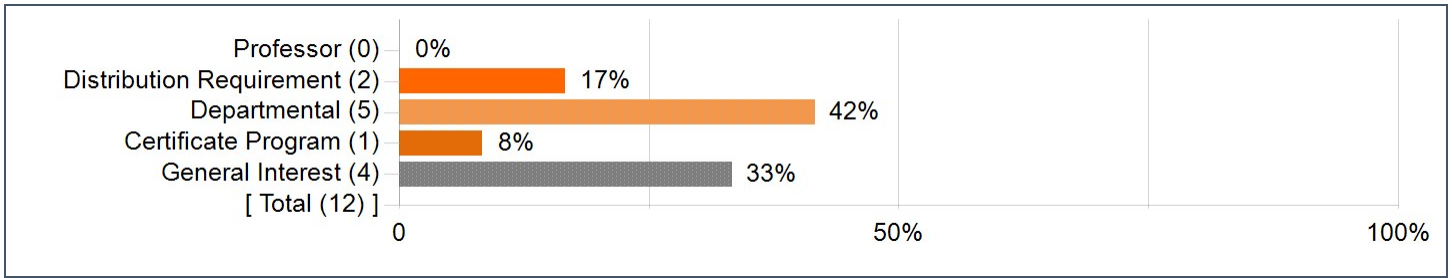
Class Year

Primary reason for taking this course

Professor (0)	0%
Distribution Requirement (2)	17%
Departmental (5)	42%
Certificate Program (1)	8%
General Interest (4)	33%
[Total (12)]	

Percentage of classes you have attended

80-100% (10)	83%
60-80% (1)	8%
40-60% (1)	8%
20-40% (0)	0%
< 20% (0)	0%
[Total (12)]	

Expected grade

A (10)	83%
B (2)	17%
C (0)	0%
D (0)	0%
F (0)	0%
P (0)	0%
[Total (12)]	
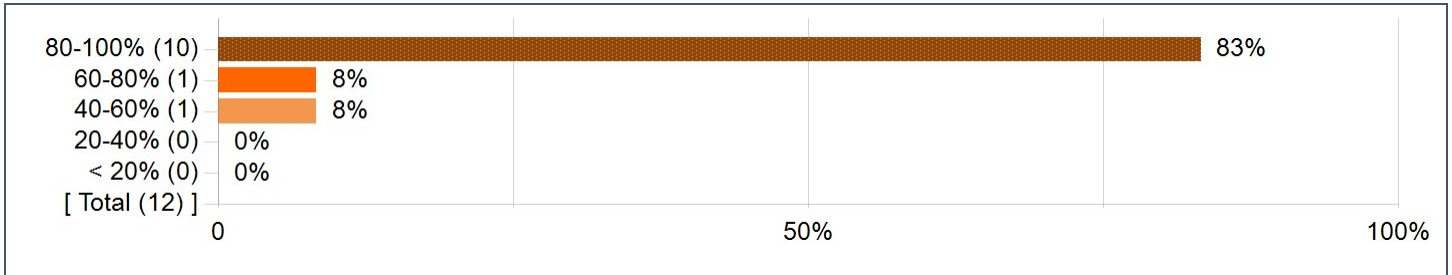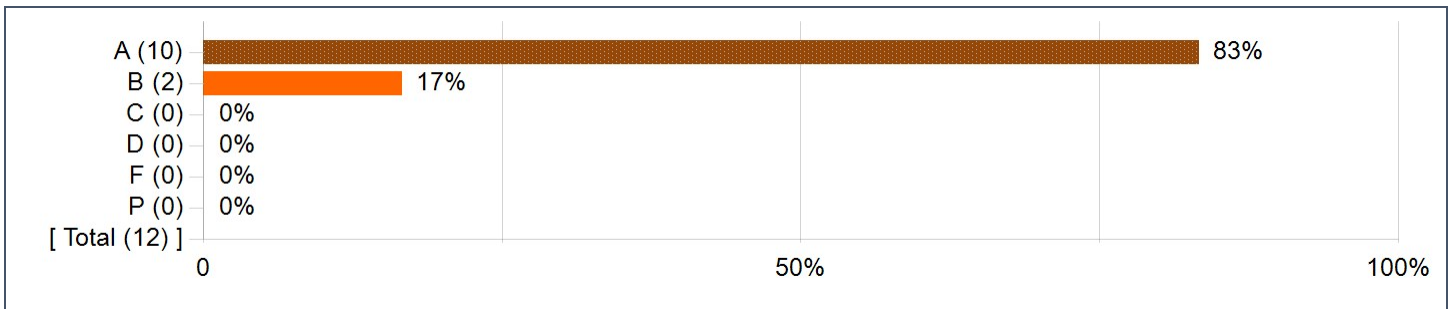
1. I think that the overall quality of the written assignments was:

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	4	33%
Very Good	4	4	33%
Good	3	2	17%
Fair	2	1	8%
Poor	1	1	8%

2. I think that the overall quality of the readings was:

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	1	8%
Very Good	4	6	50%
Good	3	1	8%
Fair	2	4	33%
Poor	1	0	0%

3. I think that the overall quality of the course was:

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	4	36%
Very Good	4	2	18%
Good	3	3	27%
Fair	2	0	0%
Poor	1	2	18%

Would you recommend this course to other students?

