



Fall 2020 Individual Report GOV 50 - GOV 50(FAS-GOV 50-Data 001,FAS-GOV 50-Data 002) David Kane

Project Title: **2020 Fall Harvard FAS Course Evaluation**

Course Audience: **101**
Responses Received: **86**
Response Ratio: **85%**

Report Comments

Note:

The order that the questions appear on this report is not the same as the way the questions were displayed to students. The order has been changed to make the report more readable.

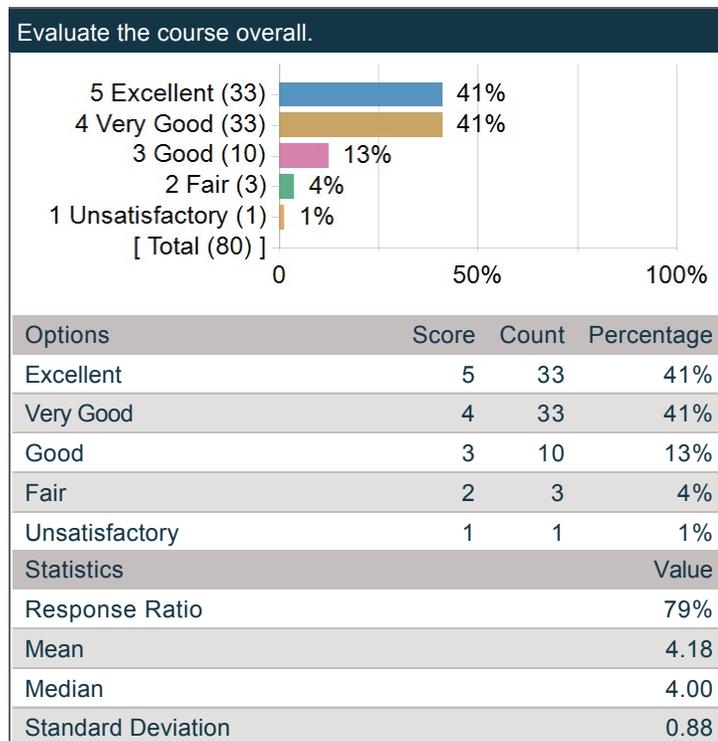
Creation Date: **Wednesday, December 23, 2020**

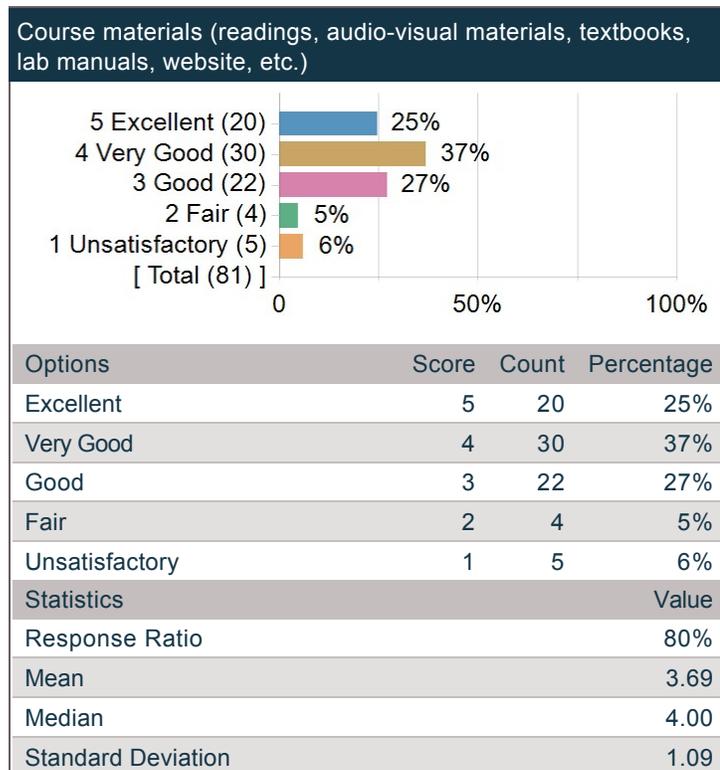
General Course Questions

Course General Questions

	Count	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory	Course Mean	Dept Mean	Division Mean
Evaluate the course overall.	80	41%	41%	13%	4%	1%	4.18	4.33	4.31
Course materials (readings, audio-visual materials, textbooks, lab manuals, website, etc.)	81	25%	37%	27%	5%	6%	3.69	4.19	4.27
Assignments (exams, essays, problem sets, language homework, etc.)	81	47%	40%	11%	1%	1%	4.30	4.18	4.15
Feedback you received on work you produced in this course	79	32%	34%	27%	5%	3%	3.87	4.13	4.14
Section component of the course	80	81%	9%	8%	0%	3%	4.66	4.35	4.20

Evaluate the course overall.

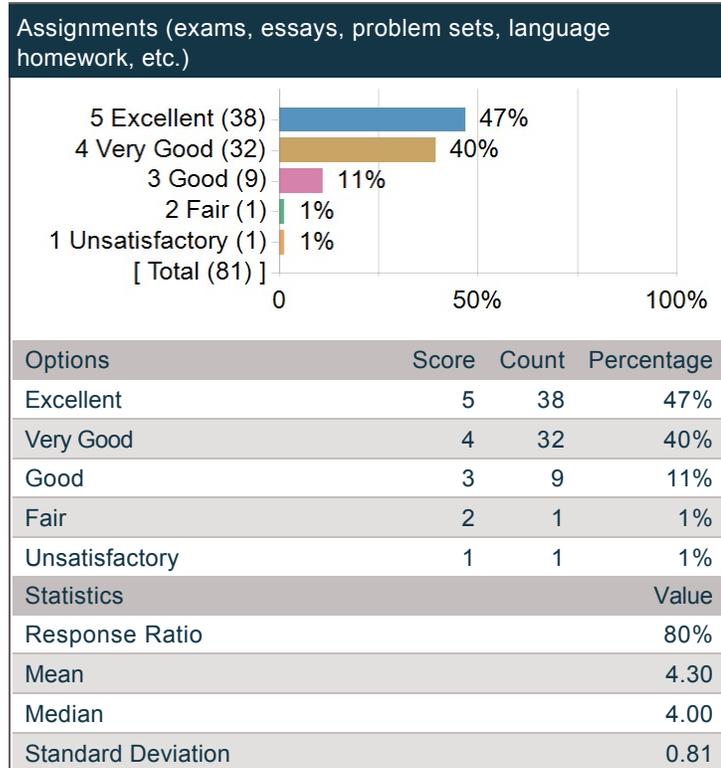


Course materials (readings, audio-visual materials, textbooks, lab manuals, website, etc.)**Add comments about course materials?**

Comments
Textbook could have used a bit of work (mostly the later sections, the early sections were fine but the later ones were more difficult to understand), but overall materials were great.
Sometimes there are small typos in the textbook
Book was utterly unhelpful and just plain confusing.
I didn't like that you had to constantly cut and paste work from question to question on the tutorials– they would be much better if that was fixed
Really good textbook, just wish we discussed it more in class
The textbook and tutorials need to be proofread more thoroughly and the hints could be more useful/standardized. The open-ended questions cannot just be copy-paste from the textbook or they need to help clarify how to interpret the textbook.
Students made it over the summer and they created a good textbook.
Could use more resources on Shiny beyond the short section in the Primer. Otherwise, very good!
The TFs did a great job of putting together the course material.
I loved how tailored to the course the textbook was, but I also think certain concepts were overemphasized (particularly the four cardinal virtues, which was especially ironic because our professor had clearly violated several of those).
The textbook and tutorials were definitely thorough.
The textbook needs to be pre-read, and errors need to be fixed. This was very frustrating throughout the semester.
Tutorials got better, but started out pretty long.
The textbook was student and professor made so some errors came up but overall it was tailored well to the class
The online textbook still has some quirks, but it was nice that all of the material was free and there were lots of extra resources to better understand things if you needed.
Didn't like the textbook much
textbook has a lot helpful examples
The book was completely free, which is great. It's pretty comprehensive, though I wish it were a little less dense especially in some chapters. It also wasn't always useful for some of the problems encountered on assignments and exams, and it often contained mistakes and typos, though I recognize that's almost inevitable for a new book.

