OSR Item Interpretation  
Student Results  
20 students 8/28/02

Introduction

I know you think you know what I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant. --Unknown

This preliminary study was conducted as part of a comprehensive usability test of the Online Student Ratings at BYU. The main objective of this portion of the testing is to solicit feedback from the students on their interpretation of the meaning of each item and the scales used on the ratings form. The purpose for gathering the information is to determine whether student interpretations are aligned with the intended meaning of the items while becoming aware of the ways in which students make these evaluations. The questions addressed are:

- How do students interpret the individual items on the ratings form?
- How do students go about selecting a rating on each item?
  - What criteria do they use?
  - What are their thought processes?
- Which items are most important from the students’ perspectives?

From a random sample of two hundred undergraduate students, twenty volunteer participants were asked to tell in their own words what each of the items means to them and to verbalize their process of selecting a rating from the items’ scale in a think-aloud protocol. They were also asked to determine the importance of each item (i.e. how important to the evaluation of teaching and learning) by selecting a number between 1 and 5 where:

1 = unimportant,  
2 = not very important,  
3 = somewhat important,  
4 = very important, and  
5 = extremely important.

The results (summarized below for each item) will be used to inform the developers of the online student ratings form as they make revisions for future implementations.
Core Items

1. Course materials and activities are effective in helping students learn.

Item Importance

Item Rank: 1st (i.e. 1st in importance to students)
Mean Importance: 4.53
Median Importance: 5
Mode Importance: 5
StDev: 0.79

Item Meaning Summary

Most interpreted *materials* as the textbook and syllabus. Some also included handouts. Some of the students could not see how *activities* applied to their courses. *Some tended to think of activities as get-togethers or something the class did outside of the classroom.* Most regarded them as discussions, group projects, object lessons, examples, labs, homework and/or experiments. *Effective(ness) in helping students learn* was interpreted as how easy to understand and how well the materials apply to the course and life. If the professor just repeated what was in the textbook or didn’t seem to incorporate textbook material into the lecture, they rated the textbook (materials) poorly. If the instructor expounded on the textbook, they rated it better. One student said in rating this item, he thought of whether the textbook was worth buying.

Rating Criteria

**Strongly Disagree** = Textbook is irrelevant, pointless, didn’t use it, or no text. Materials are not aligned with lecture at all. Class was negative experience; Instructor was not helpful, didn’t care; students have to use outside resources on their own to get help or to supplement materials; activities are busy work

**Disagree** = Textbook is useless for class or only used as a supplement. A few of the Materials are aligned with the lecture; activities are not related

**Somewhat Disagree** = one or two activities in the course are useful. Book and teacher may be aligned, but activities aren’t. Busy work, poorly-structured textbook..

**Somewhat Agree** = About 20% of time in class is worth attending and I learned something while there. Only a few things the teacher talks about aren’t aligned with the materials. Assignments correspond to syllabus. The text is not an intrinsic part of the class.

**Agree** = 60% of classtime is actually useful. All materials and activities are aligned (relevant). Activities are challenging and enjoyable. The textbook is used daily; none available could be better.
Strongly Agree= textbook is very applicable to class. The activities and groupwork, projects and homework allow students to learn something new (stretch), are aligned with each other enjoyable and complete; instructor uses great object lessons.

2. This course is well-organized.

Item Importance

Item Rank: 10th
Mean Importance: 4.05
Median Importance: 4
Mode Importance: 4
StDev: 0.76

Item Meaning Summary

Students mainly based their answers to this question on the syllabus and how well the teacher followed the syllabus. If the syllabus was not clearly defined or the instructor did not follow the syllabus closely, the students rated the course as poorly organized. Their definition of well-organized is having an accurate, complete syllabus available the first day and using class time effectively. Some students mentioned that it is difficult to separate the course and the instructor’s organization. One student mentioned that following a theme is more important to him than strictly following a syllabus. Another regarded the course as well-organized if the professor and TA were coordinated and efficient (i.e. prepared) and if the workload was evenly spaced.

Rating Criteria

Strongly Disagree = no syllabus, or did not follow a syllabus or theme; inefficient (i.e. spends too much time figuring out what to do); students don’t know what expectations are; all work is assigned at the end of the term.

Disagree = a schedule once every two weeks or just an overview without specifics; gets behind on schedule or out of order; students don’t know what to expect from class each day; professor and TA are not coordinated in policies, schedules, etc.; work is not distributed evenly (e.g. things due during midterm).

