



**University  
of Victoria**

## **UVic CES Instructor Report 201801 - John Volpe - ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES - ES 240 - A01 (CRN 21493)**

### **UVic Course Experience Survey - Spring 2018**

Project Audience 122  
Responses Received 51  
Response Ratio 42%

#### **Subject Details**

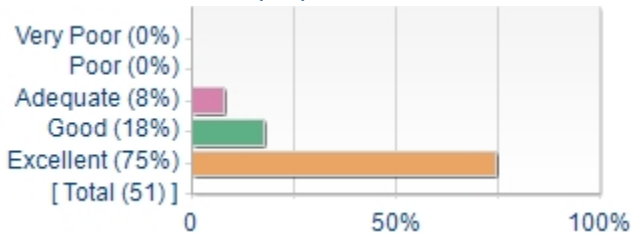
<b>CRN</b>	21493
<b>VNUMBER</b>	V00102225

**Creation Date** Mon, Apr 30, 2018



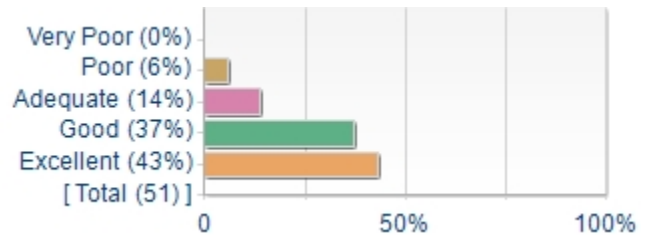
## I Instructor's Teaching - Students' Ratings on the Following Statements:

1. The instructor was prepared for course sessions



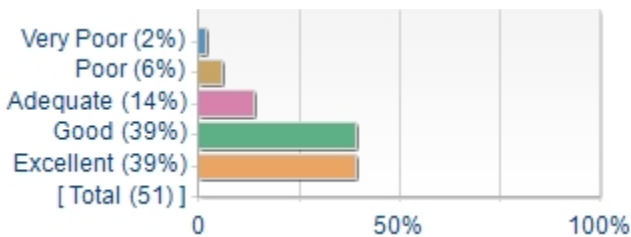
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.67
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	0.62

2. The instructor's explanations of concepts were clear



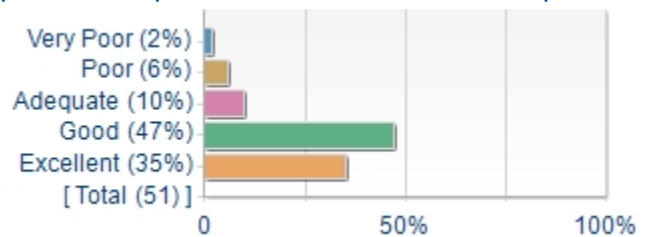
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.18
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.89

3. The instructor motivated you to learn in this course



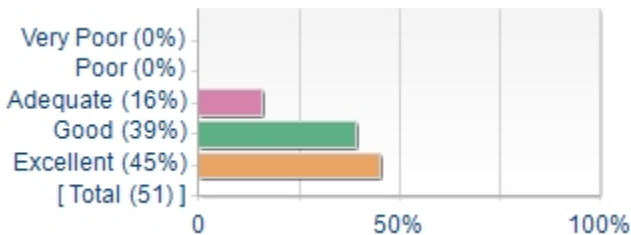
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.08
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.98

4. The instructor was available to answer your questions or provide extra assistance as required



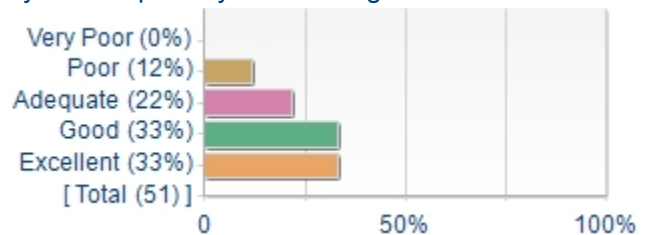
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.08
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.93