Comments
The Primer has its strengths but also had some noticeable omissions (ie certain functions would be used with no explanation of why/what they were so) and frankly the use of the "cardinal values" was kind of strange and added nothing.
Textbook wasn't too clear, which made some of the more difficult code a harder to understand.
The textbook was easy to read but often times did not align with the problem sets or did not fully explain important content.
A lot of the work was searching google for what to do
The textbook was pretty good. I typically didn't read it because I learned as much as I needed in the lectures, but found it a handy reference guide using control F to find information I needed to review.
Always easy to find and reliable. Very helpful and organized.
The textbook was a good first dive into the materials, but the explanation of the concepts were not as thorough. The tutorials were a good length and it was nice that they followed the textbook. The psets and milestones were also good lengths; although it could be helpful to have less assignments overall.
The textbook is too long and not succinct enough. It would be more effective to go straight to the point. Especially for R code or interpretations that we will have to reproduce later on (it's hard to find what we're looking for a few weeks later). Some things are explained in the textbook and then never mentioned again in class or on assignments.
It was all too much—our first tutorial took on average 16 hours.
The textbook was a little too wordy and repetitive at times.
Textbook could be more applicable to the course / proofread
The textbook was not good. Lots of spelling mistakes, and each chapter varied in quality.
Chapters on R and R concepts are very good, chapters on stats and stats concepts need to be cleared up. The textbook is also unnecessarily long at points.
Tyler's docs are the BEST. Tyler Simko, we appreciate you!
I didn't have too many problems with the course materials, but I thought some parts needed to be brushed up (esp. interaction terms).
The textbook, being a work in progress, was riddled with typos and not particularly well-explained concepts. Different chapters, being made by different people, varied a lot in terms of quality.
The textbook needs to be seriously cut down so it is a more manageable reading load. I ended up just giving up on it.
The textbook was very long and complicated. If it was shorter or simpler, then I would've gotten much more out of the readings.
The book chapters are really long. The need to be divided into shorter chapters.
The primer was not that useful but the lecture notes were amazing. the rpimer was too repetitive.
Preceptor's Primer is very good, but it could be more organized.
Textbook is disorganized. Had to do a lot of Command-F searches to find stuff, as it didn't have a flow a lot of the time.
The textbook assumes some background/preparation in the subject, which can be confusing for students like me with no background in subjects such as statistical models.
The textbook was hot trash. I have no idea why anyone thought it was a good idea to replace actual stats terminology with made-up stuff relevant to only Gov 50. That means all of the knowledge we take in this class is not replicable in the real world. Imagine writing "preceptor's table" in an actual paper you are aiming to publish. We are Harvard students, many of whom have taken stats and methods course before. Treat us like adults with the stats, not children.
The book should have been supervised for continuity
The Primer is a good textbook but could be more robust.
The textbook had some important typos that caused some confusion. Also, the descriptions of the stat models weren't extremely clear.
Add some important parts of the preamble to the tutorials (because many people just skim/ skip the preamble).
Also, add videos to the preamble.
The book had a lot of typos and issues and was slightly repetitive, making the content harder to understand.
Everything was easily accessible and free which was great! The textbook was a little rough around the edges (but that is understandable considering they are still in the process of writing it).
Textbook could be improved. Tutorials could be improved.

Assignments (exams, essays, problem sets, language homework, etc.)

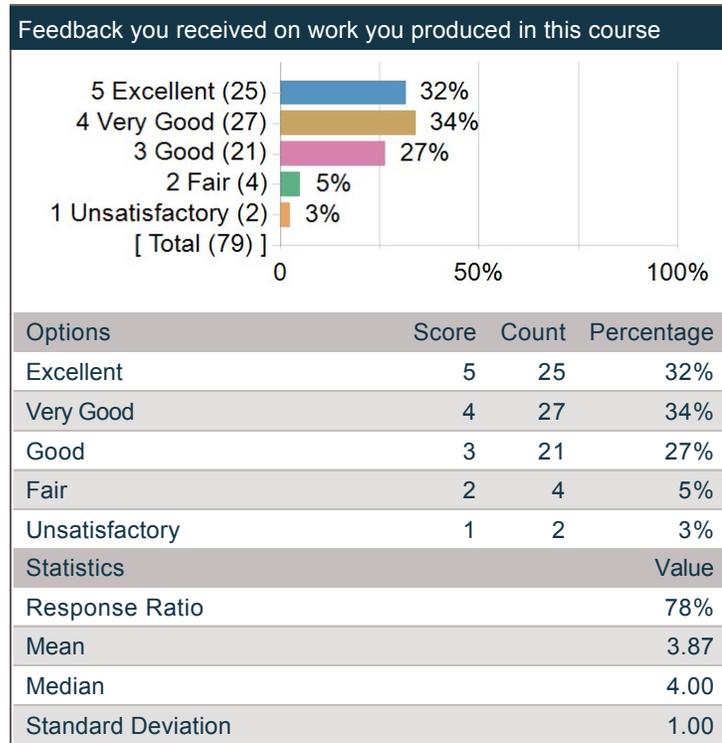


Add comments about course assignments?

Comments
I found all the exams and PSets really fun! Don't change a thing
I liked how exams are easier than p-sets
Exams were fair
All super fair
Glad the 4th exam was removed. Other than tutorials (especially the first one), this was extremely well organized and thoughtful.
Again students made most of these materials over the summer and it was good after the first pset which was way too long.
I liked the take-home exams and problem sets.
Everything was perfectly manageable to me. My only complaint pertains to the tutorials which at first required us the apply what we learned from the textbook but then shifted to us just copy and pasting exact code from the textbook (sounds nice but isn't helpful when you have to apply those concepts on an exam or pset and have no idea how).
Very manageable, but don't procrastinate until the last minute, because it will be too hard to finish on time.
There were a lot of inconsistencies with tutorials that seem like they could easily be fixed.
The assignments were very time consuming and ended up being mostly autodidactic. I did learn to consume and practice using a lot of new information.
Excluding the first two tutorials, I thought the tutorials were helpful in reviewing the material from the reading. Psets were fair, and the exams were also fair and straight forward.
The tutorials felt tedious and I think there must be a better way to introduce concepts than this. They were also a pain to load and oftentimes took a really long time. I know that they used to use Datacamp and wish that we could go back to using that.
Tutorials were pretty straightforward, but I wish the later ones were less focused on writing responses and more focused on actually learning the code. Problem sets were good, though sometimes the directions or hints were unclear and could cause more confusion. Exams were also reasonable. I liked that they were open-note, as in the real world we can always look things up. The only thing is that there shouldn't be a fourth exam especially after the final project.
There's a lot of them but they're useful. The tutorials were not the most helpful all the time but I think as a concept they're a good idea.
Not overwhelming, opportunities to check as we worked
Some of the early problem sets were very long and time consuming

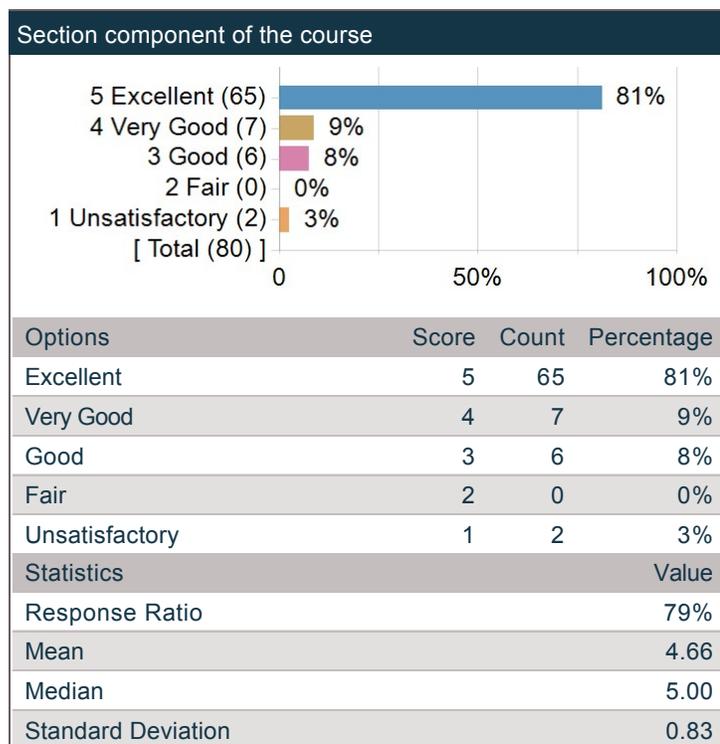
Comments
I thought they were very good! I found that the exams and problem sets were quite reasonable. However, I disliked having to comment my code so much – it seemed a little excessive.
I also think it would be good to eliminate the 4th (and final) exam, as was done this semester. I don't feel like a 4th exam would have any value and it seems too cramped with all of the other assignments.
The tutorials were only okay, kind of repetitive and dull and easy to get through even if you understood nothing. The problem sets though were excellent, stretched our understanding just enough so we would be challenged a bit but not frustrated. The final project is also great, and even better is the extensive support provided for it.
Hard enough that you had to put time and effort in, but if you did your part, you'd receive positive results.
There was thorough help on the problem sets. However, sometimes CAs gave different answers for the questions. The tests were not impossible either. Im glad that the last test was cancelled. there should not be a test after a final project is due.
I really enjoyed the psets. They were the perfect balance between challenging and doable. Slack was super helpful, and I really felt like I was learning. The grading is really chill and GradeScope is helpful to know if you got most things right. Ultimately the goal isn't to stress us out or for us to get bad grades, it's just to make sure the content is understood. I think the problem sets do exactly that!
Manageable but very heavy courseload that is graded very strictly.
Definitely a lot of assignments and a continuous flow of work. If you put in the hours, you'll be fine.
Psets can be repetitive when asking for interpretations. Milestones should be harder/ go faster, because they go so slowly and then you just wake up at the final milestone being asked for a complete website
Sometimes the problem sets were less clear, but overall the assignments were great.
All great.
P-sets and exams were overall very clear!
Problem sets are meant to be challenging, forcing students to attend study halls and office hours. This is a good thing, but just be ready for it!
Fair. Helps me develop and practice R skills.
The assignments themselves were fine, but I felt they were graded kind of strangely (eg on one of my exams, I lost a full point out of 20 because ONE LINE of my code was over 80 characters). It also seemed a little inconsistent across TFs (some people would take off a full point for a particular error, and another time they would take off 0.25 points) and grading overall seemed a little punitive to me.
Problem sets and exams were interesting and of good practical value. The final project was a great opportunity to explore the applications of data science to things I enjoy. 10/10
Cannot recommend study hall enough.
Tutorials, problem sets, and exams were all perfect. Difficult but not too challenging. Tested how much we have learned well.
The course assignments were definitely the most effective way of learning the material. I learned so much by doing the problem sets and found them the perfect amount of difficulty and learning.
Tutorials were copy paste from the text book. Would have been better if a little more application or adaptation.
All assignments in this course were fun to complete and not designed to trick or catch the students off guard. This made them more instructive, and I personally looked forward to completing them during the week.
genuinely enjoyed doing problem sets and exams.
Although the first tutorial was more time-consuming than it should have been, the following tutorials/problem sets/exams were fair.
It was always possible to complete. I never felt completely caught off guard (after thinking about it for a bit)
Individual quality of the psets and exams were high. Quality of the milestones were not great and varied week by week. If I was the instructor, I would heavily rework the milestones of this course. Focus on the most important things students should take away each week and don't try to cram 12 hours of materials into an ungraded assignment that most students will try to finish in 2 hours.
Making us add a stupid amount of comments to the code, I felt, was not very conducive to learning.