Somewhat Disagree = a weak attempt at a syllabus; gets somewhat behind on schedule; course may be “thrown on” prof. at last minute; assignments are somewhat “crammed” together.

Somewhat Agree = Syllabus-course objectives not clearly defined, at least a few dates re: the final and some midterms. Follows syllabus, but has some random assignments, activities, etc., generally follows a theme.; homework may not be evenly spaced.
Agree = accurate syllabus (adhered to); web pages with up-to-date information; no surprises; homework evenly spaced.

Strongly Agree = syllabus is followed exactly, appropriate amount of time on the topics; timely feedback; Web pages with up-to-date information; Instructor “thinks like me” (i.e. has same organization scheme as student); instructor goes to great lengths to make sure everyone knows expectations and no one is frustrated with workload or the sequence of topics.

3. **Evaluations of students’ work (e.g. exams, graded assignments and activities) are good measures of what students learn in the course.**

**Item Importance**

Item Rank: 13th  
Mean Importance: 3.82  
Median Importance: 4  
Mode Importance: 4  
StDev: 1.10

**Item Meaning Summary**

Students generally had concerns about how well tests are able to measure their ability. They based their responses mostly on tests rather than “graded assignments and activities.” Many mentioned the importance of feedback. One student commented, “Not everything can be graded.” Another said, “You don’t get evaluations from teachers, just a grade.” An English major said all assessments are subjective and that good measures depend on whether the professor understands what you’re trying to say. Another student commented that the ratings on this item may be negatively biased if the student is not doing well in the class.

**Rating Criteria**

Strongly Disagree = assignments and tests are based on things that the teacher doesn’t even talk about or strictly on memorization. Students get personal benefit from the course, but the tests don’t show it. Exams test ability to take exams rather than knowledge. Tests are extremely difficult with “trick” questions; bad test scores still get you a good grade, or grade is based solely on the test with no feedback.

Disagree = Activities are just a waste of time; one assignment or test may be a good measure, but others aren’t.

Somewhat Disagree = assignments and tests are partly applicable, but not well-thought through; only cover about 30% of what is learned in class and some are confusing; little feedback.
Somewhat Agree = A few assignments were not graded. “Wicked” curve, homework graded by TA with no comments; haven’t received assignments back., some comments, evaluations cover 50% of what is learned in class.

Agree = Mastered concepts (70-80% of what is covered in class) are successfully applied in assignments and exams. Student feels grade given was earned.; tests are well-written and prepare students for life; reviewed in class

Strongly Agree = Test is culmination of all that students learn, their assignments, and class activities.(at least 90%). Grade is given just on papers, etc. assigned; Student feels grade given was earned.; tests are well-written and prepare students for life; points out progress.

4. Course grading procedures are fair.

Item Importance

Item Rank: 6th
Mean Importance: 4.29
Median Importance: 4
Mode Importance: 5
Standard Deviation: 0.90

Item Meaning Summary

Although responses were slightly disparate for this item, students tended to base their responses on whether or not the instructor showed favoritism or “weighted” the graded items according to the amount of work expected of the students. They also considered how well assignments fit the course workload, whether the actual grading reflected what was outlined in the course syllabus, and if the grades distinguished between the “poor” students and those who excel.

Rating Criteria

Strongly Disagree = no clear criteria for grades; teacher shows favoritism; assignments not weighted for the time required; graded on a curve; on subjective assessment, professor doesn’t understand what student is trying to say or respect his/her opinion (esp. in essay questions); grade doesn’t reflect what is outlined in the syllabus; tested on unexpected items not discussed; no flexibility on how answers are interpreted

Disagree = grade based on first assignments (rest are assumed to be the same); turn in nothing and get same as someone who did everything; graded on impossible curve; favoritism

Somewhat Disagree = grading is inconsistent, subjective

Somewhat Agree = fairly clear criteria, impartiality, consistency; teacher works special deals
Agree = clear criteria, impartiality, consistency, A is achievable

Strongly Agree = clear definite criteria; impartiality; specific rubrics; consistency; able to discuss all aspects of grading with the teacher; tests aren’t “super hard;” based on what was taught; flexibility in interpretation of answers; tells how to improve

5. This course helped me develop intellectual skills (such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, integration of knowledge).