5. The instructor ensured that your assignments and tests were returned within a reasonable time



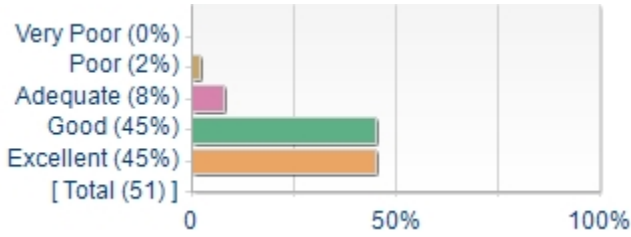
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.29
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.73

6. The instructor was helpful in providing feedback to you to improve your learning in this course

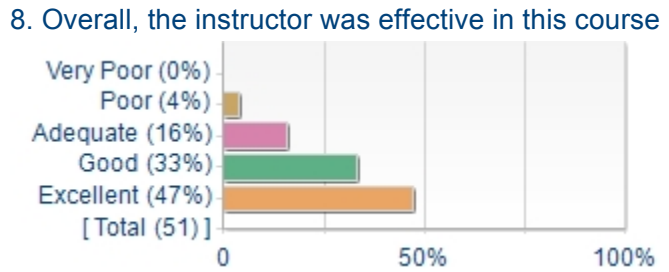


Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	3.88
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.01

7. The instructor demonstrated respect for students and their ideas



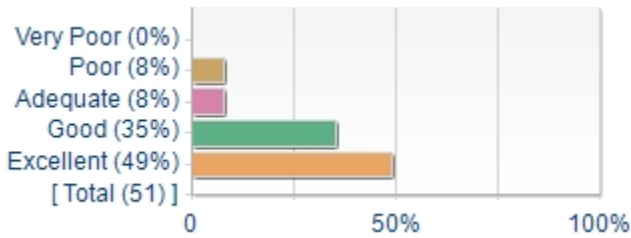
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.33
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.71



Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.24
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.86

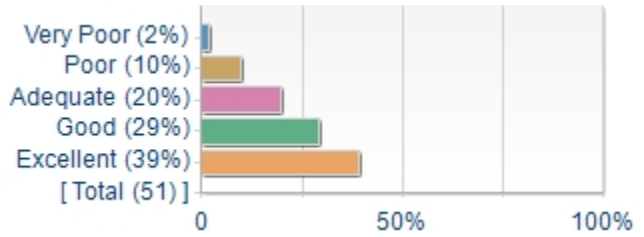
## II Course Design - Students' Ratings on the Following Statements:

1. The course structure, goals and requirements were clear



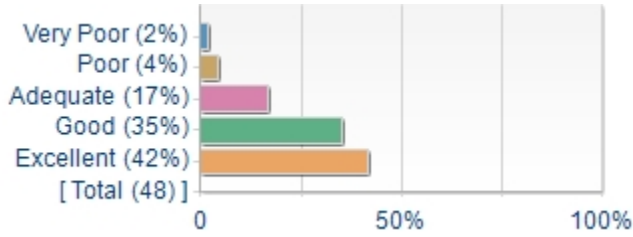
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.25
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.91

2. The materials provided for learning the course content (e.g. handouts, posted material, lab manuals) were clear



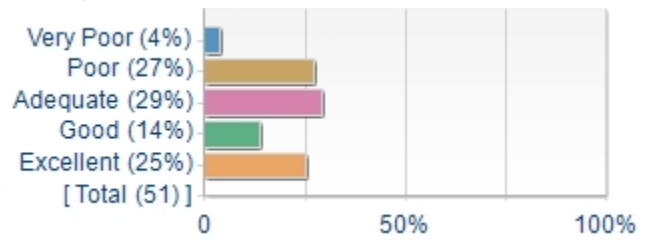
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	3.94
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.08

3. The assigned work helped your understanding of the course content



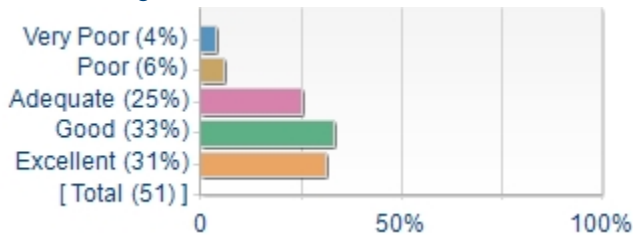
Statistics	Value
Response Count	48
Mean	4.10
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.97