Feedback you received on work you produced in this course



Add comments about course feedback?

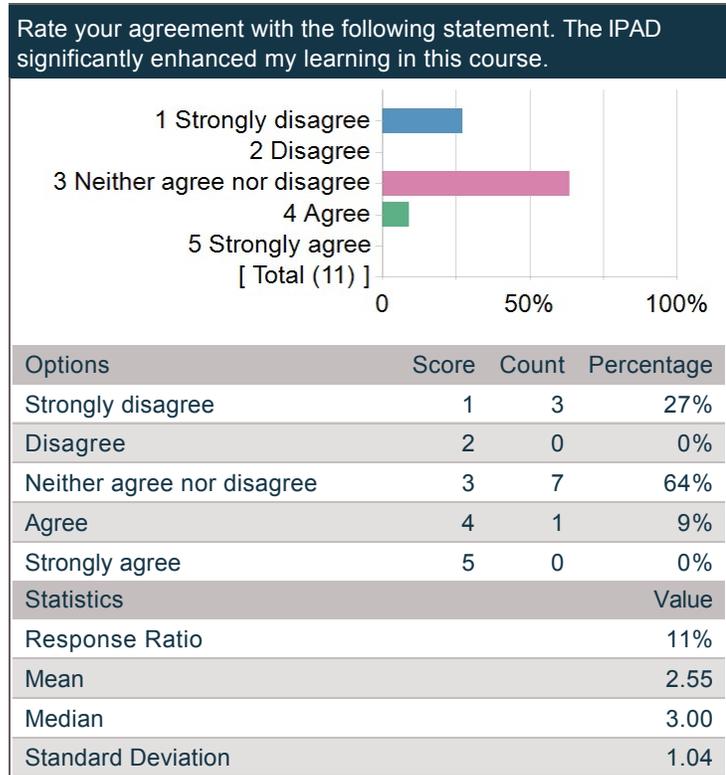
Comments
Feedback for written work for PSets could have been slightly detailed
Feedback on the final project was good
Gradescope did it's job. TF–feedback on final project was super useful.
Thank you for grading everything promptly and fairly.
I feel like I didn't really get a lot of written feedback on my assignments.
Feedback was more general than I would have liked.
Gradescope provides clear feedback on all assignments
Feedback was okay, though I wish that there was sometimes a better clarification fo why points were docked.
Honestly I didn't really get feedback when I made mistakes on psets soooo yeah.
I didn't get much feedback, but I wish I had more.
didn't ever get feedback on assignments
Rubric provided for each assignment
Sometimes was a little brief, but the course staff was always happy to elaborate if asked about it.
the feedback came in a timely manner.
Sometimes slow to come (I still haven't gotten pset 8 lol).
Meetings with TFs for my final project were very helpful.
Timely feedback, could have more comments instead of just the scores
Work was returned quickly with great feedback!
TFs are great.
The code style is unnecessarily harsh.
My main gripe re feedback was its timeliness (eg Problem Sets 7 and 8 would cover content that was also on Exam 3, yet we didn't get feedback on these psets until AFTER the exam — which makes the psets rather useless as a formative assessment. It's hard to know if you messed up on the exam if you don't know if you messed up on the Psets.)
Having meetings with my TF every week allowed me to really understand my strengths and weaknesses. Especially when it came to final projects, I found the recitations a fantastic place for getting feedback on my own work.
Wyatt is great with feedback and tyler made himself available!
Feedback was in the form of brief comments on the code for the exams and problem sets. No feedback was given for tutorials, which is understandable.
All good, all helpful
Not much feedback was provided.

Section component of the course**Add comments about the course section?**

Comments
I liked both the 1-on-1 and group sections. Perhaps starting out with one when covering new material and switching to the others when the final project becomes more dominant?
I feel that section could be one-on-one from the beginning
Wasn't very helpful until we started talking about projects
3 person section – you can't get better than this!
Tyler is the best TF in all of Harvard.
Favorite part, I think Dan is one of the best teachers I've ever had and people I've ever met. Though sometimes it was difficult to receive personalized feedback in group sections and we had a slow start to the semester, individual sections closer to the project are useful. I think starting our final projects earlier would allow us to create more robust work.
Section makes or breaks a class and sincerely I have so much love and appreciation for the TF staff teaching section. Mitchell Kilborn absolutely killed it. He made section a fun collaborative environment. We all got to know one another personally. And he would consistently go over time in section and stay with us if we had coding questions and needed support.
section leader was amazing
Recitation sections with my TF were incredibly helpful! I learned so much, and I'm so thankful to my TF for patiently helping me and teaching me so much about R and data science.
Very personalized and small sections.
One-on-one recitation was very nice when it came to the final project but I often felt it was a bit of a waste of time sometimes. The topics discussed in section didn't seem to help with other assignments for the course.
Extremely intimate and direct time; very helpful
My TF Tyler was amazing, he was very responsive, always available and was super patient. He provided a safe and welcoming environment as well.
Absolutely amazing, especially considering the fact that TFs also led lecture this semester.
LOVED section. Especially once we shifted to one-on-one recitations for the final project, I thought it was very productive and focused on helping us improve.
small recitations were very helpful
Recitations were great with Dan.

Comments
Working one-on-one with the TF (or in a group of 2–3) was super helpful and felt lower stakes than the large classes.
Amazing! Good opportunity to interact with TF, ask any additional questions
Mitchell was an excellent section leader. Lots of personal attention. You can choose what skills you want to work on or explore. Really helpful when working on the final project
My section with Wyatt was great, and in general the section format helped me get to know other people in the class and learn in a relatively relaxed setting.
First I had Juan Dodyk and then Mitchell Kilborn. Great human beings. Made the content interesting and kept us focused on the material while still being caring and personable.
section could use some more direction; more talking about the concepts. i liked having individual sections for our projects.
Love Tyler. Recitations were so helpful because they were actually focused on what we needed help with/hadn't understood. Working on the milestones during recitation was also super helpful and helped me stay on track.
Section was the highlight of my week and made the class all it was—the extremely small section sizes allowed for much needed personal direction and clarification of course material. My TF, Dan, was incredibly patient and genuinely wanted to help.
Mitchell was an amazing TF who was incredibly helpful during recitations!
Best part of the course. Wyatt is an amazing TF, and working in small groups is very useful. 10/10 for the sections.
Dan Baissa is the best.
Towards the beginning of the semester, sections felt a bit unnecessary. Towards the end of the semester, the transition to personal meetings could've happened earlier. But overall, very enjoyable!
Had the best TF thanks Shivi
Section was the best part of the class.
Wyatt is a wonderful TF who would go above and beyond to help us when we struggle with course materials or Shiny. He also explains concepts crystal-clear.
Mitchell Kilborn is a KING.
Tyler Simko deserves a raise.
Small size of section was amazing.
The only version of section we had was recitation. Recitation was one of the best things about this course, especially the individual recitations. I hope in future years the individual recitations would start sooner since I found them invaluable to my learning.
TFs are very supportive
Great
Well, since the format of the course changed, I am not sure what section really refers to now, but the recitation sessions we had throughout the year were alright.
Loved recitation. best part of the week in the class
TYLER IS AMAZING
Super helpful, super focused on students. I got all of my questions answered
Highlight of the course. One-on-one time is great and rare to find at Harvard
Group recitations were less useful. Individual recitations focused on the final project were very helpful.

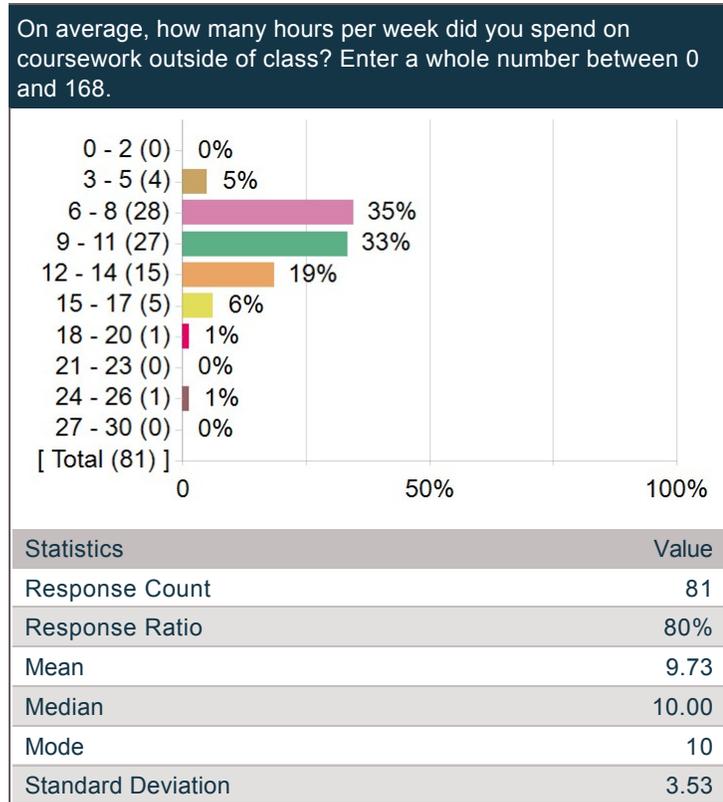
Rate your agreement with the following statement. The IPAD significantly enhanced my learning in this course.