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Strongly Recommend	5	6	50%
Recommend	4	1	8%
Neutral	3	2	17%
Recommend Against	2	3	25%
Strongly Recommend Against	1	0	0%

Instructor Questions - Frequency Analysis

I think that the overall quality of the precepts was:

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	12	100%
Very Good	4	0	0%
Good	3	0	0%
Fair	2	0	0%
Poor	1	0	0%

Qualitative Feedback

Why did you take this course? How would you describe your level of engagement in the course?

Comments
I was very engaged in the course and thought it was very interesting.
I absolutely loved this course. I learned so many new skills that are definitely going to come to use in the long run.
I took this course because it was a continuation of POL245 that I did during FSI. I thought that it would also be very helpful for my JPs and Senior Thesis. I would say that my level of engagement in the course was pretty high.
I mostly wanted to learn programming in R and improve my statistics skills.
I took this course because I expected to major in Politics. My decisions has since changed, but I stuck this course out.
I took this course because I needed a stats course for WWS
I took this course because it seemed like the most non-math QR that I could take. I also took it because I was interested in majoring in politics, but this class convinced me otherwise. I was very engaged in this course. I spent a lot of time reading the textbook and doing the problem sets, and I went to every lecture.
I took this course because it was a requirement for Woodrow Wilson School. I had taken a number of stats classes in high school and had background but no experience with R.
Prerequisite for WWS (statistics)
I had no idea what was going on through most of the process. It was only through Tolya's guidance that I was able to be successful. I don't know how I could have made it through without him.

Please comment on the guidance of the instructor(s) in preparing you to do written work, comments in response to written work, and the overall value of the papers, reports, exams, and problem sets to the course.

Comments
The problem sets were very helpful but should really be worth more. I spent a lot of time on them and am surprised at how little credit we get for them.
I think Tolya was an amazing preceptor. He always went out of his way to ensure his students really understood the material. He is by far the best preceptor I have had at Princeton. He would be an amazing professor!
The problem sets were good except for the third one. It was clear that the third one needed to be a bit more streamlined.Even the professor and the preceptors showed signs of discontent with that one. It turned out to be a good bonding experience. I thought the quiz was fair. The midterms were fair as well. It's just that the amount of support, the Swirls, Piazza, and the allowed collaboration were good counter balances to the tediousness and the intensity of problem sets and other examinations.
The problem sets were extremely confusing and much more difficult than what we had learned in class, with the lectures and textbook not explaining things well at all. Tolya walking us through everything was our only saving grace.
Problem Sets, Take Homes, and the In-Class quiz were very fair representations of important materials. I thought that PS and Take Homes took way longer than they should have (especially PS since it's only worth a small fraction of the grade).
The problem sets and take home exams were certainly a learning experience--they were how I learned the material. The take-home exams could have been better designed, however, since they tested material that had barely been covered in lecture.
Tolya was incredible in preparing us for the problem sets and take home exams.I can't thank him enough. He always went out of his way to make sure we were prepared and spent countless hours making review sessions and slides and packets for us. The problem sets were hard, but they became doable with Tolya.
The problem sets were very difficult and the lectures did very little to prepare us for them. Even the textbook information was not enough.
Problem sets were very reasonable - every other week, and they offered lots of help on the difficult ones. As painful as problem sets can be, I have no complaints. The in-class exam was extremely difficult, but test corrections were allowed. I thought the take-home exams were challenging but everything was reasonable.
Very hard
The assignments themselves were brutal. I recall my preceptor using the phrase "those poor undergrads" when speaking to another preceptor about the problem sets. That being said, Tolya did not leave the building until he made sure that everyone in the room understood the material enough to tackle everything that came at us. There's a reason his precepts had the highest average score (Hint: Tolya deserves a medal for the extra work he did to help us).
If not for Tolya (my preceptor) I would not have felt particularly prepared, as the connection between material in lecture and problem sets was not always apparent. But Tolya was incredible!!!

Please comment on the quality of the readings and visuals in the course. Did the readings present the subject matter clearly? To what extent did the readings and visuals stimulate your intellectual curiosity and independent thinking?