4. The course provided opportunities for you to become engaged with the course material, for example through class discussions, group work, student presentations, on-line chat, or experiential learning



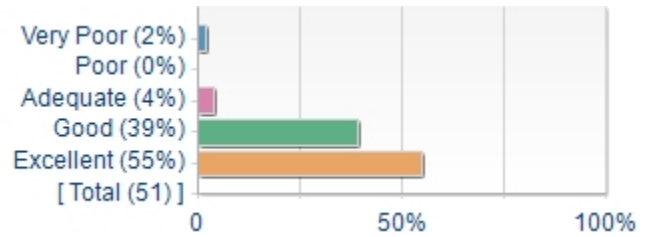
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	3.29
Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.24

5. The methods of assessment used to evaluate your learning in the course were fair



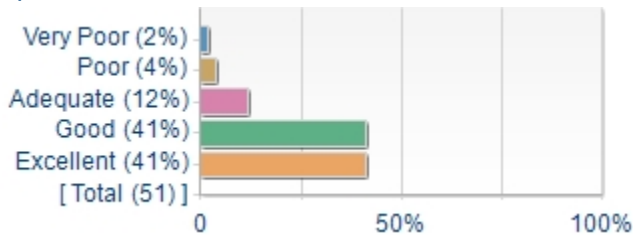
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	3.82
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.07

6. The course provided relevant skills and information (e.g. to other courses, your future career, or other contexts)



Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.45
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	0.76

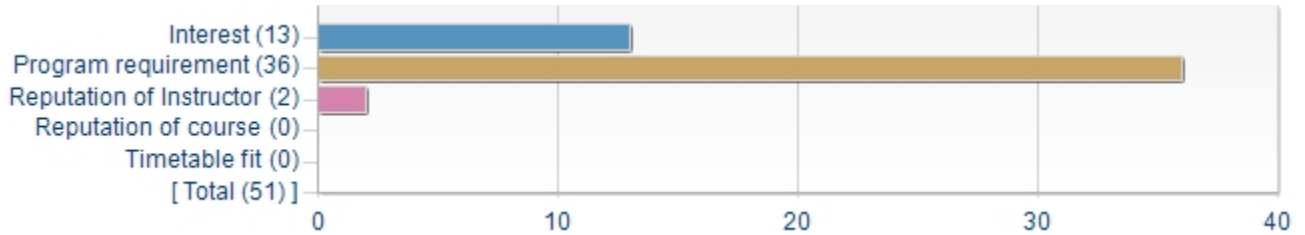
7. Overall, the course offered an effective learning experience



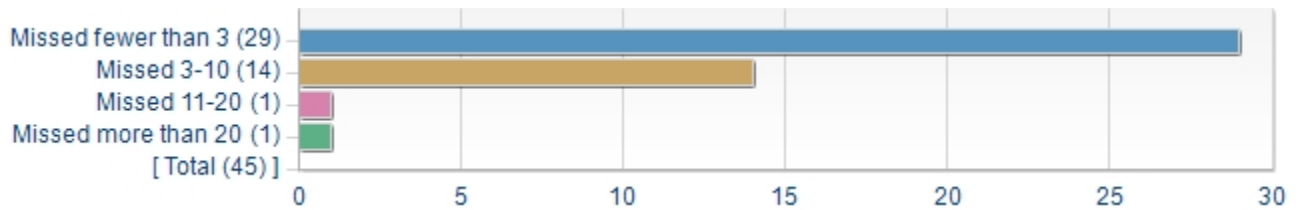
Statistics	Value
Response Count	51
Mean	4.16
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	0.92