Item Importance

Item Rank: 15th
Mean Importance: 3.79
Median Importance: 4
Mode Importance: 5
StDev: 1.26

Item Meaning Summary

Students based answers to this question on how applicable the course seemed to be to their lives and how challenging it was. A few students thought “analytical” only applied to mathematical courses. One student mentioned that he did not know what “critical thinking” or “analytical reasoning” was as a freshman (i.e. he wasn’t familiar with the terms).

Generally students seemed to think about this item in the same way as, “I learned a great deal in this course.” If they felt they learned a great deal, they believed the course helped them develop intellectual skills.

Rating Criteria

Strongly Disagree = Busy work or memorization only; no learning or growth from taking class; students are unable to reason or discuss content after taking class or to apply content to life

Disagree = Course may have some entertainment value, but material is all obvious; no in depth thinking required; no application of content

Somewhat Disagree = Course content is not memorable; may correlate to other classes, but not to life

Somewhat Agree = some application to life; student sees course in different light than when began

Agree = Application of knowledge is required; course is considered useful for future life; deep exploration of subject
Strongly Agree = Student feels confident in ability to synthesize and integrate knowledge gained, remember and think about concepts after course is over; provides a new “level of enlightenment,” ties subjects together; intellectually challenging; makes a difference in life.

6. This course provides knowledge and experiences that help strengthen my testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Item Importance

Item Rank: 12th
Mean Importance: 3.84
Median Importance: 4
Mode Importance: 4
StDev: 1.07

Item Meaning Summary

The students’ comments were mixed as to whether all courses could or should provide knowledge or experiences that strengthen testimony; however, they either thought all classes should be this way or only religion classes could. It seems that students who thought only religion classes could, had not had any non-religion courses that they felt strengthened their testimonies. One student said that most students come to BYU for knowledge and experiences that help strengthen their testimonies.

Rating Criteria

Strongly Disagree = teaches against correct principles; no enlightenment; professor doesn’t take opportunities; no effort to refer to Gospel; does not teach truth with the Spirit; no prayer; no hymn; students don’t even think about Christ while in class

Disagree = No discussion of experiences; he just lectures; infrequent effort, prayer and hymn only; no mention of scriptures

Somewhat Disagree = Didn’t help much, but teacher tried a little; 2 times out of 3 effort, prayer and hymn;

Somewhat Agree = teacher has someone pray every single day and at least once a week tries to relate class in some way back to some kind of testimony-building experience or somehow how their career has offered them an opportunity to feel the Spirit to help somebody out and to serve.

Agree = Religion course or teachers that relate their field to serving God’s children and improving the quality of life for them; takes advantage of opportunities; gets involvement/response from students.
Strongly Agree = direct discussion related to Gospel at least every few days; lots of spiritual strength; at least one really good experience.; starts all classes with a prayer; planned out (effort, prayer, hymn); teaches service, appreciation for God’s creations and relates all to subject matter; gets involvement/response from students.

7. For this course, about how many hours per week did you spend:

Item Importance

Item Rank: 16th  
Mean Importance: 3.79  
Median Importance: 4  
Mode Importance:  
StDev: 1.22  

Item Meaning Summary

Students felt this question was straightforward. Most didn’t see the purpose of the in class, portion, but assumed it meant how many hours were actually spent attending class sessions. Two students interpreted in class to mean the time they were on task in class attending to the lecture or what was being presented. They did see the out of class portion as valuable to help the teacher gauge how appropriate the workload is. They assumed it meant time spent on assignments, studying, going to labs, reading, researching and thinking/pondering about the class. Most mentioned that their time selection would be a conservative estimate of the time spent and that they didn’t keep a record. One student asked if and how (s)he was supposed to convert the time to regular semester hours if the class was on a block. One student wondered what the purpose of the data collected from this item was and another conjectured that it was to prepare future students to know what type of workload to expect. Another student speculated that the data would be skewed because the “bright” students would not spend as much time outside of class as others.

Rating Criteria

Most said out of class is always more than in class. Ratios vary from 2 to 3 hours out of class for every in class hour.

8. What percentage of this time was valuable to your learning?

Item Rank: 14th  
Mean Importance: 3.82  
Median Importance: 4  
Mode Importance: 5  
StDev: 1.15  

Item Meaning Summary
One student defined *valuable* as “the effectiveness of the time spent.” Overall, students saw the *out of class* portion as pointless or confusing, but found value in the *in class* portion. The students felt that the *in class* part was more important than the *out of class* part (just the opposite from the previous item), because it could help the instructor gauge how well class time was used. Many interpreted the item as asking what percentage of class time they actually paid attention. Some said *out of class* depended on how well they used their study time, others based it on whether homework was busy work or helped them learn.

