Instructor Ezra Morrison

Spring Quarter 2025
EPI 204 (001) 40250

Enrollment 17
% responding 58

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - DAVIS

Student Evaluation of Teaching

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree					
	5	%	4	%	3	%	2	%	1	%	$\bar{x}$	SD	M	N
Please indicate the overall educational value of the course. (excellent | very good | satisfactory | fair | poor)	5	50%	2	20%	3	30%	0	0%	0	0%	4.2	0.9	4.5	10
The course objectives were clearly defined	5	50%	4	40%	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%	4.4	0.7	4.5	10
The course was well-organized and coordinated	4	40%	1	10%	4	40%	1	10%	0	0%	3.8	1.1	3.5	10
The course fostered critical thinking and problem solving	6	60%	3	30%	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%	4.5	0.7	5.0	10
The course challenged, motivated and interested me	6	60%	3	30%	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%	4.5	0.7	5.0	10
The course emphasized important information	5	50%	3	30%	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%	4.3	0.8	4.5	10
Please indicate the overall teaching effectiveness of the instructor. (excellent | very good | satisfactory | fair | poor)	6	60%	2	20%	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%	4.4	0.8	5.0	10
The instructor communicated in a logical and organized manner	4	40%	4	40%	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%	4.2	0.7	4.0	10
The instructor challenged, motivated and interested me	6	60%	2	20%	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%	4.4	0.8	5.0	10
The instructor fostered critical thinking	6	60%	2	20%	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%	4.4	0.8	5.0	10
The instructor emphasized important information	6	60%	3	30%	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%	4.5	0.7	5.0	10
The instructor was responsive to my questions	7	70%	3	30%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4.7	0.5	5.0	10
The instructor made effective use of audio-visual materials	5	50%	5	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4.5	0.5	4.5	10
The instructor was approachable and provided appropriate feedback	7	70%	3	30%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4.7	0.5	5.0	10

Please provide any additional comments you wish to share about the course

Long time talked about linear regression, so that only few lectures related to survival analysis, and lots of homework were posted to finish within one week. TA Shea only graded one homework and one midterm so far, which midterm one had wrong graded and wrong interpretation.

Would be great to have covered more material with a very good lecture explainer. Maybe this course should have 1 lecture dedicated to handling missingness/imputation?

I appreciate the way the course is structured and how it lays a strong foundation that enables us to continue learning even after it ends. The additional materials provided and the hands-on experience in data analysis and interpretation have been especially valuable.

Covered main topics, but I think the course could benefit from reorganization and streamlining. Spent around 6 weeks reviewing linear regression in a lot of detail, but then rushed the new material that was supposed to be the focus of the course. I appreciate having some review, but since EPI 202-203 is required it should be limited to the first week or two and focus on the major concepts and processes rather than getting down to minor details, long derivations etc. For example, I think what we did during the first couple of classes (brief overview of important distributions, general steps for finding an MLE, a little bit of causal inference) plus a quick review of linear regression model structure & coefficient interpretations would have been plenty to get started. Even though the structure is very similar and can be applied to the other models, it would have been more useful to have that extra time to spend on the practical aspects of the new model types & how to build/interpret them instead of rushing to get through derivations. It seemed like the parts that were often the most rushed were the parts that are important for us to understand as epidemiologists (coefficient interpretation, hypothesis testing, model diagnostics). In general it felt like we spent the majority of class time doing derivations that weren't that helpful for actually understanding the models and the concepts. I also think it would be helpful to spend a little time before each new model or statistical process to discuss the big picture concepts/goals and establish important context. We did a little bit of this, but mostly just definitions.

Also if we are going to spend some time reviewing linear regression, it would have been more helpful to do so by doing more applied modeling that we don't have as much time for in the previous classes. Practically, I think what students need more practice with is actually interpreting coefficients, working with models, and understanding what their output represents rather than deriving MLEs by hand. Based on questions in class throughout the quarter, it seemed like people were following the math but not necessarily understanding the application of it.