### III Statements About The Students:

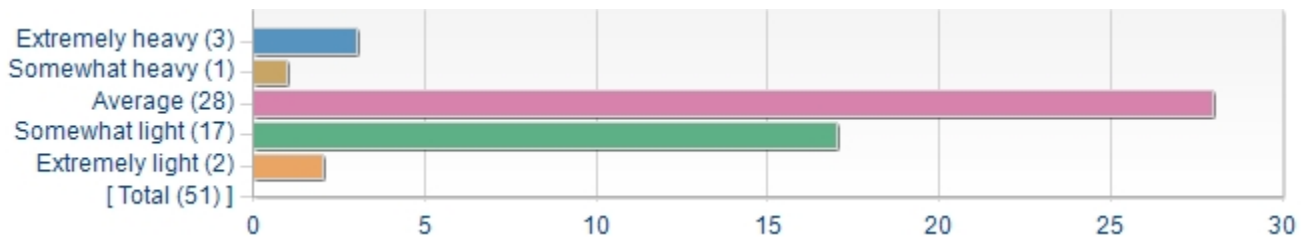
#### My primary reason for taking the course.



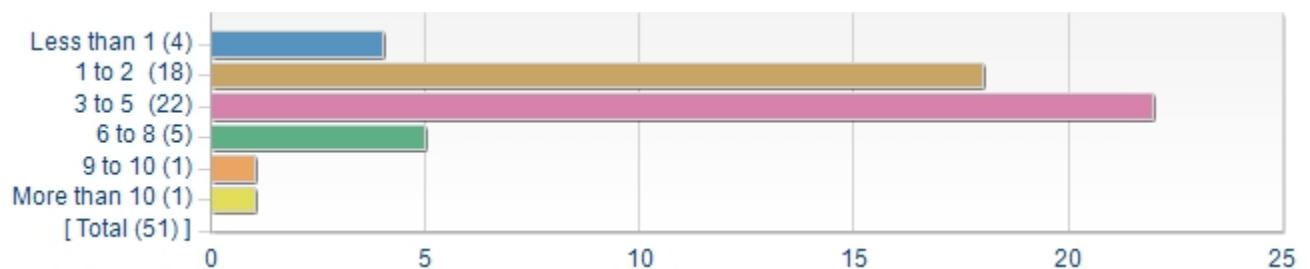
#### The approximate number of classes or labs that I did not attend



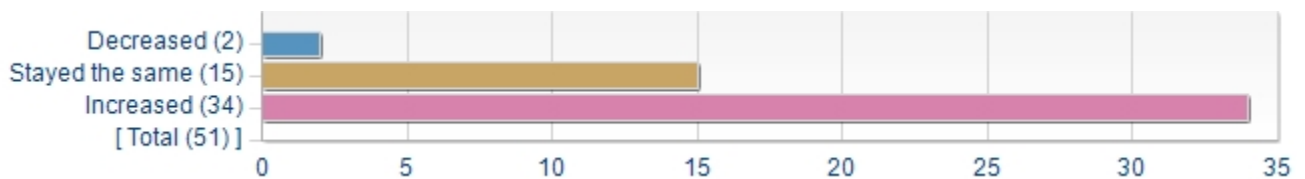
#### Relative to other courses I have taken at UVic, the workload in this course was