One student thought that the percentages should add up to 100%. If he put 70% for “out of class,” he had to put 30% for “in class.” He was interpreting the question as asking what part of the course was most valuable.

Two students didn’t know how to answer the percentage question. The blank percentage scroll-down boxes didn’t clue them in very well as to how to answer. (Susan’s Note-- I assume the percentage box is blank by default to keep from biasing students with a default of 0 or 100 percent. I recommend that rather than a blank, the default box should contain a percentage sign (%) without a numerical value before it, so that selecting a percentage would be more intuitive.)

**Rating Criteria**

Hours selected depend on how the student interprets the item’s meaning. One student said that the percentage of time that was valuable equaled the amount of time spent on applicable topics (so, *valuable time = applicable time – busy work*). Another student gave a formula for figuring this effectiveness, but called it *efficiency* (*efficiency = time learning ÷ time spent*).

**Questions regarding the instructor**


   Item Rank: 2nd
   Mean Importance: 4.45
   Median Importance: 5
   Mode Importance: 5
   StDev: 0.80

**Item Meaning Summary**

Students based responses on their perception of how the teacher felt toward them and their classmates—how the teacher treated them (whether they acknowledged students by paying attention; answering questions, showing concern for how well students are doing, tutoring, and mentoring, etc.). Some believed that flexibility in office hours, a willingness to meet after class, *accommodating different learning styles* and *learning the*
students’ names are signs of a caring or interested teacher. One student said, “Students don’t care if teachers don’t care.”

Rating Criteria

**Strongly Disagree** = makes negative comments or has negative attitude toward students; shows favoritism; is “there for a paycheck,” seems distracted; focus is not on students; doesn’t speak to students after class; is intimidating (students are afraid to approach instructor); doesn’t know students’ names or how they are doing individually

**Disagree** = is apathetic; cares little for students’ learning styles; doesn’t like to help outside of class; makes students feel stupid; is “burned out”; doesn’t know names

**Somewhat Disagree** = gives limited help to students; doesn’t know many names; shows some interest sometimes; doesn’t change (“may use the same test for 20 years”)

**Somewhat Agree** = Acts somewhat enthusiastic; not proactive in engaging students in conversation or finding out how students are doing; may be “aloof”

**Agree** = excited about subject; learns students’ names.; spends time with students outside of class; is willing to answer questions; finds out what students understand and helps them; friendly; not intimidating

**Strongly Agree** = actually calls students in for interviews or speaks with them one on one; willing to answer questions after class; available for office hours; shows attitude of concern; lets class decide what to work on; leaves test in testing center for extra days; accommodates students learning styles; knows students’ names as well as strengths and weaknesses; willing to tutor or mentor students and provide extra materials or resources when needed; shows a love for teaching and students; asks for feedback on his/her teaching; gives helpful feedback to students

10. Provides adequate opportunities for students to get help when they need it.

**Item Rank:** 11th
**Mean Importance:** 3.97
**Median Importance:** 4
**Mode Importance:** 4
**StDev:** 0.96

**Item Meaning Summary**

Most responses were based mainly on office hours and how willing the instructor and/or TA was to meet outside of office hours. One student pointed out that being able to mark the extremes depends on whether or not the student tried to meet with the instructor. Some based responses on how student questions are received. One said that if a student perceives the professor as helpful, she has confidence to ask questions even though she is shy.
**Rating Criteria**

**Strongly Disagree** = No hours, no TA, no opportunity to get help; wasn’t there; couldn’t contact them; never tell you their office hours; don’t give you their office number; takes questions (1 or 2) only at the end of class

**Disagree** = No hours, but can see TAs; or one office hour a week; or give you office hours, give you an office number; sometimes they’re not there, sometimes they are. Or they come late and no flexibility in office hours; or allows questions during class, but not after

**Somewhat Disagree** = No hours, but can see TAs or fairly regular in their brief office hours; will meet with you outside of those hours if you’re really pushing for it. If you really need the extra help, (“but probably only because they’re worried about their teacher evaluation”).

