

CS 558 (A1): Computer Networks Security

Spring 2023 | Gabriel Kaptchuk

60	Students Enrolled
19	Students Responded
31.67%	Response Rate

Quantitative

	(1) Low	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) High	N	DNA	SD	M	
Relevance of assigned readings	5.26% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	10.53% (2)	84.21% (16)	19	0	0.92	4.68	
	Easy	Moderately Easy	Neither Easy nor Difficult	Moderately Difficult	Difficult	N	DNA	SD	M	
Difficulty of course	0% (0)	5.26% (1)	42.11% (8)	47.37% (9)	5.26% (1)	19	0	0.68	3.53	
	Light	Moderately Light	Neither Light nor Heavy	Moderately Heavy	Heavy	N	DNA	SD	M	
Workload in course	0% (0)	5.26% (1)	63.16% (12)	21.05% (4)	10.53% (2)	19	0	0.74	3.37	
<i>Course Evaluation</i>	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A	N	DNA	SD	M
Overall rating of discussion instructor (if applicable)	0% (0)	0% (0)	5.26% (1)	10.53% (2)	63.16% (12)	21.05% (4)	19	0	0.57	4.73
Overall rating of lab instructor (if applicable)	0% (0)	5.26% (1)	5.26% (1)	5.26% (1)	52.63% (10)	31.58% (6)	19	0	0.93	4.54
Usefulness of assignments and papers	5.26% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	26.32% (5)	68.42% (13)	0% (0)	19	0	0.94	4.53
Overall course rating	5.26% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	21.05% (4)	73.68% (14)	0% (0)	19	0	0.94	4.58
<i>Faculty Evaluation</i>	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N	DNA	SD	M	
Effectiveness in explaining concepts	5.26% (1)	0% (0)	5.26% (1)	15.79% (3)	73.68% (14)	19	0	0.99	4.53	
Ability to stimulate interest in subject	5.26% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	10.53% (2)	84.21% (16)	19	0	0.92	4.68	
Encouragement of class participation	5.26% (1)	0% (0)	5.26% (1)	26.32% (5)	63.16% (12)	19	0	0.99	4.42	
Fairness in grading	0% (0)	10.53% (2)	10.53% (2)	10.53% (2)	68.42% (13)	19	0	1.04	4.37	
Promptness in returning assignments	5.26% (1)	15.79% (3)	5.26% (1)	10.53% (2)	63.16% (12)	19	0	1.33	4.11	
Quality of feedback to students	5.56% (1)	5.56% (1)	5.56% (1)	16.67% (3)	66.67% (12)	18	0	1.15	4.33	
Availability outside of class	11.11% (2)	5.56% (1)	5.56% (1)	27.78% (5)	50% (9)	18	0	1.33	4	
Overall rating of instructor	0% (0)	5.56% (1)	5.56% (1)	22.22% (4)	66.67% (12)	18	0	0.83	4.5	