#### The approximate number of hours per week I spent studying for this course outside of class time:



#### As a result of my experience in this course, my interest in the material:



## IIV Student Comments:

### What strengths did your instructor (**John Volpe**) demonstrate that helped you learn in this course?

Comments
He was punctual
taking time to explain concepts and concepts layered one another to demonstrate great over understanding of ecological processes. Good chronological order of material
–Self study questions provided were helpful and relevant to the quizzes we took –Overall nice and respectful
he was very knowledgeable.
Demonstrated thorough understanding of the material presented
John gave multiple examples to explain the concepts and made sure they were clear to everyone to understand. He frequently asked the class if they understood, and gave time for the students to ask questions. He is very helpful and inspires his students to learn.
Super interesting material that challenged by pre conceived perceptions, provided an interesting new perspective on ecology that was more than just the rigid scientific components. Loved the way the scientific process was challenged and the flaws were analyzed. Learned a lot if really interesting, completely new material.
Very good lectures. He explains things in simplified and effective ways.
Great lecturing style that made course concepts interesting and engaging. I thoroughly enjoyed this course and found explanations clear and comprehensible.
Very interesting lecture, made me very motivated to learn the content
– Preparedness – Strong knowledge and experience in environmental sciences – Open to discussion and questions with students (engagingness)
Truly fascinating and engaging lectures. He clearly has an extensive breadth of knowledge in the field and a far-reaching perspective on the issues he tackles. I really appreciated his references to specific authors and publications in his slides which provided great ways to further knowledge in certain areas of particular interest. Overall a fantastic professor.
Interesting guy, interesting ideas
John was great all around! I really enjoyed his lectures.
Dr Volpe is really knowledgeable and lectured the material well.
Was able to explain differently and or give different examples if a certain wasn't understood in full the first time around.
He was very knowledgeable about the various topics we discussed in lecture.
Volpe wants to know students are engaged and actually learning. He won't move on from topics unless he feels like the class as a whole has understood the material.
John is the greatest ecological processes prof ever.
He made the course interesting. He also engaged with the class a lot.
Good at asking the class if we understood concepts, and going through them again if there was any confusion.
Challenging, provoking, constructive, interesting topics and lectures
He was friendly and nice. Communicated with students well.
Linking the science topics to the broad theoretical concepts. Answering questions well in class. The quizzes were useful.
Really good lectures and lecture slides, inspiring connection between course concepts and the "real world"

Comments
He was enthusiastic, funny, engaging, and creative. He provided lots of review of concepts and integrated larger events and social/political/economic ideas and examples into ecological lessons.
Lots of real life examples and personal experience contributing positively to this course!!!
a passion for critical thinking and looking beyond the given facts. information on how to evaluate and question ecological relationships, and how those lessons can be transferred into other areas of study (connections between ecology and economics)
Very knowledgeable on subject matter and explained concepts clearly using interesting case studies/ examples. I enjoyed how Volpe constantly linked ecological concepts to larger social/ economic phenomena. Inspiring and engaging lecturer, clearly passionate about ecology and motivated me to learn.
Overall knew the concepts well which made it easy to understand him when he was teaching.
I really liked having the quizzes in the course, which made me study the course material even more. Volpe is very 'cut and dry' in his lecture style and I found this useful, and entertaining too. He was very real and personable. I thought he read the class well and was able to push students or to ease off when necessary (for example, cancelling the last day of lectures).
Knew his information well.
Prof. Volpe was very knowledgeable and had a no nonsense attitude which I liked. He was passionate about the topics and his lectures were always interesting.
A thorough, comprehensive and nuanced exploration of all course concepts. Elaborating on and breaking down the somewhat difficult readings into accessible, interesting components. He helped us understand processes and patterns which occur at both micro and macro levels, and was very good at illustrating the connections between ecological systems and other systems.
Undeniable drive to make students think in a more critical, constructive way. Definitely helped me gain a critical eye on subjects involving the use of statistics. Introduced me to the comparison between science and religion.
Very engaging, funny and obviously passionate about the course. Had really great examples and case studies which drove home the important concepts of the topics which we were studying. Encouraged us to think about the "efficiency" of our career and educational decisions, which is a really interesting thought that I think I'll hold with me going forward.
Effective delivery of material and an emphasis on respect and attending the class lectures.
He was very prepared for class lectures and both encouraged and answered questions from students.
John Volpe provided engaging lectures.
John was a very inspiring prof. He came to class very prepared, and not giving out the notes actually helped me learn a lot in this class. I like that he doesn't give out the lecture notes so you have to come to class. I do pay more attention having to take down notes. John knows his stuff and is very passionate about ES which makes me really enjoy his class.
John Volpe has a wealth of knowledge about ecology and related it to other aspects in life to help students grasp the concepts better.
Demonstrated expertise in ecological knowledge. Expanded the course material to be applied to other realms of knowledge such as social and political systems which increased my understanding of difficult concepts.