**Somewhat Agree** = Has one or two office hours in a week or has office hours, but no time after class; may be hard to catch; consistently in during office hours but students must push hard if they need some extra help or extra meeting time; may have too many students to help

**Agree** = Has adequate or convenient office hours, office hours are right before or after class; always consistent (dependable), every day every time in their office hours or explain why they cannot make it; willing to meet with students outside of class and office hours without making them feel as though they’re infringing on the instructor’s time; finds resources for the student when needed; has TA

**Strongly Agree** = Has adequate, consistent and reasonable office hours; accessible even outside of office hours and lets students know in class that he’s available; helps student grow; has TA available, if needed; provides a help section and other resources; wants to help students whenever they need it; allows students to call (even at home when absolutely needed); answers emails promptly; tests students regularly to see how they are doing

11. Provides opportunities for students to become actively involved in the learning process.

Item Rating: 19th
Mean Importance: 3.42
Median Importance: 4
Mode Importance: 4
StDev: 0.82

**Item Meaning Summary**

Some students based their responses on whether or not the instructor allowed or facilitated class discussion and student/instructor interactions. Most seemed to interpret this question as more applicable for “hands-on” classes. Some equated “actively involved” with “active learning” (e.g. role play, etc) giving the students opportunities to utilize what they are being taught in the class; to discuss and make use of course materials. One student wondered if being “actively involved”
in the learning process” meant being provided with more choice in what to study. Some noted
that in certain classes it’s difficult to have what they consider active learning (e.g. English
because students are too shy to do role playing). One student said, “To learn, you always have to
be involved.”

**Rating Criteria**

**Strongly Disagree** = Teacher lectures only; relies on text; doesn’t take comments or questions;
**shows old slides**; gives rigid and inflexible assignments (no student choice); doesn’t require
application of learning

**Disagree** = Just lectures; brushes aside student comments; no student choice in
assignments/activities; little application of learning

**Somewhat Disagree** = Activities that span wider variety of learning styles is needed, students
feel they don’t have choice in assignments/activities and that there is little application

**Somewhat Agree** = Takes few questions; asks every once in a while for what students may think
or how they’re understanding; gives in class practice of concepts (e.g. examples, experiences,
videos, etc.).

**Agree** = Provides presentations, activities, hands-on instruction; students take part in class;
allows discussion or comments; requires students to participate and come to answers on their
own, guides the discussion and leads students to the correct answer. Or, if they’ve arrived at the
wrong conclusion, can take them back; **gives useful feedback written in margins**; gives projects
and assignments to apply concepts; may give a participation grade or points

**Strongly Agree** = Class presentation; involved in a seminar; lots of discussion; projects; more
than just reading; professor **solicits student input and responses**; facilitates discussion; gives
choice in assignments/activities; may help arrange study groups; **may notify students of
upcoming conferences**; equal interaction between students and professors

**12. Gives students prompt feedback on their work.**

- Item Rank: 5th
- Mean Importance: 4.34
- Median Importance: 5
- Mode Importance: 5
- StDev: 0.91

**Item Meaning Summary**

Responses are consistently based on whether the instructor simply marked a grade or made
comments as to why and how the grade was given. Several of the students included
usefulness in determining how prompt the feedback was and vice versa (see item 13). One
student commented that in some courses how promptly feedback is given reflects more on
the TA than on the instructor. They answered this question as though promptness did not matter unless the feedback was also useful.

Rating Criteria

**Strongly Disagree** = Papers aren’t returned or are given back at the end of the semester; students feel clueless about their progress; test is “nasty” surprise (too late to prepare because of lack of feedback)

**Disagree** = work is returned a whole exam behind; if students turn in assignments everyday, they get them back 3 days (class times) later and get behind in assignments because of lack of feedback; no practice test, no answer key, no quizzes

**Somewhat Disagree** = Inconsistent, not many comments; gives a few general ideas on how to improve; may have to ask 3 or 4 times to get work back

**Somewhat Agree** = work is returned within a week or two from the day turned in; there’s some feedback, not just the letter grade.

