

**JHU - Krieger School of Arts & Sciences / Whiting School of Engineering**  
**ASEN.2012.Fall**

**Course:** EN.600.437.01.FA12 : Distributed Systems

**Instructor:** Yair Amir \*

**1 - The overall quality of this course is:**

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means				
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%		4.65	4.03	4.11	Question	School Level	Department Level	
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%								
Satisfactory	(3)	1	5.00%								
Good	(4)	5	25.00%								
Excellent	(5)	14	70.00%								
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%								
<b>Return Rate</b>				<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>
20/21 (95.24%)				4.65	0.59	7,690	4.03	0.94	901	4.11	0.88

**2 - The instructor's teaching effectiveness is:**  
Yair Amir

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means				
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%		4.60	4.00	4.01	Question	School Level	Department Level	
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%								
Satisfactory	(3)	1	5.00%								
Good	(4)	6	30.00%								
Excellent	(5)	13	65.00%								
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%								
<b>Return Rate</b>				<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>
20/21 (95.24%)				4.60	0.60	8,133	4.00	1.01	923	4.01	0.95

**3 - The intellectual challenge of this course is:**

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means				
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%		4.80	4.08	4.22	Question	School Level	Department Level	
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%								
Satisfactory	(3)	0	0.00%								
Good	(4)	4	20.00%								
Excellent	(5)	16	80.00%								
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%								
<b>Return Rate</b>				<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>
20/21 (95.24%)				4.80	0.41	7,660	4.08	0.90	897	4.22	0.82

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4 - The teaching assistant for this course is:											
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means				
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%								
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%								
Satisfactory	(3)	1	5.00%								
Good	(4)	2	10.00%								
Excellent	(5)	16	80.00%								
N/A	(0)	1	5.00%								
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	School Level	Department Level
<b>Return Rate</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>School Level</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>
20/21 (95.24%)		4.79	0.54	7,660		4.04	1.06	899		4.27	0.93

5 - Please enter the name of the TA you evaluated in question 4:	
<b>Return Rate</b>	16/21 (76.19%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tom Tantillo</li> <li>- Tom, Dano</li> <li>- Daniel Obenshain</li> <li>- Daniel Obenshain, Tom Tantillo, Amy Babay</li> <li>- Tom, Dan</li> <li>- Dano/Tom</li> <li>- Tom/Dano/Amy</li> <li>- Dano Tom Amy</li> <li>- Amy Babay, Daniel Obenshain, Tom Tantillo</li> <li>- Amy Babay, Daniel Obenshain, Tom Tantillo</li> <li>- Dano, Tom, and Amy</li> <li>- Tom, Dano</li> <li>- Tom &amp; Dano</li> <li>- Daniel Obenshain &amp; Tom Tantillo</li> <li>- Daniel Obenshain, Tom Tantillo</li> <li>- Daniel Obenshain, Tom Tantillo</li> </ul>	

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6 - Feedback on my work for this course is useful:											
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means				
Disagree strongly	(1)	1	5.00%								
Disagree somewhat	(2)	2	10.00%								
Neither agree nor disagree	(3)	0	0.00%								
Agree somewhat	(4)	3	15.00%								
Agree strongly	(5)	14	70.00%								
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%								
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	School Level	Department Level
<b>Return Rate</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>		<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>		
20/21 (95.24%)	4.35	1.23		7,644	3.78	1.07	899	3.88	1.07		

7 - Compared to other Hopkins courses at this level, the workload for this course is:											
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means				
Much lighter	(1)	0	0.00%								
Somewhat lighter	(2)	0	0.00%								
Typical	(3)	0	0.00%								
Somewhat heavier	(4)	6	30.00%								
Much heavier	(5)	14	70.00%								
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%								
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	School Level	Department Level
<b>Return Rate</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>		<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>		
20/21 (95.24%)	4.70	0.47		7,654	3.31	0.99	899	3.52	1.07		

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**Instructor:** Yair Amir \*