**Please provide specific suggestions as to how the instructor (John Volpe) could have helped you learn more effectively.**

Comments
Explain things more clearly and slowly. Make quizzes more attainable. MAKE THE RESOURCES ONLINE MORE SIMPLE ORRR HAVE NOTES ON YOUR SLIDES —> preferably the notes, because students don't feel confident just deriving information outside class from the readings, and they may not be able to attend class, so you need to meet everyone's needs, and be realistic. The difficulty I had navigating this course and finding material to study that I confidently knew would be on the test made me stop studying for the course, or really investing any interest, because it was too frustrating.
I think that Volpe could work on lecture/slide. He often trails off when speaking and doesn't finish saying points/main topic. Lots of my in class notes are incompleting sentences. Because the slides are all pictures, in addition to how he speaks around a lot of material or simply doesn't finish saying what he started with, the class itself is really hard to

Comments
follow. The midterm questions reflect the way he spoke, the questions were really oddly phrased in addition to notes on the slides or quizzes. I am usually confused in this class, and not because the content is overly hard.
have power point slides that are not as vague. there is so much information to take in. We can only type so fast and if your thoughts distract you for a minute you miss some of the lesson accidentally. If he is worried people won't show up to class if he puts all the information on the slides he could make attendance worth more.
you good bruh
No suggestions, I liked the quiz format that ensured we were grasping the topics without the excess work that a tutorial entails.
Providing more repetition within the lecture, or more time to take notes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could have been more specific in wording questions during quizzes (e.g. if "infrequent disturbances" means some disturbances or little-no disturbance, in quiz 5)</li> <li>- Could sound more respectful/less-ridiculing to students, when asking them if they know certain concepts (even if it's all in good fun)</li> <li>- Could be more specific in what content is examinable in the slides, as opposed to leaving it to us to figure out what's examinable (could reduce the stress that students face from spending so much time in studies)</li> </ul>
Honestly it was dry. He moved really fast from material. Slides were hard to study from at home. Quizzes were SUPER hard, just honestly a very confusing tough class
Determining what readings were do when was rather difficult to figure out from the syllabus. There were no specific dates assigned to specific readings so it became daunting to see a all of required readings and not know where to finish.
I think adding maybe labs or other means of assessment would benefit because only having quizzes, a midterm and final feels not as effective especially when talking about ecological systems because they are so dynamic.
He often opened questions to be answered by fellow students, and at times it seemed as though a student was "teaching" us important content. It would be nice to have him explain in his own words various concepts and definitions, and then perhaps open a discussion with students.
It's controversial but providing slides with a little more context for those who miss classes, but at the end of the day you're a college student and shouldn't be missing. I also found the self study questions helped for when I did miss a lecture. But if you go to class and take good notes and actually pay attention its amazing how much you can learn.
I would have liked easier access to his lecture slides.
Continue doing your great job!
I dont think anything needs to be improved
Being a bit more clear in lecture sometimes on which parts are important, as we go over a lot of material. Waiting a few more seconds when asking a question in class so other people would have a chance to think and learn, rather than picking the person who already knew the answers. When picking that person, make sure to rephrase their answer, because they speak pretty fast.
Make sure that practice questions/note packages match up with the current form of course.
Sometimes the course material posted on coursesoaces was a bit confusing, such as the PowerPoints.
There were few opportunities for student participation or discussion. Lectures could have been structured in a way to facilitate better dialogue and engage the entire class.
N/A
I thought that more perspectives could have been taught in this course. In my experience, Environmental Studies courses teach you about hard science as well as how to look through different lenses, such as Indigenous and women's perspectives. Please read my comments in the next section for a longer description of this. Thanks!
Explain things more clearly at times. There were many instances where he would say one thing and then later say the opposite of that, by accident sometimes, and other times because he didn't fully explain his train of thought.
More information on the powerpoints
Using a variance of examples in order to illustrate concepts. During the lecture series he often referred back to only a handful of examples which illustrated a concept (i.e small networks or functional niches) and personally feel like I would have benefited from having multiple examples to illustrate a concept rather than just one image
Great as is.