**Agree** = returned within a week; writes in margins comments that would help student improve work and knowledge; may talk to student personally

**Strongly Agree** = has tests back within 2 class periods; useful feedback is given; helps students prepare for the next test; gives comments & how to fix, not just marking wrong; gives quizzes, has answer key or checked in class

13. Provides students useful feedback on their work.

**Item Rank:** 4th
**Mean Importance:** 4.42
**Median Importance:** 5
**Mode Importance:** 5
**StDev:** 0.69

**Item Meaning Summary**

Several students did not see a difference between this and the previous item. One student said that feedback is not useful unless it’s prompt. Another said, “You can learn as much from feedback as you do from lecture.” The students all based their responses on whether there was just a grade or if there were helpful comments, and on how prompt the feedback was. However, two students saw this question as more subjective than the last question.

Rating Criteria

**Strongly Disagree** = No praise, or all criticizing, insulting, or just “Great,” or just checks it (score only); opportunity to self-test (practice test) missing
**Disagree** = Work comes back at end of semester, no answer key, no quizzes, no pre-test

**Somewhat Disagree** = Some useful comments, but most are not; a letter grade and a mark for each question right or wrong

**Somewhat agree** = gives a letter grade and a mark for each question right or wrong, underlines a few key points; some useful comments; students know what to improve on and where gaps are

**Agree** = writes in the margins things that are going to help the student understand before test

**Strongly Agree** = gives a letter grade or points next to every single question; lets students know what was right and writes a sentence or two about what was incorrect; gives detailed, personalized comments and hints/tips; talks to students about concerns; gives practice test with key; doesn’t forget praise

14. **Responds respectfully to students’ questions and viewpoints.**

*Item Rank: 9th*
*Mean Importance: 4.25*
*Median Importance: 5*
*Mode Importance: 5*
*StDev: 1.01*

**Item Meaning Summary**

All students based their responses on how polite or respectful the instructor was, in particular whether (s)he ridicules students. Several students also took into account whether the professor wasted too much class time on one particular student’s concerns. One student said, “Mutual respect is necessary for learning.”

**Rating Criteria**

**Strongly Disagree** = “Prone to wild tangents;” laughs at students or makes a joke at expense of student; insulting; shows favoritism in calling on those with questions; may hurt someone’s feelings; makes negative comments; expects students to memorize what instructor thinks; unapproachable

**Disagree** = makes students feel stupid, but not quite harsh enough for STD; ignores or discourages views other than his own; condescending; doesn’t respond to students; obvious disdain for questions, says, “It’s in your textbook, read it or read your notes from last time.”

**Somewhat Disagree** = answers students’ questions, but if they disagree with his/her viewpoints, denies the student their opinions.

**Somewhat Agree** = acknowledges student comments and questions, doesn’t completely deny opinions; guides toward better questions.
Agree = polite, even with “goofy” questions; answers questions with no yelling; nicely points out differences; says, “we’re about to come to that,” or “I’m available after class to discuss that;” makes positive comments; tries to understand why question is asked (e.g. lack of understanding?); sees questions as tools for thinking and learning

Strongly Agree = Encourages questions; willing to respond, but respectful of the rest of the class and time (achieves a balance); responds to all questions and reassures the student that they’re not the only one that has that question; says things like, “That was a good question. I understand your question,” or validates students’ viewpoint and says, “That’s possible to see it that way;” facilitates open discussion

15. The Instructor is effective in explaining difficult concepts and ideas.

   Item Rank: 3rd
   Mean Importance: 4.45
   Median Importance: 5
   Mode Importance: 5
   StDev: 0.76

   Item Meaning Summary

   Student responses were quite consistent. Their responses tended to relate to how they viewed the question #9 shows genuine interest.(i.e. taking the time to explain means the professor is showing interest). Most mentioned it is important for the instructor to present and explain concept in multiple ways to accommodate various learning styles. One student said, “I know an instructor is effective in explaining difficult concepts if I am getting it.” Another said, “I don’t understand why they don’t want you to understand what they’re saying.”

   Rating Criteria

   Strongly Disagree = Professor says, “Look it up in the book;” jumps through material and lets students “drown,” just expects that they’ll pick it up right away; uses words that are far above the students’ vocabulary, or are not a part of the vocabulary of the book; uses concepts that haven’t been discussed; students remain confused

   Disagree = Gives no good examples; explains it, but rushes through it quickly; says, “So, does everyone get that?” and moves on when no one asks a question; goes over concepts several times in the same way

   Somewhat Disagree = Presentation of material good, but rarely has examples; makes attempts to explain, notices that students have awkward or confused looks on their faces, but does not plan ahead of time how to approach the topic with them; understands material, but is not effective in answering questions
Somewhat Agree = Textbook is sometimes more helpful than instructor in explaining concepts; students still have a hard time grasping idea; instructor doesn’t understand students’ questions; explains only in one way

Agree = Professor knows more than textbook, and explains/presents in different ways; takes time for difficult things; thinks of and prepares analogies and different ways to approach the topic with students before class.