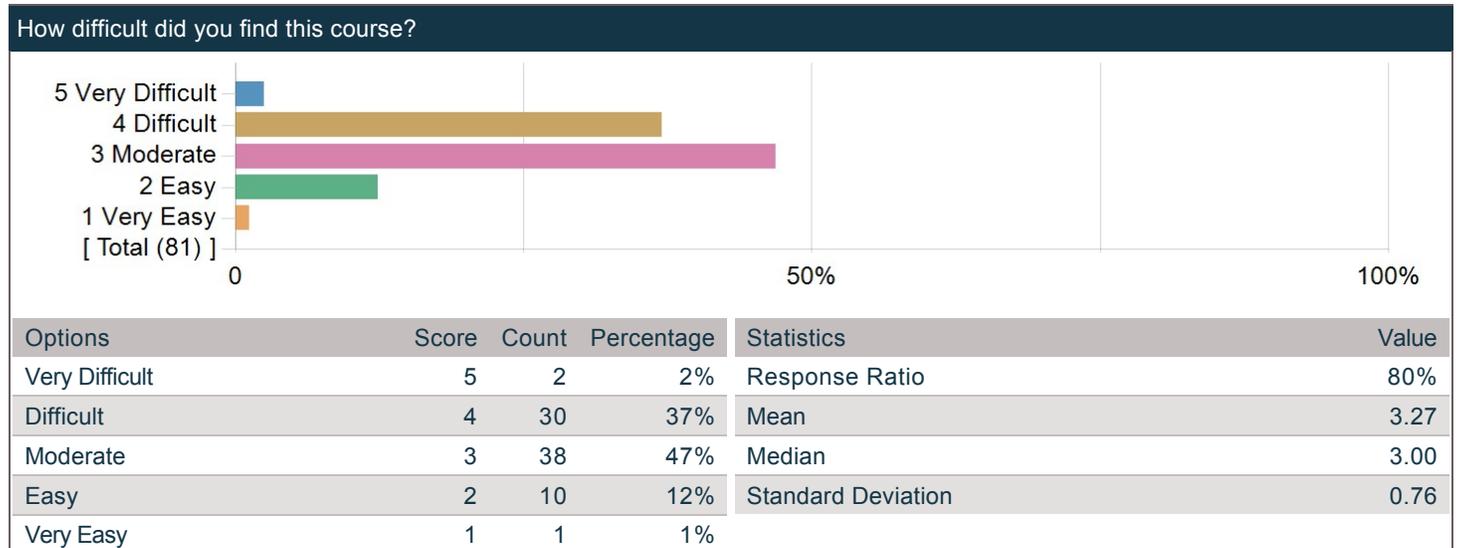
Requirements - What did this course require of you?

On average, how many hours per week did you spend on coursework outside of class? Enter a whole number between 0 and 168.

Frequency chart and mean excludes students who answered 31 or more hours.



How difficult did you find this course?

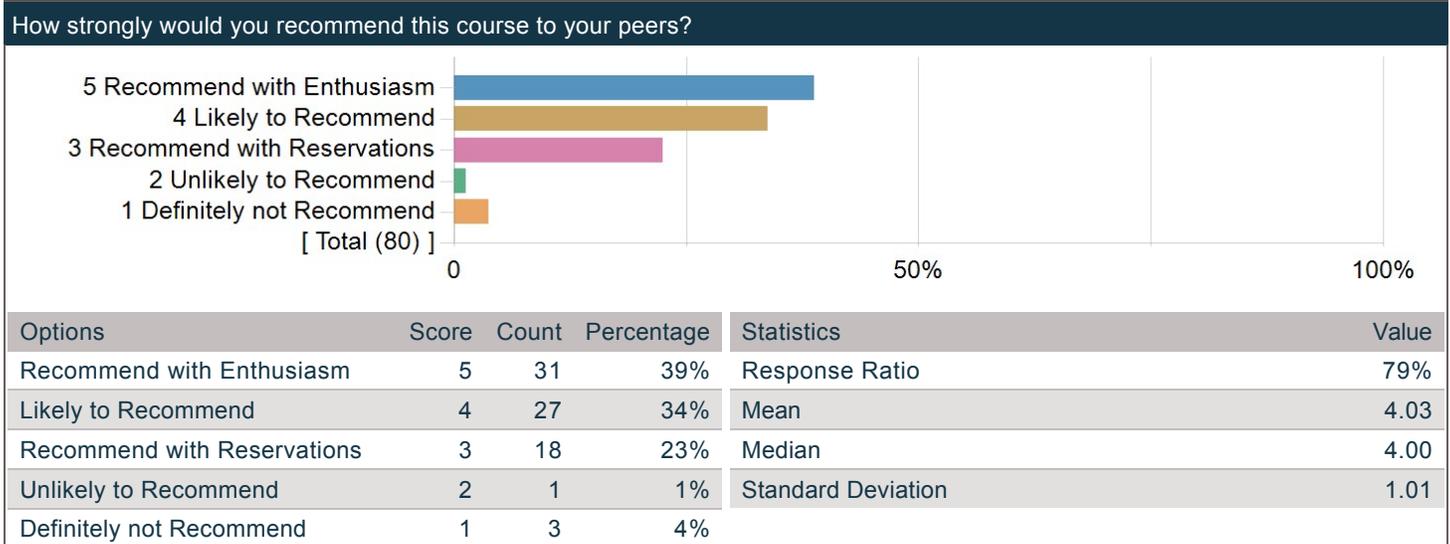


What was/were your reason(s) for enrolling in this course? (Please check all that apply)

Options	Count
Elective	37
Concentration or Department Requirement	45
Secondary Field or Language Citation Requirement	9
Undergraduate General Education Requirement	1
Expository Writing Requirement	0
Foreign Language Requirement	0
Pre-Med Requirement	1
Divisional Distribution Requirement	4
Quantitative Reasoning with Data Requirement	21

Recommendations - Would you recommend this course?

How strongly would you recommend this course to your peers?

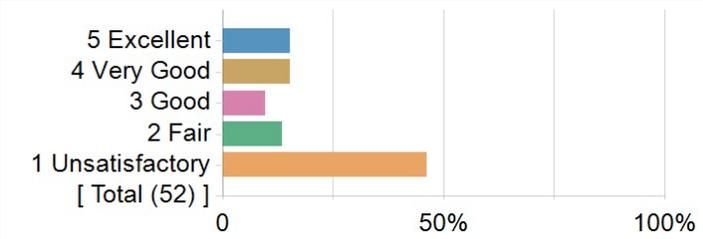
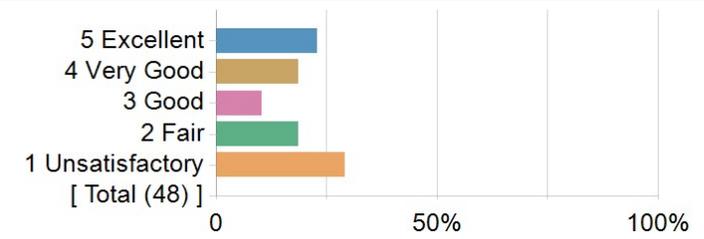