**Comments**

Could do with a little more tact and respect. Often assumed that students were being incompetent when in actuality he just wasn't listening to what they were saying. Multiple times he would scoff at something someone would say and many people in the class would attempt to jump to that persons aid to explain what they were trying to say. After having it happen to myself once, from that point on I resisted the urge to ever speak up in class just in case I ended up looking like an idiot again.

Simpler slide notes

Be less scientific in your word choice when teaching a first year course and stop using complicated wordy questions when it could have been a simple concept.

Providing a list of important terminology for each topic would help.

John Volpe could have helped me learn better if the course outline and materials were better organized in the syllabus or coursepaces. Both the syllabus and coursepaces were lacking detailed information about when subjects were going to be taught. Also, the required readings, lectures, and self study questions were poorly organized on coursepaces and hard for the students to figure out what content was for each week. Lecture slides that were posted to course spaces for students to study with for quizzes had multiple spelling and grammatical errors which made it hard to self study and review.

I would have had an easier time learning if course spaces was more organised. I suggest utilising the week-orientation of the material, so that students can locate all materials (lecture slides, readings, and self-study questions) in the same place, rather than having to search through headings and materials that do not contain the same titles (ROckfish vs Confidence intervals). Orienting all related materials in the same place would have greatly improved my experience in the course!

Midterm – Evapotranspiration was not covered in class before the midterm, and yet it was onthe midterm. It did show up in the slides the day after the midterm.

Quizzes – Better allotment of difficult and easy questions within the "question bank". Does not seem fair to weight 50% on chance in question draws.

Lecture slides contained multiple grammatical errors and outdated information (i.e. said we would learn about a topic in tutorial, but we did not have tutorials) that made review for quizzes and exams very frustrating.

**Please provide specific suggestions as to how this course could be improved.**

**Comments**

The time limit on the quizzes made them very stressful which caused panic and bad answers sometimes rushing through questions. Maybe a slightly longer time limit would be better. Although removing the worst quiz mark was very appreciated as everyone has bad days under the time limit.

Make it less boring, not sure how, but please do. I feel asleep in class way too often because the material wasn't provoking.

–improved slides/slides notes

have worksheets handed out each class that have a list of the most important points that he wants you to take away from that specific class. they don't have to be worth anything, but it can be in point form what he believes is the most important.

Weight the quizzes as less and another midterm instead

maybe more small group discussions like the TA did in her lecture. Less intimidating than talking in front of the whole class.

I wish there was a lab or tutorial to gain the oportunity to engage with the course material more and to discuss content with my peers.

No tips, loved the course!

Giving a longer time period in which you could take the quiz, possibly 2 days instead of one would be much easier

– Could possibly extend the time-limits for quizzes (e.g. extend from 20-mins to 30-mins)

I had a fine experience with the CourseSpaces quizzes, however I feel like it might not have been the most representative or fair method of evaluation for all students. When 5 quizzes consisting of only 12 questions count for 50% of your final mark, there is quite a bit of luck involved with which randomly assigned questions you get, and some quiz questions were clearly more difficult than others.

honestly, the questions on the quizzes were so hard to detect what they were even asking...so making them more clear

**Comments**

making the content more engaging instead of just listening to blah blah blah

going a little slower

answering questions/ encouraging questions more

I really would have liked to have a Tutorial section with this course. There was so much information to take in that I feel that having that separate space to talk about the material and ask questions would have really helped with my overall engagement with the material and my fellow peers. These lower level courses are so important because they are the basic foundation for the rest of our studies.

Labs, tutorials or a paper!

The quizzes worth a large portion of our grade (for the time allotted to complete them) almost always included course material we had not yet covered in lecture. This was unfair especially because the randomized questions meant that some students were able to do much better on the quizzes just based on luck, and others not well at all. If they weren't worth as much, this wouldn't matter as much, but I feel that this was a very unfair form of grading for this course.

Honestly just wish we had more time. Volpe is an amazing prof and has so much to offer.

Keep it the way it is

I have no suggestions.

Just keep it the way it is:)

Once a week class could fit the material, maybe students would be more inclined to go..there are quite a few empty spots every class. 830 is the earliest class at Uvic so it is expected but this is just a suggestion. I didnt mind the classes this semester.