Strongly Agree = Examples articulate what students are having difficulty with; professor provides lots of analogies, examples, visual aids (some are even humorous) to clarify what the concept means or implies and how it’s best applied to the course and to life; breaks it down and explains it in different ways (adapts to students’ learning styles); important to professor that all understand; plans; doesn’t wait for students to ask a question; anticipates questions; students are able to articulate concept after explanation

16. Appropriately brings Gospel insights and values into secular subjects.

Item Rank: 17th
Mean Importance: 3.76
Median Importance: 4
Mode Importance: 4
StDev: 1.13

Item Meaning Summary

Similar to Question #6, the students had conflicting views as to whether this could or should apply to all classes other than religion. Most explained the term appropriately within the context of the item as meaning how well the insight fits within or relates to the topic being discussed. Two students thought that gaining Gospel insights was a personal matter (i.e. more dependent on the student than on the instructor). One student said, “There is no such thing as a secular subject. The Gospel should be one of the most prevalent topics on campus.”

Rating Criteria

Strongly Disagree = Makes no attempt to bring in Gospel insights or brings in unrelated things; does not make an attempt to show students the importance of the material

Disagree = Misses opportunities to bring in Gospel insights at inappropriate times or tries to bring insights into the Gospel without planning;

Somewhat Disagree = Mentions Gospel once in awhile or tries to mention the Gospel when it isn’t very applicable or doesn’t relate to students’ lives

Somewhat Agree = teacher can’t force gospel insights or does it in a distracting or reluctant way; misses opportunities to bring in more or does make attempts and does say relevant things, at the last minute
Agree = plans appropriate moments to bring in relevant insights and personal or Gospel stories (uses values); tone of class is conducive to developing talents to serve

Strongly Agree = Religion classes; instructor shows secular and Gospel correlation; talks about Gospel at each opportunity; has many experiences to share; when students leave class they feel subject is not just secular anymore; but that it really is something sacred. (“A good example ZOOL 260-- Intro to anatomy class”); encourages students to bring in their own insights

17. Is spiritually inspiring insofar as the subject matter permits.

Item Rank: 18th
Mean Importance: 3.76
Median Importance: 4
Mode Importance: 4
StDev: 1.15

Item Meaning Summary

Students had to think about how this question was different from the previous one; half thought it was the same and that one should be deleted from the form. They tended to interpret both this and the last question as stating “insofar as the subject matter permits.” The phrase “spiritually inspiring” was interpreted by one student to mean how much students are inspired to become better people, to learn more. Two students interpreted this question more as a rating of the teacher’s spirituality and found it inappropriate.

Rating Criteria

Strongly Disagree = is less than inspiring; may make negative comments about fellow faculty members; not willing to connect to Gospel material

Disagree = consistently misses opportunities to relate to students things spiritually; to inspire students to reach higher and to do more with the subject matter; to learn more and to appreciate things more; goes against what we believe in; may make a joke

Somewhat Disagree = rarely sees the potential of inspiring students to grow closer to God by attaining more knowledge,

Somewhat Agree = notices when it’s possible to really inspire students and when students are eager; may not put in much effort

Agree = Stresses Gospel—where it’s relevant; consistently seeks out and takes advantage of opportunities to inspire students; invites students to learn by faith and the Spirit and to become better people; helps students understand how subject fits into their lives
Strongly Agree = “inspiring” – makes students want to be better through example; never misses an opportunity to inspire others and to show people the inspiring methods that God has used as it pertains to that subject..

18. This instructor and course contribute to the Mission and Aims of a BYU Education.

Item Rank: 7th
Mean Importance: 4.26
Median Importance: 5
Mode Importance: 5
StDev: 1.07

Item Meaning Summary

Students interpreted this question as they did the first item on the form about the overall impression of the course. However, unlike the first question, they did consider the four parts of the “mission and aims of BYU.” One student noted, “The Mission and AIMs are basically the purpose of our school. When all parts of the mission and aims are incorporated into class, then that is a remarkable feat.” Another student remarked that the item seemed “loaded, “and “heavy,” with “too much togther.”