8 - What are the best aspects of this course?	
Return Rate	16/21 (76.19%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- I really like how the professor takes the time to meet with each group to make sure that they are going in the right directions for assignments. I also really really really like how this course does not have tests, only big assignments.</li><li>- Require lots of thinking</li><li>- Professor Yair Amir is undoubtedly the best person in distributed systems. I am a big fan of his work, and infact i plan to study his research papers and publications during my winter vacation. He has certainly induced passion and interest in distributed systems in me and i will be thankful to him for rest of my professional career.</li><li>- Students get an understanding of distributed systems from low-level communication protocols to higher level replication protocols. Extra help outside of class is readily available.</li><li>- Great/effective teacher.</li><li>- The instructor gives you a few (sufficient) tools and throws you into the middle of demanding projects. This method allowed many to grow beyond expectations from taking the course.</li><li>- The lectures are very well-thought-out.</li><li>- The theoretical assignments were really good. I enjoyed the correctness proof on the second homework a lot. They check in on us a lot</li><li>- TA are very intelligent and effective. The instructor is very responsible</li><li>- This course is possibly the best course offered in the computer science department. It has all the challenges and difficulties that you might need to make it the perfect course. At the end of it you can say that you understand the subject in great depth. The professor is very passionate and makes a lot of effort to ensure that you understand every aspect of the course. Every computer science student should take this course as it forces you to think and solve problems differently. The theoretical assignments are amazing and you will possibly never see anything similar anywhere else.</li><li>- All of the practical assignments. They really drove home the different kinds of distributed design that we were learning.</li><li>- Theoretical Assignments</li><li>- Solid programming/debugging workout.</li><li>- The instructor is excellent and nice.</li><li>- The assignments are challenging.</li><li>- - Prof. Yair Amir's teaching skills</li><li>- Each student is monitored and guided very well by both Professor and TAs</li></ul>	

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9 - What are the worst aspects of this course?	
Return Rate	12/21 (57.14%)
<p>- Although both the Professor and the teaching assistants are excellent and they give so much time and energy in helping the students in the assignments. But i did not like the way theoretical parts of this course were evaluated. The theoretical assignments were evaluated very strictly and arbitrarily, for example in one of my assignments i lost 13 points due to a typo! And in another i probably lost points just because the way i tried to prove it was not the way Professor wanted the proof to go. Atleast i felt really disheartened and disappointed after seeing my performance in theoretical assignments inspite of putting in a good amount of effort in them. I personally respect Professor Yair Amir so much , that this kind of evaluation definitely made me lose confidence in me, but again that might be a part of learning. Overall i think this is a great class from one of the best persons in industry and academia in distributed systems.</p> <p>- Dr. Amir will often run out of time during lecture and can't finish the slides for that day.</p> <p>- The mini projects and final projects take too long. I learned a lot while doing them, but I think they could be made slightly easier or less time consuming without sacrificing much learning.</p> <p>- The instructor gives you a few tools and throws you into the middle of demanding projects.</p> <p>- The projects are long and arduous. They are not clearly explained.</p> <p>- The crunch time just before the final project was due.</p> <p>The scheduling of the final project was really awkward. The design was due 2 days after the project was given, which was way too fast, and then we finally got going on the project too late.</p> <p>- Heavy work</p> <p>- Nothing much really except the workload so be prepared.</p> <p>- Not really anything. The lectures weren't as great as the assignments, but that doesn't mean they weren't pretty darn good.</p> <p>- None</p> <p>- 1. Not being allowed to use standard builtin data structures -- lots of busywork duplicating existing functionality.</p> <p>2. The expectation that a design will survive implementation is, in my opinion, unreasonable.</p> <p>- There was only one thing that I disagree in this course. I think that the assignments should not be done in pairs. I understand that since this is not the programming course, the concepts that we understand are more important than the implementation, but I was struggling in the team assignments since me and partner have quite a big gap in experience.</p> <p>We tried two approaches and they didn't work very well. First, we tried pair programming and I felt like when we programmed together, it was slow than when I programmed alone and he didn't have much time to meet up, so we split the work, I did my parts, and he did his parts. It turned out that when we merged, there were many bugs that I had to reread the whole code he wrote again and fixed it myself, which was a lot harder than to fix my code.</p> <p>I didn't want to complain too much because I felt like many groups were having the same situation. But I just feel like it's not quite fair for a partner that did a lot more job in the assignments.</p>	