STA 108 wasn't particularly helpful for this course either. There were several things that were assumed & had to be explained because some 108 professors taught it and others did not. It would be much simpler for this class to just follow similar procedures and notations to 202 and 203. Notation differences and matrix algebra were a barrier to being able to follow and understand what was going on in class most of the quarter.

I also didn't really understand the back and forth about notes sheets for the exams, it seemed like it took up unnecessary time both on the professor and student side. I would have rather used the time it took to talk about formulas to review more material and do practice problems. I've always found making my own formula sheet to be a good exercise anyway, and personally I don't find that the formulas I can memorize necessarily track with the topics I understand the most or vice versa.

The statistics series (202-203-204) would benefit from allocating more time and support for the TA (25 to 50%), as well as offering additional course credit (4 to 5). We need more office hours and structured study sessions—often, we exceeded the scheduled office hours, and it was greatly appreciated that the professor made time for us beyond that.

The first part of the course felt like a review and involved adjusting to a new teaching style, which comes with a learning curve. However, I would have liked to see more new material and topics introduced earlier on, specially given its a quarter.

More homework assignments focused on written exercises would be helpful, especially since both the midterms and final exam are handwritten. This would better prepare us for the exam format.

It's great that the professor challenges us with R and introduces new tools and methods, as many PIs now expect strong R programming skills from their students.

I also appreciated that the exams were designed to fit within the 2-hour timeframe, rather than feeling like a 2-hour test that actually takes 3 hours. While the instructions in the first exam could have been clearer, by the final exam, I understood his evaluation style better, which made the experience smoother.

The content and grading of the exams felt fair. The professor is very open to helping students find useful learning resources, and it's clear that he genuinely wants us to learn valuable skills and be well-prepared for the next step in our academic or professional careers. As someone who has also taught, I can say he is the kind of instructor who is not selfish and truly cares about student learning.

I'd like to acknowledge that Katy was a great TA—she was very patient and took the time to thoroughly explain concepts and walk us through exercises. Her support made a big difference in understanding the material.

The organization of the course could be improved, but overall, it was a positive experience and well-delivered.

At times, the Professor could rush through the material and change the note styles quite often. For instance, sometimes he would pull from online lecture slides, and at other times he'd write the lecture material on the whiteboard. This made it slightly difficult to determine how to approach keeping the notes organized - I switched from an iPad to a physical notebook and then back to the iPad. For future classes, I would suggest slowing down a bit and, when writing on the board, going in a sequential order rather than jumping across different boards.

Please provide any additional comments you wish to share about the instructor

I hope professor will provide clear and correct solutions before the midterms, which can give us more time to review, also I don't like self-grading, I am confused to self-grade my homework and midterms, TA Shea is very strict to the score, which the answers need to be exactly same as the solutions. I think professor need to grade the midterms and finals, not the TA.

I think too much emphasis having the students lead the class every lecture, while this is great, the class moves slower. It was confusing sometimes how lecture PowerPoints/slides is different from the notes website, the material is essentially the same but it will be great to be clear. Instructor really knows the material and how to explain topics, but sometimes makes small mistakes on the board, perhaps a bit more preparation before each class. Really cares about students, thanks for the quarter and cheat sheets!

I am inspired by the knowledge he shared and how he created a great learning environment, even outside the classroom.

Dr. Morrison is one of the best Professors I have had at UC Davis; he genuinely cares and wants us to learn the course content, which we did. I hope he never stops being an amazing Professor

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1. The content in this course is very interesting for me, but I expected to learn more than I got from it.
2. I like the way you show how to derive the model equations.
3. You spent a lot of time (more than half of this quarter) reviewing linear regression, which we already learned in STA 108. Three out of five graded homeworks were about linear regression, and I think we should have had more time and more practice on logistic regression and survival analysis.
4. Your handouts are good, but sometimes I couldn't tell what you wrote on the board in class and where it was located in the handout.
5. I feel like everything was packed and got too close to the deadline in the last two weeks, and it would be better if you could re-schedule that.
6. I think the scores in each homework and exam don't make sense to me. For example, Midterm 1 is 30 points but counts for 35%. When you deduct points, you do it in 0.5-1.0 increments, but in reality, that's more than 0.5-1.0% out of 100. I think that's too much compared to a mistake. For example, if you made the total score 50 for 35% and deducted 0.5 points per mistake, that would sound better. Just for your consideration.