Comments
The textbook was very very helpful
I thought the reading material was interesting and very helpful. However, sometimes the reading material wasn't always so clear.
The working book that Professor Imai was working on was general pretty helpful. It was well organized. I think its format could have been a bit more clean. The visuals in class and lecture were very good. I found that the chapters and readings on probability were a little less than necessary. That we could have gotten away with. Maybe just 20 mintues on the most important aspects and how it related to the next chapter.
The textbook, being a draft with us as the guinea pigs, felt very much like a work in progress. Focus on theoretical statistics or programming for a specific course, not both at the same time.
To be fair, the textbook was in its draft stage, but I felt that the book made things more complicated than they had to be.
The textbook was very confusing sometimes. IT covers a lot of material really quickly without a lot of details- so it wasn't always helpful for me because I had literally no background in this subject.
The readings were very informative and explanations of the power points / message boards made everything easier to understand. Examples in the readings were extremely helpful as well!
Good textbook written by the professor
The textbook that Prof. Imai wrote was quite helpful.

Please comment on the quality of the precepts. How did they contribute to your learning in the course? To what extent did the preceptor raise challenging questions, help clarify course material, and encourage broad student participation? Was the preceptor responsive to students' questions, opinions, and criticism?

Comments
Tolya is the most dedicated preceptor I've ever had. He spent countless hours helping us with problem sets, midterm preparation and project help. He genuinely wanted us to learn and appreciate the material and did everything in his power to help us get there.
I think Tolya was an amazing preceptor. He always went out of his way to ensure his students really understood the material. He is by far the best preceptor I have had at Princeton. He would be an amazing professor!
The precepts were excellent. They especially got better after the first half. Tolya was a trooper. Tolya will always be my favorite preceptor of all time! Princeton would be remiss to not make him a tenured professor. His wisdom, compassion, and utter care for the material and his students is truly exceptional. He is simply amazing. Please make him a professor of this university ASAP. I wish I could provide a score above a 5 for the quality of precepts.
Tolya was extraordinary and really a saving grace when the textbook and lectures left us completely lost. He was extremely patient and helpful in organizing study sessions to help us with our problem sets. Tolya is the best preceptor I've ever had at Princeton.
Best preceptor. Clarifies concepts and underlying logic VERY WELL! Even held extra study sessions.
Tolya is one of the best teachers I have ever had. In precept and in outside study sessions that he hosted, he continually proved to be engaging, caring, and a great communicator of complex material. His passion for statistics made me grow to enjoy the subject as well. I cannot stress enough how fantastic Tolya is and how much better he made this class.
INCREDIBLE AND SO HELPFUL. Best preceptor I'll probably ever have.
Tolya Levshin is the best instructor I have ever had in the history of my education. He literally taught me everything I know in this course. His commitment to his students and his knowledge of the subject were truly awe inspiring. About two weeks into the course he noticed that the lectures and the textbook were unhelpful, so he started hosting a study session every Monday. I learned more in these study sessions than in all of the readings and the professor's lectures. But not only that, he also spent hours writing up pamphlets on difficult topics of the course. Again, these pamphlets and study sessions are the only reason I learned anything and was able to complete the problem sets. Without the help of Tolya, I would have been completely lost on all of the assignments. His guidance on the final project and the problem sets was invaluable, and I could not have done it without him. Speaking of awards, you must take all of the teaching awards you have and give them to Tolya. I can guarantee you that no other preceptor on this campus deserves a teaching award more than Tolya. In fact, Tolya should become the new instructor of this course. It may sound like I am being sarcastic or facetious, but it seems like the only way to get across my point of how great of a preceptor Tolya is. Take all of the awards and give them to him. Make him a tenured professor right now. He deserves all of that and more.
Tolya is the best preceptor that I have ever had. He is so incredibly knowledgable, and he is so invested in helping people. He would spend hours making sure everything was reasonable, he held study sessions for hours every week, and he helped me so much. I am very grateful for Tolya. He really wants you to succeed and will do everything he can to help. He deserves an award!
Tolya is the best and most dedicated preceptor I've ever had at Princeton. He was very helpful, always made sure we understood all the material covered and spent a lot of extra time working with us.
This man was the reason I'm passing. I frankly don't know how people manage to get by in this course without someone as dedicated and helpful as Tolya Levshin. He explained the concepts of both the code and the analysis in ways that made sense. He took extra time to teach students one-on-one that I have never seen before in my time at Princeton. He genuinely cared that his students, not only did well, but also gained something from taking the class. I will sign up for any class that I know he will be precepting. He deserves every teaching award that is available to him. I wish there were a higher option than "Excellent" in the list below. Thank you for your dedication. It did not go unappreciated.
Tolya was essentially the teacher for this course. By that I mean, had Tolya not been my preceptor, I'm not sure I would've learned much of anything at all. He not only made the work doable, but did so in such a way that I also loved learning the material. I've never seen a teacher so dedicated to a single course (he'd stay up until 3 or 4 in the morning to prepare booklets and presentations to help guide us through problem sets). I wish Tolya could be my preceptor (or even professor) for every class. Someone should give him his PhD already...