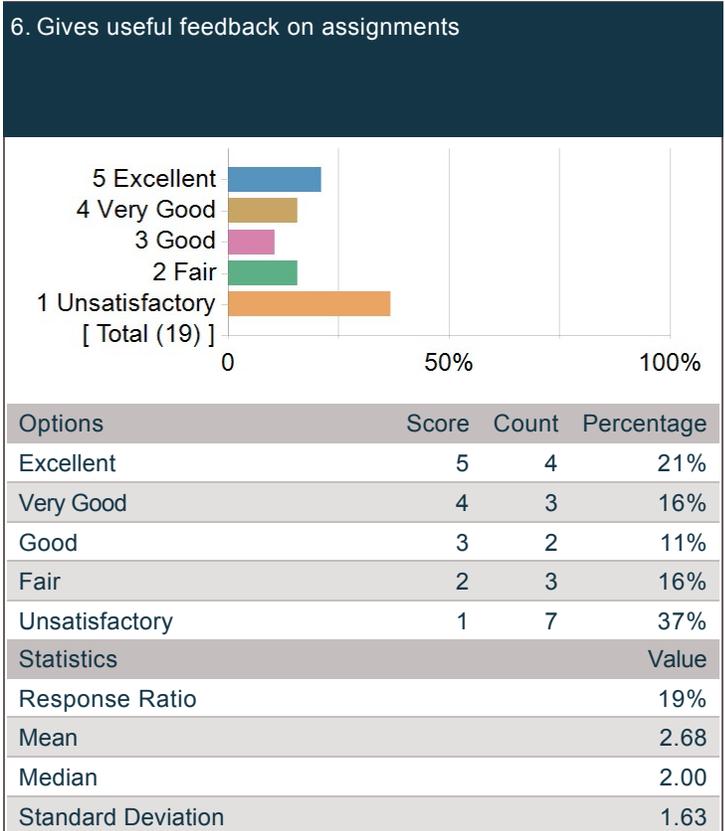
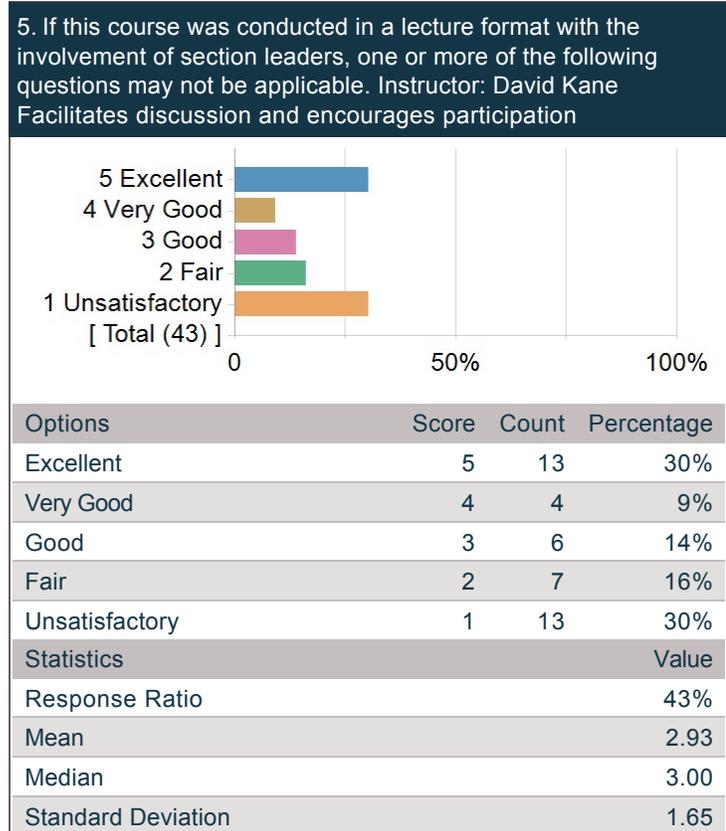
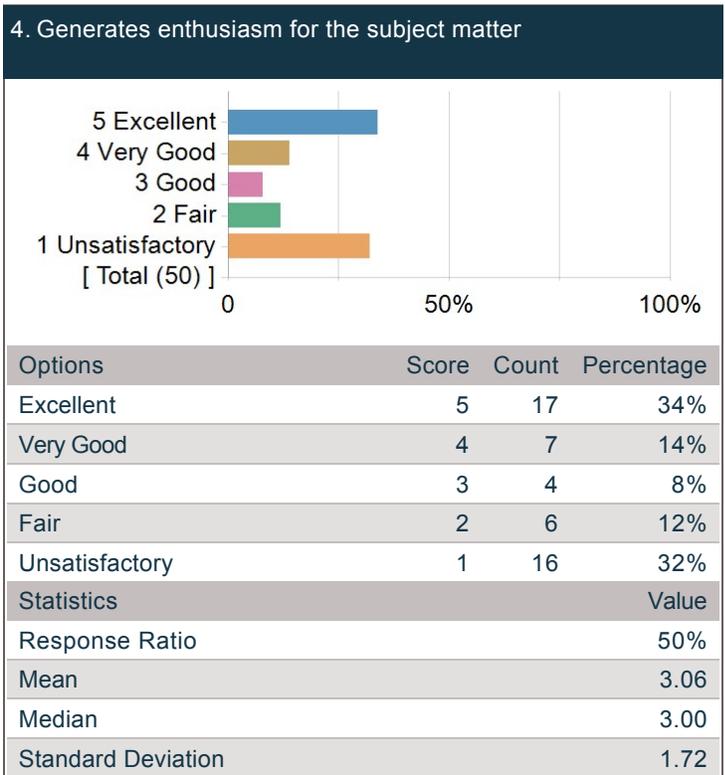
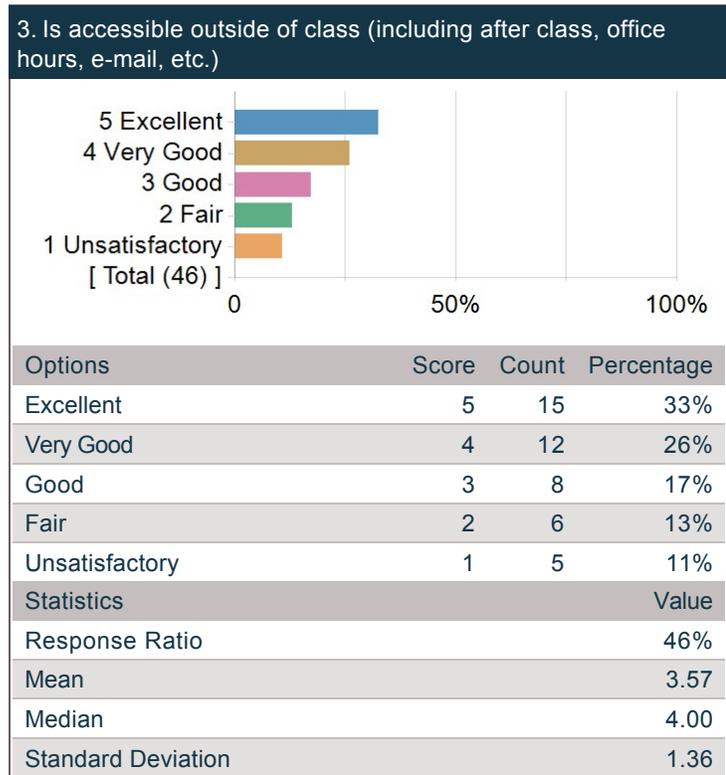
Evaluation of Instructors

General Instructor Questions

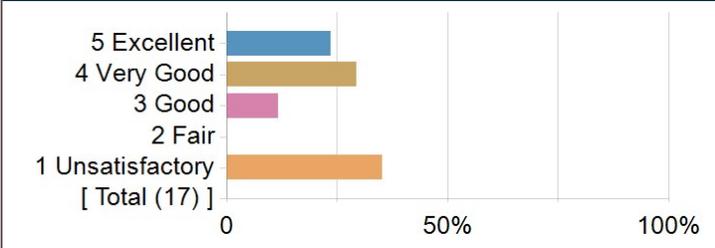
	Count	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory	Instructor Mean	Dept Mean	Division Mean
Evaluate your Instructor overall.	52	15%	15%	10%	13%	46%	2.40	4.46	4.58
Gives effective lectures or presentations, if applicable	48	23%	19%	10%	19%	29%	2.88	4.47	4.51
Is accessible outside of class (including after class, office hours, e-mail, etc.)	46	33%	26%	17%	13%	11%	3.57	4.48	4.44
Generates enthusiasm for the subject matter	50	34%	14%	8%	12%	32%	3.06	4.55	4.62
If this course was conducted in a lecture format with the involvement of section leaders, one or more of the following questions may not be applicable. Instructor: David Kane Facilitates discussion and encourages participation	43	30%	9%	14%	16%	30%	2.93	4.44	4.49
Gives useful feedback on assignments	19	21%	16%	11%	16%	37%	2.68	4.42	4.45
Returns assignments in a timely fashion	17	24%	29%	12%	0%	35%	3.06	4.40	4.45

Instructor

1. Evaluate your Instructor overall.				2. Gives effective lectures or presentations, if applicable			
							
Options	Score	Count	Percentage	Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	8	15%	Excellent	5	11	23%
Very Good	4	8	15%	Very Good	4	9	19%
Good	3	5	10%	Good	3	5	10%
Fair	2	7	13%	Fair	2	9	19%
Unsatisfactory	1	24	46%	Unsatisfactory	1	14	29%
Statistics			Value	Statistics			Value
Response Ratio			51%	Response Ratio			48%
Mean			2.40	Mean			2.88
Median			2.00	Median			3.00
Standard Deviation			1.56	Standard Deviation			1.58



7. Returns assignments in a timely fashion



Options	Score	Count	Percentage
Excellent	5	4	24%
Very Good	4	5	29%
Good	3	2	12%
Fair	2	0	0%
Unsatisfactory	1	6	35%
Statistics			Value
Response Ratio			17%
Mean			3.06
Median			4.00
Standard Deviation			1.68

General Course Questions - Comments

What were the strengths of this course? Please be specific and use concrete examples where possible.

Comments
Lectures and section were highly engaging, you learn how to make a lot of really interesting, useful programs in a very short amount of time.
The diversity of assignments—p-set, tutorial, final project, and exam—really help students get exposed to R every day and learn to use it.
Do not take this course. Since being revamped this semester, it includes much more statistics and less interesting data visualization. The book does not teach statistics well; instead it uses all these language about honesty, wisdom, justice, etc. You're better off taking off another data science course, like EC50.
I would also avoid David Kane.
TFs and other course staff were incredible, very responsive to questions and always willing to help. Exams were fair and representative of what we learned.
Really teaches you R! You get to make an amazing project at the end in any topic of your choice. SO cool.
I think the final project is a huge attraction and the one on one sessions with my TF were invaluable. I feel like I am walking away with tangible skills and I'm really excited about the self-directed work I was able to do. Course staff are exceptional, the best I've interacted with in my Harvard career. Study halls are amazing! I learned a lot about Github, R, and feel confident I will retain this knowledge.
The TFs. The only reason I stuck with the class and said it was good was because of the TFs, especially Mitchell Kilborn. They took the time to speak with students when we found out about preceptor Kane's blog and accommodate our desired educational spaces. They expanded their office hours amidst their own school work. They worked with CAs to make sure undergrads who needed the job still had it. The Teaching Fellow and CA team are the heart of this entire class and they deserve every ounce of recognition for the tireless work they put into supporting the students who stayed in the course.
I think the materials for this course are absolutely outstanding. The tutorials, primer, and problem sets are all perfectly paced to help you learn the material. Additionally, the amount of one-on-one attention we received through tutorials was incredible and really helped me improve on concepts that I was struggling with.
The class was very thorough and guided us every step of the way. Help was available at any time if we needed it. The Primer is a brilliant text book.
The teaching fellows, the CA's, the actual content of the course.
The course really made everyone participate and challenge themselves in their own ways.
The course was a fantastic deep dive into statistics, R, and data science. If you're interested in studying political phenomena with a quantitative lens, do take this course. Also great if you want to do a Gov/quantitative thesis.
The teaching staff is so so supportive; if you ever need help, there will definitely be someone there!
As someone who did not know any coding at all before this course, the network of TFs, CAs, and fellow students was vital to my success. Everyone was always super helpful and typically replied quickly on Slack. Also, there was an abundance of study hall hours throughout the week.
The learning of a hard, practical skill. Engaging preceptor, skilled course staff, incredible instruction flow (coding actively in class), a final project to apply coursework into the real world, development of network. An instructor who dared think independently.
Extremely useful and informative in the realm of data science and visualization. I learned many skills that have made me a competent data scientist.
The TFs and the TAs worked day in and day out for this class to run smoothly and it showed.
If it were not for the TFs and the way they stepped up after Preceptor Kane's blog was uncovered, I most definitely would have dropped the course. They literally carried this course on their backs and despite an extremely difficult online situation, did whatever in their power to make sure that we, as students, were comfortable and were continuing to learn as planned.
I came out of it with a lot of new hard skills in using R for visualization, having a Github account, etc.
I think the amount of practice you get coding in this course is a huge strength. While some things were repetitive, I felt very comfortable by the end of the course doing almost everything we had talked about in class since we had so much class time to practice on top of the psets. The second strength I would isolate is the freedom of the course when it comes to the Final Project. It's very liberating and productive to be given the chance to really do WHATEVER you want for the final project, and it's a really good base for future research/work that is personally interesting to you.
The course does what it advertises: it provides a solid introduction to data science in R for absolute beginners. I can come away from the class saying that I've used R and ShinyApp, and I value that. I think the problem sets were the strongest part of the course,