I think tutorials would help.

Some of the quiz questions could be less ambiguous

Make the quizzes worth less of final mark (or have more quizzes or more quiz questions). Add a tutorial component that would add more discussion, a different kind of mark and better understanding of concepts.

the section about power and variance is a little muddled

It would have been beneficial to have an assigned text book to accompany the course. The subject matter was very focused on ecological concepts, and I can't imagine that there isn't a relevant textbook that students could use for reference. It would have been helpful for additional clarification or details on certain concepts, and for studying purposes. I personally enjoyed the assignment structure with the 5 online quizzes, the midterm and a take-home final (as it meant a light work load and almost no memorization), but I can also imagine that this wouldn't have been effective/ fair for all students who favour different assessment styles. I would have also preferred a diversity of question styles on assignments, as opposed to almost exclusively multiple choice, which enables superficial understanding.

It's overall a nice course with the quizzes but it was really nerve wracking doing them because how much it was weighed.

The way the course was taught was linear and made sense. I like how it built to the end, where we finished by looking at the bigger picture. However, I thought the point of view taught was mainly the white male perspective ('Western' perspective, if you will). The master's student who taught for a day was refreshing because she included more Indigenous topics in her lecture, and she was a woman. Throughout the course there were numerous opportunities to include Indigenous topics, and challenge the general science narrative from different cultural perspectives (challenging science was done but only from a Eurocentric perspective). Being a woman, I noticed that the female narrative was largely missing from the course. In this day and age, and especially in the Environmental Studies department, I expected to encounter more Indigenous topics and women's lenses. Guest lectures are ways to do this, or looking deeper to find women in science or to look at Indigenous worldviews (experimentation is common across all humanity, not just in Eurocentric methods). I really enjoyed Volpe as a prof but thought that the experience of students would be enriched by having a variety of perspectives taught, again by either bringing people in sometimes or finding ways to include other perspectives (or even acknowledging the utter lack of other perspectives, and what does this mean, etc. It wouldn't have to take long but would be useful for students who don't see their identities being represented in history). A great article to read on anti-oppressive education is "Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education" by Kevin K. Kumashiro. Collaborating a bit with the Gender Studies and Indigenous Studies departments would be useful too. Thanks so much, I hope the course stays the same in the future but has some added perspectives :)

Nothing, liked the course

Comments
Putting more quizzes which cover more of the details in the course. I felt like the quizzes tested us on our understanding of the broader concepts, but because there were so few questions, our understanding wasn't tested on all of the concepts covered in lecture.
I was very frustrated by the online quiz component. As a student who showed up to every class, took notes and studied, I found myself consistently discouraged when having to make split second decisions on multiple choice questions without being given the opportunity to think them through. Maybe I'm just not a good tester, but I was always shocked when I'd receive my quiz grades back because they were never reflective of my actual understanding of the course content. As well, the fact that we never really engaged in class discussion or did anything that applied the course concepts was not ideal. I understand concepts best when I get to work through them in lab form or through at least tutorial or class discussion.
Class engagement / lab or tutorial sessions
I think tutorials would be helpful for learning the concepts in a small classroom setting for those who feel uncomfortable asking questions in a large class.
I would suggest a textbook to accompany this course to help with understanding the concepts.
The format of quizzes was horrible. 10% of grade for 12 multiple choice questions that may or may not represent your understanding. An essay or assignment would be more beneficial. Hated the quiz format, detered learning.
This course could be improved with better organization and communication between the professor, the TA's and the students. Also, a better detailed syllabus or coursespace website would be very beneficial.
Better communication and organisation overall. Being tested on material that we had not yet covered seems to me that the organisation was not clear to the instructor or the TAs. The syllabus did not contain dates when we would be covering topics, only the order in which they would be studied, and by the end even that was no longer accurate. More optional videos to help understand course material – the crash courses were great!

**My Instructor gave time in class to complete this survey.**

Options	Count	Percentage
Yes	9	19%
No	37	79%
Does not apply (online course, field course, etc.)	1	2%