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10 - What would most improve this class?	
Return Rate	10/21 (47.62%)
<p>- I think it might be a little more help to the students if the theoretical concepts and the way theoretical proofs need to be written is explained better. And i honestly disagree with the way i was given points, i think it was just too strict and random. This kind of way of evaluation can definitely make people lose confidence in their abilities and might even defeat the very purpose of this class. I would strongly request the Professor to encourage students and let the driving force be passion and interest in a course, rather than "fear of failing", i think interest developed at this stage will go a long way in building their careers.</p> <p>- If the instructor gave more time for some of the projects and had more hands on introductions to using the relevant network code.</p> <p>- Learning about and using real, practical distributed systems.</p> <p>- I'm not sure what exactly I would do to improve it yet. I'll let them know when I do.</p> <p>- I would tweak the third assignment a little and make it more challenging. It is sort of a let down after the intensity of the first two. In addition, I would add one more theoretical assignment because I simply loved them and that was the best part of the course for me.</p> <p>- Occasionally, the professor had a tendency to spend a significant amount of time on non-material-related philosophy, like how the course was self-selecting and we were all very very good (just an example from the last day. There were others too). While nice to hear, I think that we all wanted to hear more about the material instead.</p> <p>- We should be required to demonstrate that we know the data structures we need to use, sure. But once we do that, we should be allowed to use whatever we want, within reason.</p> <p>Also, subgoals within projects would help in pacing the extremely large assignments.</p> <p>- Ask students to preview slides before classes.</p> <p>- Everything was good</p> <p>-- More lectures about the current research work would be helpful</p>	

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**11 - What should prospective students know about this course before enrolling? (You may comment on any aspect of this course such as assumed background, readings, grading systems, and so on.)**

<b>Return Rate</b>	16/21 (76.19%)
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- Assignments for this class will take up all your free time.
- Computer Networking, experience with Unix/Linux system
- It is a great class by one of the best minds in industry and i will strongly recommend this class to everyone having interest in algorithms and systems. Again, please do not feel disheartened even if you do not do well in this class (atleast i do not agree with the way they evaluate the theoretical work in this course)...but take this course and you will learn a lot.
- There is a lot of work and do heed Dr. Amir's advice when he tells you to start early.
- Yair is a great professor but the class is a lot of work.
- This course will take up a lot of time, but what you get in exchange is worth it.
- The work is all theoretical, not practical computing.
- The work comes in bunches
- love programming and debugging.
- You should know C pretty well and should have some experience on Unix. The workload is pretty intense and we did spend a lot of time programming. Another important thing is the design stage which you should do as the professor says. Basically listen to the professor and you should be fine because trust him he knows what he is doing.
- Start the assignments ahead of time. You'll thank yourself later.
- Heavy workload
- 1. This is possibly the most demanding course in Computer Science, in terms of pure work. In terms of intellectual difficulty, it's not bad.
- 2. Solid programming experience is necessary.
- Computer Networks. Preview slides before classes.
- Very fun class. I like it a lot.
- - Networks, mainly how TCP/UDP works
- C Programming
- Data Structures

**12 - This course improved my appreciation for and/or ability to engage in life-long learning.**

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses
Disagree strongly	(1)	1	5.00%	
Disagree somewhat	(2)	0	0.00%	
Neither agree nor disagree	(3)	1	5.00%	
Agree somewhat	(4)	6	30.00%	
Agree strongly	(5)	12	60.00%	

0 25 50 75 100

<b>Return Rate</b>			
20/21 (95.24%)			

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**13 - This course deepened my understanding of the social impact of computing.**

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses
Disagree strongly	(1)	0	0.00%	
Disagree somewhat	(2)	0	0.00%	
Neither agree nor disagree	(3)	3	15.00%	
Agree somewhat	(4)	6	30.00%	
Agree strongly	(5)	11	55.00%	
<b>Return Rate</b>				
20/21 (95.24%)				

**14 - This course enhanced my ability to work effectively in a team.**

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses
Disagree strongly	(1)	0	0.00%	
Disagree somewhat	(2)	2	10.00%	
Neither agree nor disagree	(3)	1	5.00%	
Agree somewhat	(4)	9	45.00%	
Agree strongly	(5)	9	45.00%	
<b>Return Rate</b>				
20/21 (95.24%)				