Rating Criteria

Strongly Disagree = A lot of memorizing and no application or Gospel insight; no learning or growth; instructor does less than job entails; doesn’t interact appropriately with other students; tears down their students for asking stupid questions or tears down other faculty members; doesn’t help students see the “bigger picture” of why they’re here

Disagree = lacks relevance for life after graduation; students leave class not feeling skilled or inspired; instructor does not make attempts to strengthen students; doesn’t ask students to be more than they are or to reach for more; deficient in at least one category

Somewhat Disagree = makes attempts at these aims and missions but it’s not planned. It’s passive, not an active part of instructor’s preparation

Somewhat Agree = Everything, but lacking service; a teacher who thinks about doing these things, who tries, who may accomplish one of them either by chance or because they did plan it but only during sporadic moments

Agree = Makes students feel skilled, can now serve others; focuses on each aim and mission; actively makes it a part of their lessons, their person and their role as an educator

Strongly Agree = Relates to life after graduation; class is inspiring; all factors (aims and mission) are fulfilled; instructor is a role model and a master teacher (i.e. is like the Savior in that they pattern their teaching after the way that He taught); something in class is life-changing; every class tells how to “go forth and serve “
19. Please add any comments or suggestions you have about your learning experience in this course with this instructor.

Item Rank: 8th
Mean Importance: 4.25
Median Importance: 5
Mode Importance: 5
StDev: 1.01

Item Meaning Summary

All the students thought this question was important to allow them to comment on aspects not covered by the closed questions only if the comments are actually read and considered by those who could make a difference. One student asked if students could be given a guarantee that their voice would be heard. Those who did not rate the item as extremely important, didn’t believe that the ratings actually affected faculty or the course in any way because of past experience and observations of courses needing improvement remaining unchanged.

Student Comments

Most students said they would write comments if something “stood out” in the class as either positive or negative. One student said it is a good way to communicate how she felt about the class without having to say it to the instructor’s face. Some were hopeful that their suggestions would be taken seriously and acted upon for course improvement or that they could be used as a warning or tips for success for other students before they enroll in the class

Overall Items

n=9

Compare this course with other university courses you have taken. Please indicate an OVERALL … for the following:

Course

Item Importance: 3rd (of the 3 global items)
Mean Importance: 3.78
Median Importance: 4
Mode Importance: 5

Summary

As with most of the questions about the course, the students had difficulty separating the course from the instructor.

Student Comments

(4) Subjective, rarely gives extremes. Good in … of all factors in the course.

(5) Good. How class went; teacher helped. If liked teacher style. Didn’t learn; unhelpful teacher (VP). Somewhat—didn’t really want course.

(6) Put this question at the end, since it’s a summary of the overall thing. Does this include the teacher?

(7) Good. Learning what I didn’t know before. Teacher just a little boring.

(8) Avoids “exceptionally good.” Professor makes the course good. Depends on whether you are a major (5) or not (3).

(9) (SWG) Weird question; hard to compare courses; easy to compare instructors. A VG if she enjoyed it, understood material.

**Instructor**

Item Importance: 1st (of 3 global items)
Mean Importance: 4.1428
Median Importance: 4
Mode Importance: 4, 5

**Summary**

Students either gave the instructor an overall rating, or focused on one aspect that is important to them in an instructor.

**Student Comments**

(2) Approachable. Flexible, but fair (EG).

(3) Interactive.

(4) Very subjective about professor; influential by grades, etc.

(7) Overall, instructor very good. Tries really hard, cares about students, wants us to learn. Maybe if he spoke more clearly. Poor—hard to understand, doesn’t care about students.

(8) Instructor more important than the course.

(9) Poor. Instructor boring. Enthusiastic, available (EG).
I learned a great deal in this course.

Summary
Responses were based mainly on whether on or not the material was new and/or seemed relevant.

Item Importance: 2\textsuperscript{nd} (of 3 global items)
Mean Importance: 4.125
Median Importance: 4.25
Mode Importance: 4

Student Comments

(2) Difference from what you know; newness of material (A).
(3) (SA).
(4) Either did or did not. Not important because learning is based on our own effort.
(5) (A) Went over a lot of material and can remember. Forgot everything after test (D).
(6) (STD) Felt like in high school again.
(7) Strong agree.
(8) Apply material to everyday life; material relevant; how applicable to life.
(9) (STD) This depends on what I have done in class.