Please comment on the overall quality of the course. What worked particularly well and in what ways might the course be improved?

Comments
This course was really interesting. I wish we focused more on hypothesis testing.
This has been one of my favorite courses at Princeton. Definitely worth taking!
Imai constructed something good here. I really appreciate POL345. There were times where I wanted to pull my hair out with the frsutrating amount of busy work that it demanded. Nonetheless, I got something out of it. I am inspired to take POL346 next semester, as proof of my appreciation and admiration of what this course has produced and taught. It would not have been possible without the stellar performance of the preceptors, particularly Tolya Levshin. I can't say this enough, make that gentleman a professor already!
The course spoke to the general sorry state of statistics at Princeton. Students should be required to come in with a semester of statistics experience so the course can focus entirely on programming and not switch back and forth between complicated programming and theoretical statistics, making everyone extremely confused.
It isn't a great intro stats course in that it is definitely (at least, from what I've heard) the most involved "intro" stats course. If you're interested in going deeper, then take this course. I think teaching more math would be helpful.
Overall I really did not like this course (except for Tolya.) I did not like the subject material, the lectures, and I did not like any of the assignments. This class is actually the reason why I decided I never want to do data analysis or statistics again. I also decided not to become a politics major because of this class. The only thing that made this class bearable was the help from my preceptor Tolya. Without him I would have learned nothing, and I would not have been able to do the assignments or get a good grade. Tolya saved this class.
Great course - very challenging but everything is very reasonable and set up that students should do well. It is very important to not set students up for failure when tackling something so new, and I think the course does everything just right.
Slower pace
The course was unfortunate but manageable with proper instruction and help.

What advice would you give to another student considering taking this course?

Comments
This is a great course. I really enjoyed it.
This has been one of my favorite courses at Princeton. Definitely worth taking! Make sure to reach out to your preceptor if you don't understand concepts.
Start things early. Go to every precept and don't be scared to engage in lecture. It will be dull if you don't. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Please, develop a relationship with the preceptor and know that Imai is always willing to meet to help you with almost anything. He knows his stuff, he cares about his course, and he loves to help his students. The course will be annoying at times, but the pay off is pretty good. It is solid class that I hope you consider. It will help you realize how numbers and statistics make a story. You'll learn how to read those stories and better understand what is noise and what is the good stuff. WWS people, I highly recommend that you take this so that you are not just a consumer of statistics, but actually someone who could implement models, regressions, and informative graphs in your papers and policy projects. Once again, it is a very good class. Don't make a dread, rather make it an opportunity to develop important skills that you can later hone. Oh, if you ever see Tolya Levshin of the Politics department, make sure to thank him for making POL 345 better for future students.
Come in having already learned some statistics or programming, otherwise both, or you will be completely lost. Hope you win the preceptor lottery, or otherwise you're screwed.
If you're POL/WWS and don't like linear, don't take this... take WWS 200 instead. If you just need a basic stats class, look into the SML course offerings. I liked the course because of my preceptor (unfortunately, he probably will not stay on board), so if you find a good preceptor, then it will be worth your time. I actually learned a lot about data analysis. It just was a lot of work.
Take it with Tolya! The course goes really fast and covers a lot, so if you've never done any coding with R before be prepared to keep up. Lectures really just go over the textbook readings, so they weren't always helpful, but problem sets normally stuck closely to the examples from the text and precepts. Tolya and Ted were fantastic preceptors. They hosted review sessions and were basically the only reason I did so well. I can't thank Tolya enough. He always went out of his way to make sure we were prepared and spent countless hours making review sessions and slides and packets for us. The problem sets were hard, but they became doable with Tolya. If you need a stats class, this one isn't too terrible. With office hours and the preceptors, it's possible to get a good grade even with no experience.
Only take this class if you need it for a QR or you know that you love statistics or data analysis. The lectures and readings are incredibly boring and the problem sets are very difficult. If you can, take another course for a QR if you do not want to be a politics major. But if you are going to take this class, make sure to choose Tolya Levshin as a preceptor.
Take this course if it is an option for a requirement. Previous background is not necessary, and, as long as you work hard, they will make sure that you succeed.
It's hard, but interesting and really useful
Only take this course if you absolutely have to.
There are two things difficult about this course: the unit on probability and the coding in R. If you've learn pretty basic probability before that part is easy. If you've taken some cos before, the coding is easy too. The preceptors for this class are exceptional and ultimately make it pretty easy (though if you haven't done the math or the coding it'll probably be a bit more challenging).

# POL 345: Quantitative Analysis and Politics - P07 - Tolya Levshin

Department, division and career level statistics are survey-specific (i.e. the main survey, FRS, Writing Program, and graduate program surveys). Statistics below are based on responses of the course population that completed the same survey questionnaire as this course.