**JHU - Krieger School of Arts & Sciences / Whiting School of Engineering**  
**ASEN.2012.Fall**

**Course:** EN.600.337.01.FA12 : Distributed Systems

**Instructor:** Yair Amir \*

1 - The overall quality of this course is:										
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means			
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%							
Weak	(2)	1	11.11%							
Satisfactory	(3)	0	0.00%							
Good	(4)	1	11.11%							
Excellent	(5)	7	77.78%							
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%							
<b>Return Rate</b>				<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>		<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>
9/9 (100%)				4.56	1.01		7,690	4.03	0.94	901

2 - The instructor's teaching effectiveness is: Yair Amir										
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means			
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%							
Weak	(2)	1	11.11%							
Satisfactory	(3)	0	0.00%							
Good	(4)	2	22.22%							
Excellent	(5)	6	66.67%							
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%							
<b>Return Rate</b>				<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>		<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>
9/9 (100%)				4.44	1.01		8,133	4.00	1.01	923

3 - The intellectual challenge of this course is:										
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means			
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%							
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%							
Satisfactory	(3)	0	0.00%							
Good	(4)	2	22.22%							
Excellent	(5)	7	77.78%							
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%							
<b>Return Rate</b>				<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>		<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>
9/9 (100%)				4.78	0.44		7,660	4.08	0.90	897

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4 - The teaching assistant for this course is:											
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means				
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%								
Weak	(2)	0	0.00%								
Satisfactory	(3)	0	0.00%								
Good	(4)	1	11.11%								
Excellent	(5)	8	88.89%								
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%								
<b>Return Rate</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>School Level</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>
9/9 (100%)		4.89	0.33	7,660		4.04	1.06	899		4.27	0.93

5 - Please enter the name of the TA you evaluated in question 4:	
<b>Return Rate</b>	8/9 (88.89%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daniel Obenshain, Tom Tantillo, Amy Babay</li> <li>- Tom Tantillo, Daniel Obenshain, Amy Babay</li> <li>- Tom, Dano, Amy</li> <li>- Tom and Dano - these guys were amazing, I've never been in a class where the TA's were so helpful and put in so much time to the course. Thanks guys!</li> <li>- Tom and Dano</li> <li>- Tom, Dano, Amy</li> <li>- Tom Tantillo, Daniel Obenshain, Amy Babay</li> <li>- All three</li> </ul>	

6 - Feedback on my work for this course is useful:											
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses			Means				
Disagree strongly	(1)	0	0.00%								
Disagree somewhat	(2)	0	0.00%								
Neither agree nor disagree	(3)	0	0.00%								
Agree somewhat	(4)	1	11.11%								
Agree strongly	(5)	8	88.89%								
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%								
<b>Return Rate</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>School Level</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>
9/9 (100%)		4.89	0.33	7,644		3.78	1.07	899		3.88	1.07

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**7 - Compared to other Hopkins courses at this level, the workload for this course is:**

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses				Means			
Much lighter	(1)	0	0.00%								
Somewhat lighter	(2)	0	0.00%								
Typical	(3)	0	0.00%								
Somewhat heavier	(4)	3	33.33%								
Much heavier	(5)	6	66.67%								
N/A	(0)	0	0.00%								
				0	25	50	75	100	Question	School Level	Department Level
<b>Return Rate</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>		<b>School Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>	<b>Department Level</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>		
9/9 (100%)	4.67	0.50		7,654	3.31	0.99	899	3.52	1.07		

**8 - What are the best aspects of this course?**

Return Rate	8/9 (88.89%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doing the projects actually helps you learn a lot.</li> <li>- The availability of help from the instructor and TA's was the only reason I passed this course. The instructor and TA's are the only ways to learn and make it through both the programming assignments and the theoretical assignments.</li> <li>- Lectures are great, the course staff is very dedicated. Assignments are intellectually challenging. Programming is done with partners, which can be helpful.</li> <li>- The projects</li> <li>- The TA's were absolutely excellent. They always took the time to answer any question that you had. The instructor is one of the best that I have had. He really makes sure that you understand all of the material and more than that can actually implement it in you own distributed system. You will definitely learn a lot from this course. It is evident that the instructor puts a lot of thought and effort into this course. You will also have to work with a partner, which although difficult at times is certainly a learning experience.</li> <li>- The material is fascinating, and, like all of Amir's course, after you take this you WILL know the material inside and out.</li> <li>- Hands on learning. The approach to teaching this class was unlike any other course at Hopkins. Yair taught us how to create protocols rather than just learn existing protocols for distributed computing.</li> <li>- Project based course - it means I got to apply the material, not just learn it</li> </ul>	

