Summary of Student Reviews
IS635 Distributed Information Systems
Spring 2002

See Statistics generated from department report.

Positive student comments [What did you find most valuable about this course?]:

1) I liked the course, but didn't like the textbook.
2) OLTP
3) The concepts
4) The instructor is very knowledgeable and we learn so much about technology. No suggestions needed.
5) The course content was very useful.
6) This course is very useful to the IS students and should be compulsory. It summarizes a lot of the other courses an actually goes into detail where other courses did not.
7) It covers all aspects of internet technology.
8) Instructor was really good at explaining the text. He was extremely organized. We covered a lot, but that was a good thing! I learned a lot – one of the best classes I've taken.
9) Clearly, this is a very important topic for information systems today. Course content was comprehensive and thorough. All important areas were covered.

Comments concerning areas for improvement [What suggestions can you offer to improve this course?]:

1) Use a book more up-to-date. No group projects.
2) Students must be able to physically see all the things discussed.
3) Try to reduce the acronyms in the course.
4) Should choose new textbook it is too old. The textbook writing is terrible. Concepts aren't state clear[sic]. Should introduce more study resources and reading material. The project is not useful and takes up too much time.
5) A new textbook will be helpful too!
6) Please make it more practical. It's more theoretical at this time.
7) This is a huge topic, and often an overwhelming one, especially to the uninitiated. Even though this is an elective, it almost should be a 2 semester class. Also, every class ended early. I would have rather the Prof. used the entire period, and covered the material more completely.

Analysis of Evaluations

Lab work

The course still lacks enough supporting materials for those who crave hands-on. Tutorials and extra exercises were not enough.

Projects

Organized the class around group projects rather than individual projects. Some groups worked better than others. A wide range of experiences. I probably need to coach the presentations more and provide more guidance about standards and expectations. In general, the presentations were weak. Provided time for group work, but generally this was extremely open ended. Think about ways to provide more direction for groups and more checkpoints to monitor progress. The time management issue mentioned by the student in suggestion 7 was intentional to make time for group work. Perhaps structuring that group time more would have addressed the concerns.

Content, Textbook, Assessment

The textbook issue persists in this class. The Orfali book is still really the only option. Tried to supplement it with tutorials for OS, networking, etc. No one complained about closed-book multiple choice tests. Last year used essay open book. Multiple choice worked better as an assessment tool, but essays provide better reinforcement of concepts. The multiple choice tests made it simple to see who understood and who did not, who did homework and who did not. Completely not reaching some students. Many questions were on practice quizzes and underlined in an obvious manner in class and yet still many got them wrong. Unacceptably wide variance in test scores. I'm still missing people in the delivery phase. Need much more work here.