Course Questions - Score Analysis

1. I think that the overall quality of the written assignments was:

Instructor Average 3.3
Course average (010758) 3.8
Department (Politics) 3.8
Division (Social Sciences) 3.7
Career (UGRD) 3.8

2. I think that the overall quality of the readings was:

Instructor Average 3.2
Course average (010758) 3.5
Department (Politics) 3.8
Division (Social Sciences) 3.8
Career (UGRD) 3.8

3. I think that the overall quality of the course was:

Instructor Average 3.8
Course average (010758) 3.9
Department (Politics) 4.0
Division (Social Sciences) 3.9
Career (UGRD) 4.0

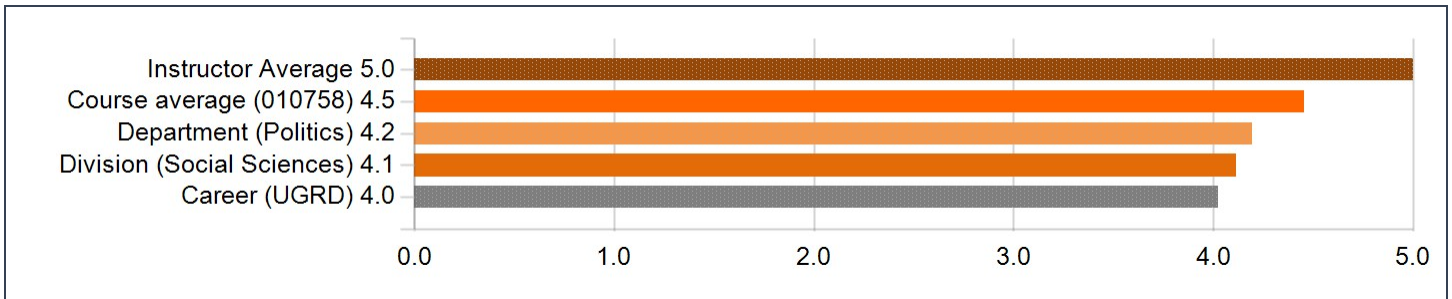|	Resp%	Invited	Resp
I think that the overall quality of the written assignments was:	86 %	7	6
I think that the overall quality of the readings was:	86 %	7	6
I think that the overall quality of the course was:	86 %	7	6

Would you recommend this course to other students?
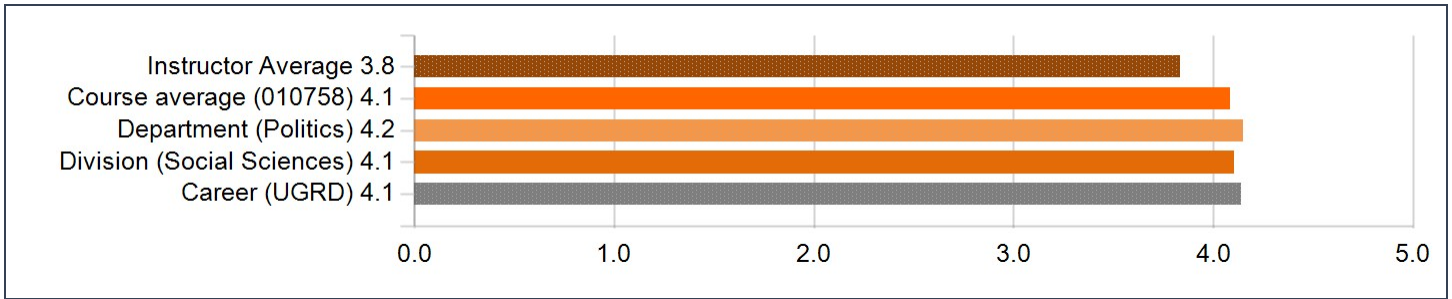
Resp%	Invited	Resp
86 %	7	6

Instructor Questions - Score Analysis

I think that the overall quality of the precepts was:

Resp%	Invited	Resp
86 %	7	6

Course Questions - Frequency Analysis
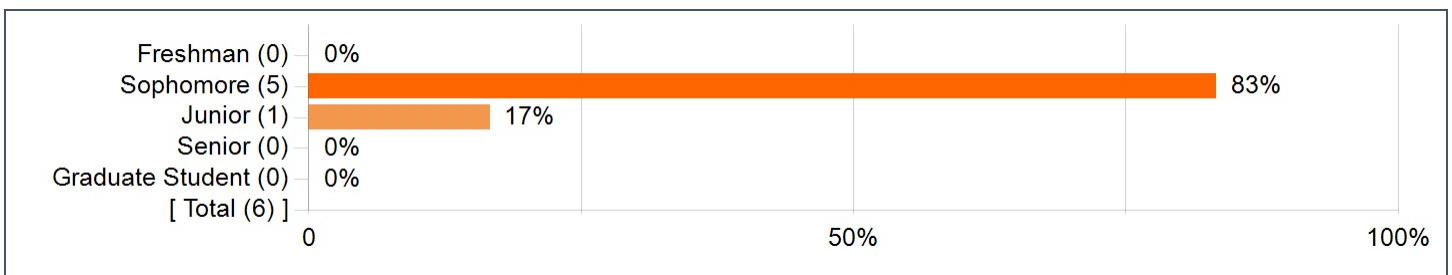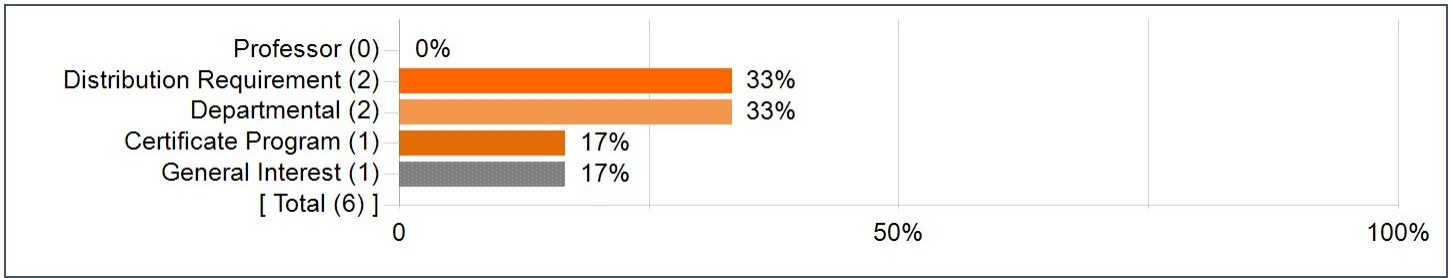
Class Year

Primary reason for taking this course

Professor (0)	0%
Distribution Requirement (2)	33%
Departmental (2)	33%
Certificate Program (1)	17%
General Interest (1)	17%
[Total (6)]	

Percentage of classes you have attended

80-100% (5)	83%
60-80% (1)	17%
40-60% (0)	0%
20-40% (0)	0%
< 20% (0)	0%
[Total (6)]	

Expected grade

A (6)	100%
B (0)	0%
C (0)	0%
D (0)	0%
F (0)	0%
P (0)	0%
[Total (6)]	
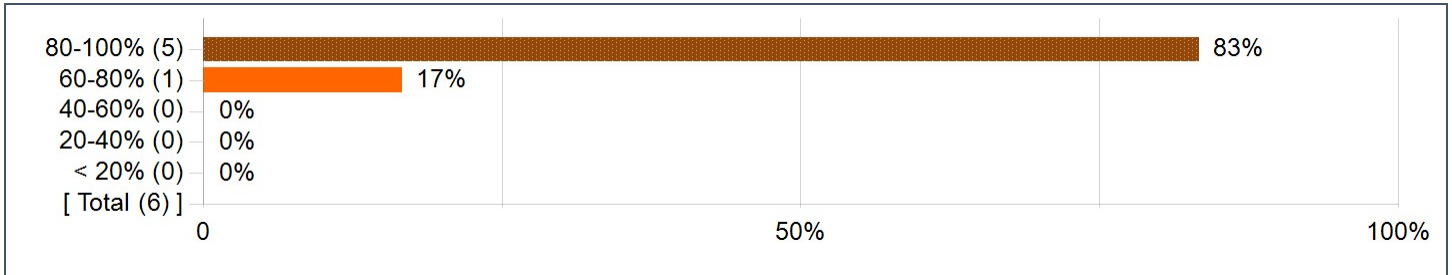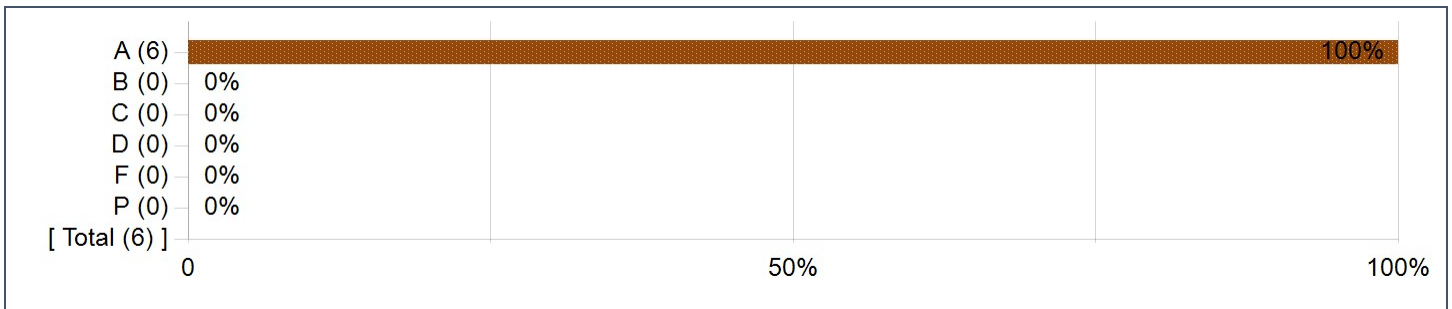
1. I think that the overall quality of the written assignments was:

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	0	0%
Very Good	4	3	50%
Good	3	2	33%
Fair	2	1	17%
Poor	1	0	0%

2. I think that the overall quality of the readings was:

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	0	0%
Very Good	4	3	50%
Good	3	2	33%
Fair	2	0	0%
Poor	1	1	17%

3. I think that the overall quality of the course was:

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	1	17%
Very Good	4	4	67%
Good	3	0	0%
Fair	2	1	17%
Poor	1	0	0%

Would you recommend this course to other students?

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Strongly Recommend	5	1	17%
Recommend	4	4	67%
Neutral	3	0	0%
Recommend Against	2	1	17%
Strongly Recommend Against	1	0	0%

Instructor Questions - Frequency Analysis

I think that the overall quality of the precepts was:

Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	6	100%
Very Good	4	0	0%
Good	3	0	0%
Fair	2	0	0%
Poor	1	0	0%

Qualitative Feedback

Why did you take this course? How would you describe your level of engagement in the course?

Comments
I wanted to learn statistics, explore politics, and find out whether I was interested in data analysis. I was very engaged in the course and took an active role in seeking help.
I took this course for the QR, and because I am considering majoring in politics and interested in statistics. I was very engaged in the course.
Interested in majoring in politics or Woody-Wu. I was engaged in the course throughout, but found spending time with preceptors more helpful than lectures.
I took this course as a prerequisite for Woody Woo and I would say I stayed consistently very engaged in the course.
I hope to pursue the certificate in statistics and machine learning, for which this course is one of the possible requirements.
Took it only for the requirement - not very engaged in the lecture, very engaged in precept.

Please comment on the guidance of the instructor(s) in preparing you to do written work, comments in response to written work, and the overall value of the papers, reports, exams, and problem sets to the course.

Comments
The assignments--except for maybe Problem Set 3--were all well-designed, informative and fun learning exercises.
The problem sets generally weren't that bad, and were good preparation for tests, with the exception of the third one... That was a headache, and the amount of time I spent working on it before it they decided to make it extra credit threw off my entire week. Tests and quizzes were reasonable and graded fairly.
The assignments were all very standard. There was only one problem set that seemed unfair, whereas the in-class and take home exams were fair in terms of the material that was covered and explained.
Problem sets and projects were very helpful in making sure we understood the concepts and feedback on all the work was great.
The problem sets were interesting instructive, though there seemed to be some issues with the third problem set (it was very significantly more difficult than the rest).
The assignments were so hard that the preceptors' offices were full 24/7. They tested things we never learned in class.

Please comment on the quality of the readings and visuals in the course. Did the readings present the subject matter clearly? To what extent did the readings and visuals stimulate your intellectual curiosity and independent thinking?

Comments
The slides were excellent and well-organized.
The readings were basically clear, although some key explanations were occasionally missing.
The readings were very helpful, especially early on in the course. When it came to more detailed statistical concepts I found that talking with preceptors helped to elucidate the readings. I don't think I could've just read the book and understood statistics, though. It left things unclear at times.
Textbook started off pretty good but got more complicated/confusing as the course went on. (Sometimes it seemed some of the code/info was not useful or I was confused as to why they were telling us something.)
The textbook explained concepts very well, and the supplementary materials that some of the preceptors provided were very helpful.
Imai wrote a textbook (that is not quite done) and used this class as a test drive for the book. The book is awful, doesn't explain concepts well, and is poorly-written.

Please comment on the quality of the precepts. How did they contribute to your learning in the course? To what extent did the preceptor raise challenging questions, help clarify course material, and encourage broad student participation? Was the preceptor responsive to students' questions, opinions, and criticism?