Comments
as having us do actual examples of the concepts that we cover in class is helpful. I did like the way that we submitted our psets through Gradescope and uploaded them onto Github – was effective.
learned a ton, tutorials were helpful, Mitchell (and course staff) was great, final project was a great learning experience
Great course staff, book is comprehensive, and assignments beside tutorials are pretty good at testing your knowledge. The class does a good job of actually teaching you how to use R and not just talk about data science stuff you can do.
The course is really good at teaching how to make plots in R
I believe that the course fulfilled its promise in giving us the skills that are sought after in the outside world. I feel confident in using R and applying data science skills to whatever task lies before me as a result of taking this class. This class is based a lot on repetition, which is great in honing your skills. The plots (through classwork, psets, exams) and final projects that we create are also incredibly interesting to look at.
The teaching staff was very approachable and there were ample opportunities to receive feedback on work and troubleshoot with members of the staff.
The TA and CA staff is excellent. There are many study halls available plus they are always answering student questions on the Slack. Recitation was also very helpful because you received individual attention
very organized, extremely invested teaching staff
The TFs carried the course. At times I felt like they were overworked, but they were always more than willing to help.
Strong teaching staff and accessible materials
Working in class was very fun! Really enjoyed the class problems
The course is fundamentally about R coding, not about data science in my opinion. It did an excellent job teaching me to code in R and how to approach coding in general, including finding out new information and approaches for myself. I loved the format of coding in class with peers in small groups.
Clearly expressed expectations for assignments and grading. Forgiving grading scale that didn't kill your grade if you messed up a pset or something minor. Teaching staff was supportive of students and clearly cared about our learning of the content. Also, another strength was Tyler Simko and Mitchell Kilborn. Those guys were amazingly helpful teachers, very thoughtful and patient and did all they could to facilitate our understanding of the material and connect its applications to broader topics. If there's a teaching award for graduate students, I would proudly nominate them.
Really great practice for Rstudio, and great skills learned. you make a concrete final project that showcases your skills. You gradually learn the concepts. dedicated teaching staff.
Really teaches you R. This is one of the only courses at R that truly allows you to walk in with zero experience and leave with real skills that you can use for actual work.
This course made me love R. Tyler, the head TF, is the main reason why. He was so helpful and supportive throughout the semester, and really fostering a great learning environment despite the mid-semester turmoil. I think the small recitations are awesome, and the smaller lecture format (a group of 20 students run by a TF) was so much better than the big lectures. Less intimidating, we really got to know our classmates by working with them, and had fun! Slack is also super helpful, and the exam format is awesome (no stress, just a good opportunity to apply what we've learned so far).
The strenghts of this course were the TFs. If it weren't for their constant support I would have long ago dropped the course because of the workload and preceptor Kane's despicable attitude. The TFs taught the course with a compassion and dedication that helped my peers and I grasp concepts and techniques as easily as possible.
The teaching staff and additional help outside of the class is the main strength of this course. If you have a question, you have office hours, study halls, and the slack to answer anything.
The course staff are amazing! They have been so helpful this entire semester, and made the best of what they could given the circumstances.
The course is very well structured. It keeps students engaged every day, either with class or homework, it's constantly challenging but not overwhelming. By the end of the semester, I already used the material learnt in gov 50 for another class — I gathered some raw data, cleaned it, modeled it and used it for the final paper for my other class. I think each assignment was useful and well done. The parts were harder than class work but easier than exams, and at the end I was so satisfied to have completed them.
In a few words, one of the best, most useful classes I took at Harvard. I realized how much I love statistics after this class, and will most likely look for a spring internship to use the skills I gathered in this class.
Very practical and accessible intro to R for someone who has no quantitative background to speak of.
It taught me useful data analysis and visualisation skills. In particular I liked the recitation structure wherein we had small-group discussions with TFs to go over course material as we learned it, as well as individual meetings to review progress on our final projects.

Comments
Teaching staff. I would not have stayed in this course had it not been for the teaching staff. Tfs and Cas saved the course and ran it. Always super helpful, kind, incredible. Words cannot express how amazing they were.
taught very useful skills. This includes R data skills, but it also encourages networking in a way that I think is very useful but that no other Harvard course explicitly does. This class tries to demystify a lot of very important steps in setting yourself up for a successful career (networking, asking for a rec letter), and I really appreciate that. It's too bad that a lot of these aspects stopped partway through the semester.
The Study Halls were very helpful; TFs were always there to answer questions and help students. Preceptor, TFs, CAs were also very active on Slack. The repetition and constant assignments really helped me learn the material well. Overall, it's a solid course.
Learned a lot. Super fast-paced in the beginning / middle parts of the course pretty much forced you to learn the material in a timely manner and think like a data scientist.
Lots of support. Was able to learn many things about data and data visualization.
The way that they teach coding R (lots of small steps and repetition) is very effective for teaching beginners. The TFs and CAs are incredible, and are unmatched in terms of their accessibility and dedication to the course material and the students.
The lecture format is unique, but it definitely worked. I enjoyed getting to know many of my classmates through this format. The course is extremely effective in getting students comfortable in R.
Great psets and exams! Solid material to engage with
The TF staff was phenomenal and truly cared about the students learning the material.
The TFs and CAs are super helpful. Really, without their support, I would have struggled really hard. I also like Preceptor's motivational speech. It keeps me going. The class structure and content is great.
I think that the final project is one of the strengths of the course. Especially since I worked with a group, that experience is great to talk about or put on a resume, but in general I just think it's very valuable to go through the process of picking a topic that seems interesting and working on it steadily throughout the semester. Another strength of the course is the more practical things it teaches, like how to make a GitHub repository look pretty or how to cold-email. Finally, I think that the small class size is actually a strength as well, since in class I was always either sharing my screen and coding or explaining something to the person sharing their screen, and that kept me really engaged and focused.
This course covered a lot of practical material necessary for further work in Data Science, visualizations and modeling being the most important. Despite the turmoil in the middle of the semester, I found that Preceptor Kane was a passionate and caring educator.
Develop very robust applied data visualization and science skills. The skills developed and concepts taught in this course have proven deeply valuable in a range of other similar courses I was currently taking and projects I had been working on. The course was well-structured and well-thought-out.
The strengths of this course are that it teaches you visualization in R really well and gives you a solid non-mathy introduction to data science. I came out with an ability to create a tone of plots in R.
Really great material and great pedagogy. The course staff is great! Supportive environment.
The teaching staff
I loved this course. I learned so much and found it very engaging.
This course was the perfect introduction to data science. As a freshman, with no computer science experience, I was incredibly intimidated by the coding portion of this class. This course gave me an incredible amount of individualized attention, from having course staff in breakout rooms every lecture to near daily study halls to even individual weekly conferences with my TF. If I ever needed help, it was always there for me. This made me really feel secure in the way I was learning the material and made me passionate about data science going forward.
The course provides ample opportunities to practice and cement the skills learned in class. Course staff are always available if students need help.
Tyler and Wyatt. basically the entire teaching staff excluding David Kane. The lecture notes provided by tyler were my saving grace.
The structure of the class was very helpful. The breakout groups allowed for better learning
This course does a great job in equipping students with a solid skill. The tutorials and the exams were especially student-friendly; they were not designed to stress and be overly difficult but instructive and fun to complete.
Amazing teaching staff and great response rate on Slack.
The strengths of this course lied in the TFs. They did everything and are the best human beings on this planet. When times looked tough because of the preceptor, they were the ones to support me and others.
I was a complete beginner in R at the beginning of the semester and now I feel very comfortable with it, especially for data visualization. I'd credit the structure of the class (constant coding, breakout rooms, tutorials) and the material for that improvement.
The teaching staff and constant practice with R were both instrumental to learning and understanding the course material to the point where R becomes something I intend on practicing even after this class.

Comments
the content and the way it taught us basic data science methods and Rstudio
The class is structured incredibly well; it teaches you proficiency in R and teaches you to teach yourself — for when you want to explore new, more complicated topics.
Lots of help available (OH, slack). Textbook was very related to course content. hands on, we always at some point had done what we were later tested on
Learning R, like really well
The teaching fellows and course assistants were far and away the best part of the course. Dan Baissa in particular was helpful, kind, approachable, and knowledgeable. Otherwise, the course material was generally well thought out and organized.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – structured – managed – extensive
The teaching staff (the TFs and CAs) were incredibly supportive of students and did a great job adapting to some exceptional circumstances. There were a lot of resources in place to ensure that students could solve problems that came their way.
The TFs are fantastic. Tyler's lectures were always very clear. The one-on-one advice/help on the final project is a unique advantage to taking this course.
The problem sets were helpful and interesting.
My newfound fluency in writing R code to wrangle/clean/visualize data is a very useful skill I've gained.

How could this course be improved? Please use concrete examples where possible and provide constructive suggestions.