**9 - What are the worst aspects of this course?**

Return Rate	7/9 (77.78%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doing the projects is extremely difficult, mostly because we do not get taught how to code them at all during class. All we do is learn the theory, and then get thrown into the projects. I got the theory down every time, but figuring out how to code everything was ridiculously difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming.</li> <li>- The theoretical assignments are done individually and there is no encouragement to discuss them with other classmates which would be extremely productive and insightful.</li> <li>- The final project is very complex, and must be done in a short amount of time. Programming can get bogged down with low-level stuff.</li> <li>- No test</li> <li>- It was quite a bit of work, not sure if that is necessarily a bad aspect though.</li> <li>- Oh god the workload.</li> <li>- Work load is tough at times. This course is all about time management and teamwork.</li> </ul>	

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10 - What would most improve this class?	
Return Rate	6/9 (66.67%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Code tutorials that don't just explain what things do, but how they should be changed to work in ways that we can implement in our projects.</li> <li>- This class would be most improved if the theoretical assignments could be discussed among fellow classmates and worked on together.</li> <li>- Being able to use standard C library could make assignments easier.</li> <li>- Please make a test</li> <li>- I think it should probably be four credits.</li> <li>- Either make it a 45 credit class to reflect the amount of work I put in or limit the number of hours that Amir can expect a student to work in 2 weeks (between my partner and myself we put in almost 200 man-hours in 2 weeks)...</li> </ul>	

11 - What should prospective students know about this course before enrolling? (You may comment on any aspect of this course such as assumed background, readings, grading systems, and so on.)	
Return Rate	7/9 (77.78%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don't take this course unless you've taken a similar course, otherwise you will struggle if you're taking a decent course load.</li> <li>- This class involves programming projects which takes up uncountable amounts of time, especially whole weekends and several late nights. Those projects take up much more time than any other assignment or project.</li> <li>- You should be comfortable programming in C. No theoretical background is needed.</li> <li>- I would definitely recommend taking it.</li> <li>- It's hell. It's like pledging the CS department - these people will do terrible things to you that will keep you awake, stressed out, and unhappy for the whole semester. But at the end you come out of it forgetting the pain they caused you and feeling that you accomplished something by defeating the arbitrary obstacles placed in front of you and you feel superior and that you've advanced as a person.</li> <li>I guess this is a recommendation? I'm still not sure myself.</li> <li>- Grading system feels holistic. In other words, the grade you get will feel like the grade you deserve. The work load is heavier than average.</li> <li>- Fairly heavy workload, mostly projects - start them early!</li> </ul>	

12 - This course improved my appreciation for and/or ability to engage in life-long learning.				
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses
Disagree strongly	(1)	0	0.00%	
Disagree somewhat	(2)	1	11.11%	<div style="width: 11.11%;"></div>
Neither agree nor disagree	(3)	0	0.00%	
Agree somewhat	(4)	3	33.33%	<div style="width: 33.33%;"></div>
Agree strongly	(5)	5	55.56%	<div style="width: 55.56%;"></div>
				0 25 50 75 100
Return Rate				
9/9 (100%)				

**JHU - Krieger School of Arts & Sciences / Whiting School of Engineering**  
**ASEN.2012.Fall**

**Course:** EN.600.337.01.FA12 : Distributed Systems

**Instructor:** Yair Amir \*

**13 - This course deepened my understanding of the social impact of computing.**

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses
Disagree strongly	(1)	0	0.00%	
Disagree somewhat	(2)	1	12.50%	
Neither agree nor disagree	(3)	1	12.50%	
Agree somewhat	(4)	3	37.50%	
Agree strongly	(5)	3	37.50%	
				0 25 50 75 100
<b>Return Rate</b>				
8/9 (88.89%)				

**14 - This course enhanced my ability to work effectively in a team.**

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percentage	Percent Responses
Disagree strongly	(1)	1	11.11%	
Disagree somewhat	(2)	0	0.00%	
Neither agree nor disagree	(3)	0	0.00%	
Agree somewhat	(4)	1	11.11%	
Agree strongly	(5)	7	77.78%	
				0 25 50 75 100
<b>Return Rate</b>				
9/9 (100%)				