Comments
You did a good job of covering the tricky parts of units during precept, so that I felt prepared to tackle assignments afterward. I preferred when you switched to concept- rather coding-based precepts because I learned much more from each session. I also really liked what you said in your concluding remarks on the course. In general, you are impressively in tune with whatever students do not understand and know exactly how to fix their problems. Thank you so much for being an amazing teacher!
Precepts were very useful and challenging. Unlike in lectures, we actually covered material that wasn't in the textbook. I always got very helpful answers to questions.
Without a doubt the best preceptor I've had, and expect to ever have. Tolya's dedication to his students was remarkable, and he is without a doubt the reason that many of his students passed the course. Time spent in office hours was much more helpful than the lectures or reading the books, because his ability to explain the material was unparalleled even compared to the Professor. I was really in awe of Tolya did this semester, sacrificing his time and health for his students when things were left unclear.
BEST PRECEPTOR EVER. I can't say much more. Because this is anonymous I can say I feel like I learned about 70% of the material just through the extra review slides, review sessions, office hours, etc. that my preceptor (and the precepting team) put on.
Tolya was incredible. Every week, he prepared extra materials to more clearly explain concepts covered in the lecture and in the textbook, and he ran problem sessions which were unbelievably well-attended. Precepts with him were excellent.
Easily the best preceptor I've had at Princeton. Without Tolya, this class would have been impossible and I would have dropped it immediately. His consistent encouragement and patience with students is something I don't see too often at Princeton. He spent SO much time with us and really dedicated himself to ensuring that we understood all the things that Professor Imai failed to get across. Tolya is amazing.

Please comment on the overall quality of the course. What worked particularly well and in what ways might the course be improved?

Comments
Overall, I enjoyed the class and thought what you said at the beginning about POL 345 being demanding but worthwhile was accurate. I was mostly impressed by the structure and thorough nature of the course. I also appreciated how much help was available from you, the preceptors, study/review sessions and Piazza. I like QSS, but wish that in the chapters for the second half of the course you provided as much annotation and explanation of the code as you did for the first half. The textbook seemed to assume after a few chapters that what it was saying was self-evident, but I often could not tell the screenshots of R were supposed to be doing on a line-by-line basis, so I recommend elaborating the chapters on regression, probability, uncertainty, etc. I also recommend slightly shifting the course timeline so that if the problem set is due on Wednesday, the last lesson related to that problem set takes place a week before, giving students enough time to learn and ask questions about the concept before applying it in the assignment. Instead of splitting regression into one unit before probability and one unit after, we should do all of regression after probability, so that we have enough time to master probability instead of rushing to learn regression and probability all before the probability problem set. The quiz should also not be right after Problem Set 3, which is very difficult and time-consuming, since students don't have enough time to study; a week's delay could be helpful.
Piazza was an excellent resource, and I really appreciate how quickly questions were answered by the instructors. Generally, the book was very useful. The course could really be improved by somehow changing the content or presentation of the lectures so that it's not an exact repeat of the readings. Maybe the course would be better in a class format instead of a lecture format, so that there is more emphasis on precept-style activities.
The course was really saved by the preceptors. Especially in the second half of the course, it would be incredibly helpful to cover the statistical intuition behind the material so that the preceptor aren't tasked with discussing the material and then explaining different ways of application.
This is an interesting course.
This is a terrible course. You need to change the lecturer or at least instruct him on how to teach.

What advice would you give to another student considering taking this course?

Comments
POL 345 is very time-consuming, more so than MAT 104 or 202 (though less intellectually straining and painful than them, so don't worry--all you have to do is budget a lot of time), but definitely manageable and really rewarding if you put in the effort. I came in with no stats or programming experience and walked away actually knowing how to analyze statistics and use R, so I would definitely recommend the course. Professor Imai's lectures and textbook are good, particularly for the first half of the class. But he doesn't always make the material understandable, especially in the second half of the course, when the concepts became harder and his descriptions don't help enough, the textbook stops explaining many things, and class is not organized as well (with assignments due two days after or even before we cover concepts essential to completing them). Professor Imai didn't shape my experience, since outside of his two hours of lecture per week, I spent much more time learning POL 345 from Tolya Levshin (!), the best preceptor ever. He's one of the greatest and most dedicated teachers I've had in my life and one of my favorite people that I've met this year, so absolutely take this class with Tolya if he precepts again! He will make everything crystal clear, put in countless hours preparing slides and booklets and talking to you to help you with whatever you need, and give you a rock solid foundation for statistics that you almost certainly won't find anywhere else at Princeton.
This course teaches very useful skills, and it's actually kind of fun. However, as someone who went to every lecture, going to lecture is not necessary if you do the readings and mostly understand them--it's an exact repeat, and the book is more complete than lecture. On the other hand, precepts are useful. The preceptors are amazingly helpful and really want you to succeed. If you put in the time and take advantage of their review sessions, it's not a difficult class to do well in.
In the beginning it seems to be a coding course, but never forget you have to master the statistical intuition behind what you're doing. It always gets harder, so be prepared to spend lots of time digesting the material and even more time applying it to problem sets and exams.
I would only recommend this if Tolya Levshin or Brandon are precepting. If they are, they will make it as positive an experience as they can!
This is an enjoyable course! If Tolya is precepting, sign up for his.
Get Tolya as your preceptor!!! It is the only way you will survive the course. Professor Imai is a terrible lecturer, so be prepared to teach yourself directly from the book.