Comments
Smaller lectures – lecture size at the start of term was too large, and when the smaller lectures were adopted that tremendously improved the experience overall.
I feel that the final few weeks of the class are not useful for the final project and their contents are easily forgettable.
Remove the statistics and focus on data visualization.
Some of the tutorials were really long which made the overall workload a lot, but they got better towards the end of the course.
Get rid of Kane. Improve continuity in the textbook and class lessons.
More alignment between the textbook and tutorials. Shorter class scenes. I think PSETs felt really fleshed out and interesting but other parts of the class could feel haphazardly thrown together.
Don't re-hire David Kane and potentially hire a TF to teach the course.
I liked the balance that Tyler achieved of breakout rooms vs. lecture-like instruction. Back when we were with Preceptor, it felt like there was too much time in breakout rooms and not enough priming to get everyone on the same page. Additionally, I think more time should be spent on learning Shiny in the course.
Different professor. Students shouldn't need to sit in a classroom where the professor is publishing work about how black students wouldn't be at university if it wasn't for their blackness.
<p>I loved attending my TF's lectures and think they did an incredible job teaching us this semester. However, they should not have needed to step up in the way they did.</p> <p>A constructive suggestion: fire David Kane. Change the conditions that allowed him to be hired in the first place. Attending a class that is taught by a man who you know does not respect your identity and who in fact has outwardly voiced support for white-supremacist causes is deeply psychologically violent to all students in this class and at this university. I stopped attending Kane's lectures when this information was revealed, but seeing him constantly in our slack channels and getting his deeply disrespectful emails and surveys (which framed his own white supremacy and the harm it caused us as just an awkward and inconvenient situation) made me feel disrespected and unsafe in this learning environment. Moreover, that Charles Murray was invited to this class was also deeply disconcerting to me — and this is further disturbing because I know that this situation has occurred in the past and will continue to occur in the future, as there does not seem to have been any change in the guidelines involved in inviting speakers. I'm all in favor of professors inviting speakers with unconventional views; however, those views cannot literally be that certain people are inferior. For the purposes of this class, inviting Charles Murray — a pseudoscientist whose 'science' has been repeatedly debunked and clearly violates all the principles of ethics in data science that we learned in THIS CLASS — also makes no logical sense. This situation should not have occurred, and it should not have BEEN ALLOWED to occur.</p> <p>This course taught me so much about data science, and I'm glad I took it. However, I also felt deeply unsafe in this class. My constructive suggestion is to fire David Kane, put in place procedures that would prevent individuals like him from being hired in the first place and setting guidelines for their removal if information like this is revealed, put in place guidelines that would prevent</p>

Comments
speakers like Charles Murray from being invited, and actually listen and be responsive to students' concerns in these cases.
I feel like we never really learned how to navigate a Shiny App, which is our entire final project.
Please note: if you have a coding background, the actual coding will be very very easy (and at times, this will be frustrating). The statistics is where you'll learn.
Maybe it was because of Zoom but I did not particularly like the class format. Class felt kind of pointless because we would just work through scenarios that I feel did not tie into the psets or exams and we often did not finish the scenarios so we were not able to discuss all the concepts for that class. Also, some breakout rooms are great while other are just terrible. If you were lucky to be placed in a collaborative breakout room then the experience was general fun and the group could work through problems together easily. But, more often than not I was in a breakout room where no one wanted to talk or attempt to solve the scenarios. This made class unenjoyable for me and made it feel pointless. Also, I felt the tutorials were great early on at requiring us to apply the concepts from the textbook but they slowly transitioned into us just regurgitating information in the later chapters.
Most of my concrete feedback has been included in our last couple internal surveys.
This course could be improved by spending more time interpreting models of a different number of coefficients.
The awkwardness with the professor made for some awkward tension throughout the semester.
The biggest possible improvement I can imagine is terminating Preceptor Kane from his employment with the College. As a Black student in this class and pursuing the Data Science path of Government, the thought of any necessary or future interactions with him makes me extremely anxious and uncomfortable. Spaces with him feel unsafe, and as such, I believe he should no longer teach this or any other course.
We switched to TF-led classes after the incident with preceptor, and I think this smaller setting was actually so much more helpful in understanding prompts, getting work done, getting active engagement with peers, and in seeking help from instructors.
I honestly think getting rid of Preceptor Kane would help this course a lot. Even if you disregard the complications of having him as a lecturer despite his very controversial and potentially harmful comments, I honestly think he didn't teach the course very well. While we need time to practice, he didn't even review key concepts, which was very difficult if you didn't understand something from the book because there was no time in lecture to go over those things again.
I didn't like the textbook very much. I felt like the chapters weren't concise enough, and they were also riddled with typos and felt a bit inconsistent.
last few tutorials were just copying and pasting from the book, the Charles Murray event didn't teach me anything but made a lot of students needlessly uncomfortable with David Kane
This is probably the same thing other evaluations will say but this course needs a new professor. It has potential to be even better with a professor that not only introduces data science but also shows us how the skills in the class can be used for societal good, if one desires to go down that career path. I won't get into the specifics of this professor's racist and sexist comments but it is something that shouldn't be ignored.
The conceptual part of the course is pretty opaque and as much as this course is opposed to "lecturing" I think some lectures on the statistical concepts would be very useful
I thought that some of the pset problems became a bit too repetitive, and were merely busy work (copying down textbook steps). I do wish there was a bit more exploration of some different packages, including a deeper dive into animation and maps.
Fire David Kane.
Fix issues with Preceptor. Really made semester more stressful and rough because of the uncertainty of the situation.
Get rid of Kane. Looking back, the rhetoric and perspective he used with students weren't conservative, it was racist and bigotted.
Better handling of the David Kane situation
I think tutorials should really be improved. They should be checked for errors before they are assigned. They had lots of bugs (i.e. saved objects were not actually saved and had to be copied over) and typos. The textbook should also be edited for clarity – it could be more concise.
The data science part of the class was, to put it bluntly, terrible. It was extremely confusing, and students would leave the class not able to make heads nor tails of a very straightforward quantitative research paper.
The teacher of the course (Kane) should be changed. The textbook needs to explain statistical concepts with more detail and needs to be more user-friendly for those who are not familiar with statistic concepts. having tylers guides about concepts was very helpful
At times, course materials were repetitive. Especially in the tutorials, there wasn't as much of a logical progression that could have been possible.
I don't think this course needs David Kane. The TFs and CAs are awesome, and do most of the work anyway. Also, some of the tutorials towards the end were pretty useless. I think that they were very helpful at the beginning to get some practice with R before graded assignments started, but that once the psets had started they weren't very helpful.
Removing Preceptor Kane would take this course from Good to Excellent. Knowing I was learning data science under a man who actively displayed and created racist propaganda using the same "data science" he was "teaching".

Comments
The course is a great one, but if the goal is to teach data science and the professor is going to detract from those goals, maybe consider if he is necessary?
It was nice to have smaller lecture groups with consistent breakout room groups, so having this for the entire semester would be a great improvement.
The last 4 chapters were slightly repetitive. I think the pace of learning went down a bit, and there wasn't necessarily a need for that. We also did a lot of interpretation — too much. Some interpretation, I agree, is necessary. I learnt a lot from the questions of explaining what the Median and MAD SD mean, and even the one about difference in differences. But all those concepts with Wisdom and Temperance and etc were very repetitive and became tiring at some point.
Next — keep the TF-taught classes if possible. They were the best thing this semester, and I feel so lucky to have had this opportunity. Our little class section was about 20 people, so I got a chance to know everyone and ask questions, as opposed to the big class at the beginning of the semester.
I don't have much I'd change about the class overall. One last thing would be, if possible, to include videos in the preamble. Sometimes it gets tiring to read so much, and a video here and there would be nice.
I felt like the tutorials were not the most helpful towards the end, since it mainly entailed copying and pasting from the textbook.
More coding! Specifically, some of the tutorials were entirely conceptual rather than a mix of conceptual and practical, and I wasn't a fan of that. It was good to review the concepts covered in the chapter, but without the coding practice of them I felt like the theory and the practice were disconnected.
David Kane's removal.
the first tutorial was incredibly long. I think it may have been an assignment to weed out students, but I think it could still be a little shorter and weed people out effectively. But, you all know what you're doing.
I also found the textbook to be really long sometimes. If more concision is possible, that would be great.
Perhaps the tutorials could be improved. When I would do a step in a new code chunk, it would not remember the previous code I had done, resulting in an error. Perhaps this is something that could be fixed?
A new instructor that is not blatantly racist.
Pace got too slow and repetitive near the end. For the last three weeks, we basically did the same things over and over again, and for a class that meets twice a week, lecture became super tedious. This class also babies you, meaning it's really easy to do well, but there isn't much motivation to above and beyond. Kinda wish there was more support for students who wanted to go the extra mile in learning. Also, even though this class was suppose to have a "quantitative" learning aspect, it didn't really happen. We learned what lines of code to type to create a model, but it was never made clear "why" doing so worked (i.e., what was the math that makes this possible).
The statistics concepts that this course tries to cover is not adequately explained and not well taught. Also, there was a bunch of turmoil this semester due to Preceptor Kane's presence.
The milestone expectations were at times unclear. The tutorials also felt a bit repetitive at times.
More specific advice on career pathways
Nothing, the class was great if you are looking to learn coding.
The statistics part – I still struggle until now about model choices.
The later tutorials were largely not useful, as the answers could be more or less taken from the textbook. The textbook also rushed through some concepts, leaving a lot of gaps in the conceptual foundations for modeling in particular. (I'm thinking things like Bootstrapping, MCMC, etc.) Some greater detail on this, or at least some references to these things, would have been appreciated.
Greater focus on developing the theoretical understanding behind some of the concepts being taught about. There was very little rigorous and nuanced discussion about the underlying statistical theory behind many of the concepts we learned.
I think the course could be improved by changing the final quarter of it. I did not learn the concepts it was trying to teach. Frankly, the textbook was too long and didn't do a good job of teaching what it was supposed to.
The data modelling component is still difficult..
n/a
David Kane was not necessary. I learned so much more just from my TF.
The one area for improvement I see is in the textbook. The textbook was often very long and hard to understand. The language was rarely intuitive and or simple so I never got much out of it. The best parts of the textbook were the summaries like the chapter 10 summary so I'd encourage the course staff to review the textbook to simplify, shorten, and summarize in a similar manner.
The studyhalls need more than one CA per session. It gets really crowded, especially when there are problem sets.
I really think the breakout room time could be reduced. The lection component taught by tyler was much more helpful .