Qualitative

Strengths of the course and of the instructor: -
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He had an interest in the subject that was palpable and you could tell he was very excited and knowledgeable about the topic Gabe was so good at explaining even the toughest of parts of network sec. The drawing on the slides and the pace was perfect for note taking which was ideal for me to retain information. The passion that he as instructor has for the subject is apparent and the inclusion of current events and blog posts was something that really made him stand out as a professor. Triggers my interest in security. Gabe is clearly very passionate about the stuff he teaches. Gabe is knowledgeable and is able to explain concepts well. He keeps the class interested. He is also very understanding and wants students to do well. He doesn't set crazy deadlines for assignments, which is really good. He teaches the latest material in his class, which is great! He is honest about what he doesn't know and that's refreshing. It is a well designed course, covering all the important aspects to actually understand how computer networks work and what causes security lapses in these networks and how we are figuring out ways to correct it. Instructor makes the class super interesting. Some of the concepts which are difficult to understand are explained with such clarity and innovative approach that it makes the concept fun to learn. He is humorous, so the class is usually active. I really enjoyed the course structure, and the outside reading did add to my understanding of the course material, I felt like asking questions about the reading made sense when it was a paper, but when we're reading a regular article and we almost covered everything in class I found it difficult to come up with questions. The course form where we start with basic crypto and then move on to explore different protocols made sense and was helpful. I personally enjoyed the course and found it very eye opening, would defiantly consider doing work in this field in the future. I also appreciated the gray look the professor provided us in terms of complicated real world issues that relate to cryptography. Thanks Professor! This was a very fun and interesting class! I enjoyed the material a lot, and I appreciated that the professor talks a bit about politics and censorship as well. The Professor was very engaging, and did a great job lecturing. I attended every lecture, but I still appreciated that he recorded the lectures as an additional resource. One of the best instructors in BU
Weaknesses of the course and of the instructor: -
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I thought the lack of office hours was a bit difficult. Since Julie didn't have office hours, that meant there was about one hour a week we could seek help outside class, and if you can't make it then, then you have to rely on piazza. I thought the TA / professor were very slow to reply on piazza. I would have questions go unanswered anywhere from 3-5 days on average. Additionally, I don't think the homeworks should have been due on Mondays. I respect that the professor goes offline for the weekend, but that meant that if we had any questions come up in the 2-3 days leading up to the due date, there was no one around to answer them, as the professor was not online, and the TA was very slow / unresponsive to answer questions. Also, I felt like the grading of the review questions was a bit harsh. I would get many points off for not answering questions that were not explicitly asked. My answer would answer the questions posed, but there were details or side topics that apparently I was supposed to write about as well, and I could have written about it, I just didn't know I was supposed to. So I think the review questions should have been a lot more specific in what they were asking. I wished that the heaviest parts of the course relating to TLS and Tor were given at the begging, and then we do the rest of the protocols after, that way we won't be stuck programming at the end of the semester. The grading for the review questions was very random, I would put a very long paragraph and explanation and I wouldn't mention the thing that was request and would get points taken off. I wish there could be more details in what's required in these questions because they were supposed to be there for us to get grades not lose them. :) Need more clear explanation about the assignments. Course is very well thought out. I believe the only positive improvement that we can make to the course is by making the slides clearer. Most of the slides cover diagrams and the way professor teaches is really good. But other than the annotated class slides and recordings, if we can get the slides with clear diagrams of static concepts like working of ARP, BGP, DNS, TLS, SSH etc. It will be a positive improvement because sometimes even after attending the class its difficult to understand the slides later without referring to the lecture recordings which takes a lot of time. The Heartbleed assignment is a little difficult and the Tor assignment is a little vague and difficult to figure out. It seemed like there was barely any assistance from him in helping grade assignments or responding to piazza posts which meant a lot of waiting for us students. His office hours were extremely unclear when they would be for each week. Additionally, it was like he did not know the homework assignments at all when I would go to ask him with help on it, and they were also extremely buggy to run on our computers (especially if you had a Mac), with little to no assistance from him. Multiple times throughout the semester, there were some issues with the homework that he did not know how to solve and still left us to figure it out on our own. I think instructor should slow down when explaining TLS or Tor. Since, the topics after DNS are a bit difficult. It could help to go through some of the technicalities that were necessary for coding assignments in class, since this class is intended for upperclassmen and graduate students that wasn't the biggest issue, and it made me and my classmates really delve into the course material and read documentation which was very educational. Available for one hour once a week and would not know any information about the homework assigned. Piazza posts were not answered quickly and often didn't provide a good solution to people's problems. The homework always had errors that everyone would complain about and were known to the teacher and TA and would cause us to be unable to run code, and yet the teachers would still say they couldn't help us fix it. Homeworks were returned over a month after they were due, and we are missing about 30% of our grade leading up to the final so we don't know how we are doing in the class. Professor talked super fast and said at the beginning of the class that us asking him to slow down was not reasonable and said to watch Zoom recordings if we didn't catch something, but the Zoom recordings often had connectivity issues and would cause us to not be able to learn the content.

General Comments -
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This course was a highlight of my senior year. The lectures were incredibly interesting, yet also accessible to someone who does not have a strong background in crypto and cybersecurity. Thank you for a great semester!• Excellent!• Overall, extremely frustrating course which is unfortunate to say as someone who wants to go into security. I cannot say I learned as much as I would have liked to.• Enjoyable course with loads of learning! I actually enjoyed learning more in-depth details about some things that I had only done the basics of before and some that I had never done!• The professor is nice and professional, but the TA really brings some confusion to students in the assignments.• Don't lose this professor BU. He is one of the best. Try to make him stay.• Gabe did a nice job of clearly explaining complicated concepts. He answers questions well and made it easy to ask questions during class. He was also flexible as necessary and understood that sometimes things come up for students.