I think he does care about our learning and try to support it, and I appreciate the time put into updating notes, providing detailed keys, and reviewing things if people have questions. I also appreciate the opportunities for practice (eg midterms vs final, homeworks) and earning points for reviewing our assignments. I'm sure it is challenging taking over this course and updating it, so all things considered I think the key points were made and the assignments were well developed.

I think his teaching style worked for some students but would be more effective for others if able to incorporate different learning styles and more conceptual explanations. Concepts were mostly explained via derivations, which are important but in my experience with classmates not how most of us think and process this information. It seemed like there was disconnect within the class between understanding the math vs understanding the underlying concept, so professor would sometimes get frustrated that people didn't understand something, but the only explanation given was an equation without much practical or conceptual context, and then questions would also be answered in the same way. I think it would be more effective to contextualize the math before jumping into it. As a more specific example: in one of the early classes about interactions in GLMs, we spent a while working out a bunch of derivatives for terms in different models. Then at the end drew out graphs to visualize interaction as a difference in slopes vs. slope of difference, and that illustrated the point much more quickly and effectively. It would have been more helpful to start with that and then work out the proof. I also think pacing the class better would help with this, because it seemed like part of the issue was that we were always rushing with the new material. Especially survival, which isn't covered in other core classes.

Lectures also sometimes felt disorganized, going back and forth between topics and ideas, board and screen, etc. Would be super helpful to follow even a minimal outline just to make sure all important context and definitions are established up front for each lecture, and also to help us see what we are working towards with derivations. Part of this may also be different preferences for working out problems. Professor likes to break down formulas into multiple pieces and work in small pieces separately, but I found this really hard to follow. We would often lose track of pieces on the large board or forget to add something back in, and personally this just made it even harder for me to follow how different formulas work together and to keep track of whatever end goal we were working toward. Was also quite particular about notation, but then wouldn't follow that notation on the board, which could interfere with understanding in cases where it made a difference to the math procedure.

There were also times when certain interpretations or definitions were never brought up in class, but then we were told we should still know it from other classes, but at the same time there were other topics that we did learn in other classes but were told to do differently for this class. I got the impression that the professor had frustrations with the curriculum and thought that students were just not that dedicated when they weren't able to recall certain formulas or ideas. Some of the comments made when classmates asked about these issues came across as condescending. I don't think that was the intention, but it's discouraging when we are all adults and professionals that are voluntarily here to learn. In reality I think our goals and expectations are just different, and the statistics series in general is theory and calculus heavy to the detriment of our applied and practical knowledge.

He is very committed to teaching and supporting students, which is truly appreciated. Overall, he is a great professor with a deep understanding of the course content. He also goes beyond the core curriculum to teach us additional skills that are essential for our success in the program.

Of the statistics series, I enjoyed EPI 204 the most. Professor Morrison truly cares about his students and aims to advocate on their behalf. He also made himself available for one-on-one talks, as well as during office hours (sometimes even staying later) to ensure we understood the material. One of the things that stood out the most (in a positive way!) was the professor asking about the students' different learning styles and tailoring the homework and study materials to fit our needs. I found the readings particularly helpful. The professor was also clear about the material for exams and what we needed to focus on. He defined concepts clearly and effectively, which helped connect all the material we learned in previous statistics courses to EPI 204.

Term	Eval Opened	CRN	Subject	Course	Section	Enrollment	% Response
Spring Quarter 2025	5/29/2025 12:00 AM	40250	EPI	204	001	17	58