Comments
I liked the course as it is.
This course would definitely benefit from a separate series of tutorials on ShinyApps. Even though most students would feel comfortable with data cleaning and making plots, integrating these into ShinyApps requires a different knowledge set, so a few of the tutorials or lectures can focus exclusively on Shiny.
I would say the tutorials are sort of questionable. Towards the end, it was easy to complete the tutorials without having an idea of what was going on.
The preceptor's history made it difficult for me to have a good class experience.
I didn't feel like I learned quite as much in the second half of the semester, other than stan_glm and posterior_predict and posterior_epred. Honestly felt like it could've been condensed and maybe we could've learned other tools.
The situation this year with Preceptor David Kane and the administration's inadequate response has weighed heavily on many students' minds, including my own and led me to question whether or not Harvard always has the student body's best interest in mind.
the textbook was poorly written in my opinion. the content was explained poorly and despite having a statistics and econometrics background, i was extremely confused reading it. i ended up not reading the textbook anymore towards the end of the semester and did perfectly fine on the assignments given my previous background. the more i read the textbook and more confused i was.
Sometimes the timing of assignments or office hours was very inconvenient. IE, no office hours on thursday evenings even though milestones were due friday which often required outside help
The political drama and childishness from a certain course head reacting to that drama could have and should have been avoided.
Not having a massive scandal hit in the middle of the semester would have been nice.
– more supervision of learning materials, i.e., book
The textbook!!! The Primer needs a lot of work – a lot of people noted some of the specific problems in the last feedback survey. The instructor should also make sure that workload stays more constant throughout the semester... This has already been addressed, but the tutorials were far, far too long the first few weeks.
The entire David Kane situation was extremely poorly handled and very stressful. Kane should be replaced as an instructor as soon as possible. More concerning than the contents of his blog was his woefully inadequate response to the situation. Instead of publicly addressing student concerns in any meaningful way or taking responsibility for his actions, he ignored student concerns and invited an incendiary pseudo-scientist to speak. Such an individual is unfit to continue instructing students. Furthermore, I learned just as well – if not better – when instruction switched over to TFs. His removal would likely result in little educational disturbance. The administration has also been disappointingly un-transparent about their investigation into Kane and its timeline. Students deserved better than the chaos that occurred that week. Quite frankly, this was shameful. The TFs saved this course.
The Gov 50 textbook is poorly written, piecemeal, and surface-level. Because each chapter was largely written by separate students, it lacks cohesiveness. In addition, the attempt to explain statistical concepts in a partial manner only serves to confuse students further. This textbook should be improved, or should be switched.
The tutorials were less helpful as the semester went on. Many were exact replicas of problems in the textbook – resulting in a lot of copy-pasting vs. testing actual comprehension of material.

Requirements Comments - What did this course require of you?

In your opinion, what preparation or background is necessary to take this course?

Comments
Some basic familiarity with coding (of any sort really) will really help, but not necessary.
No coding experience is required— but if you do not have any background, you need to spend a lot of hours, especially at the beginning of the course.
None
Some stats
None!
None, truly. As someone who disliked CS before coming into this, I'm pleasantly surprised by how much I could learn.
None, just make sure you find a pset buddy and are able to commit the time.
No background necessary. Personally I had taken some stats classes in the past, so I felt really well prepared (and at times overprepared), but I think the course would be accessible to people who hadn't.

Comments
nothing – just guts.
None
Prior coding or stats experience would definitely help but I didn't have any and it wasn't too brutal.
No preparation/background necessary.
I mean obviously some background in coding would be nice, but I was someone with absolutely no background I did fine.
None.
There is no background necessary. Having familiarity with computer science is always helpful, but it is by no means necessary.
Some coding experience would be useful
It's good to have some level of knowledge of statistics or the basics of data science coming in, but isn't necessary at all.
Having some sort of stats background will definitely help (I didn't have any stats background), but it's not necessary. Same with a coding background– knowing another language or a little R will help, but you don't need it to succeed.
None
none, read the book and don't fall behind
You don't need any prep or background to succeed, but at least a little bit about R would make things easier.
Some stats background
Just an interest in data science and a willingness to learn at a fast pace.
No coding experience necessary, but it sure wouldn't hurt
None
some sort of coding experience would be helpful, but not necessary
You've got to be resourceful and adaptable. Good typing skills help
No background necessary
None!
I wouldn't advise taking this course if you have no background in statistics or data science. You'll do fine in the course, but will leave it extremely confused in the real world.
Dedication to complete the assignments on time.
basic statistic background
None, though it would definitely be easier to have R experience.
None
Nothing, but some general understanding of statistics is helpful
None because I had none
No background though a coding one makes this class pretty easy.
Knowledge of basic statistics.
None, they teach you everything from ground up.
Little to none. I had no CS training, and no experience coding before taking this course and felt comfortable in it.
none
It did help to have taken Econ 50, another course with a coding component.
Technically none, but an intro stats / econometrics course would be very helpful.
None
None, but helpful if you know some stats.
Nothing!
Little bit of computer science background
None
Nothing. But be prepared to work very hard if you have no background.
None
I think lots of Gov concentrators who take this class find it hard, but as someone who's planning on doing CS I didn't think it was that bad, in that I was able to pick up R super quickly because of my prior coding experience. Luckily the course was structured in such a way that I wasn't bored either, I was just able to go more in–depth with my final project and make something pretty cool that I'm proud of.

Comments
None.
Some previous exposure to coding and some previous exposure to statistics.
None!
None
n/a
None
I honestly think a beginner could take this class. Having super basic statistics knowledge is an advantage but certainly not necessary AT ALL.
None
Nothing really, perhaps an intro coding class.
None
No preparation or background is necessary. Even basic statistics and probability topics are covered from scratch.
Coding and stats knowledge might come in handy, but it is not of import.
n/a
None.
Nothing. Just be willing to put in the hours.
A background in statistical models or some computer science would be helpful.
statistics makes it so much easier to understand especially since the textbook does not explain statistical concepts well.
If you have previous background in coding, the class will be a breeze and you probably won't spend more than 5 hours a week after the first couple of weeks, when you get used to it.
None
None
none
None, but you will have an easier time if you have some basic statistics and R background.
None.

Recommendations Comments - Would you recommend this course?

What would you like to tell future students about this class? (Your response to this question may be published anonymously.)

Comments
Take it! It's not as intimidating as it first appears (although still tough), and you'll learn a ridiculous amount.
I recommend this class to students who want to learn the basis of R and be able to clean datasets and make a cool project
Avoid this class as much as possible. Not only are the ethics of David Kane problematic (check the Crimson for relevant articles), but also the course is just structured badly.
This course was restructured this semester to focus less on data visualization (the real helpful skills) and more on statistics. However, statistics is not taught well in this course at all — the book is a mess, and you don't learn any of the concepts well. Assignments are basically just about copying and pasting from the book rather than actually developing intuitive understandings for the concepts.
Apparently Kane was invited to teach a graduate seminar some number of years ago, which ended in flames and required another instructor Gary King to step in (search David Kane on Twitter for more details). Kane is an ineffective instructor with a troubled track record of pedagogy at Harvard, period.
All around, I would avoid this course and look for data science course alternatives in the statistics, economics, and computer science departments.
This class is a lot of work, but the skills you'll learn are really useful. Start your final project early.
This class is extremely valuable and challenging. Most engaged course staff I have experienced at Harvard, passionate teachers and TF's, excellent quality of assignments that help you learn the material. They started a new tutorial system and it has worked

Comments
well.
Take this class! Its a lot of work but you get used to it, and you end up making a super cool project. I really am thankful I took it, now I want to take more data science classes.
Although this was a crazy semester, the course staff are incredibly dedicated and the best part of the course for me. I had little coding experience coming in and though I actively disliked code/STEM, but this class changed my mind. I found we learned practical skills in an accessible way and so much of the class was tailored to our individual needs. You won't meet a more knowledgeable data scientist or more compassionate course head than Tyler. I loved the community, the Slack, the final projects, and the learning that happened in this course.
Most of the class content isn't made by preceptor, so the student labor and work is valuable. You learn a solid amount about R and how to use it for your own projects. Take it as long as David Kane isn't teaching it. Grade wise, it's essentially a completion course.
Putting aside opinions on the instructor since this year was unusual in that respect, I think GOV 50 is an excellent course for teaching you R and data visualizations. The weekly assignments are interesting, helpful, and manageable, and the grading is very fair so long as you put in the work. I think this class is still trying to figure out how to teach statistical modeling, so I wouldn't take it expecting to emerge with a rigorous understanding about the math or interpretations behind that. But if you mainly want to get comfortable with cleaning, processing, and displaying data, it's an amazing course, and the one-on-one attention you get is really special.
Great class, hopefully Kane won't be there.
On a non-academic note: don't support David Kane if he continues to be the preceptor of this class. The man is uncontroversially a white supremacist, so if taking this class means supporting him in any way — don't. Regarding the actual content of the course: don't take this class if you're not planning on doing plenty of work! But if you're willing to put the work in, this is a great opportunity to learn a bunch of new skills for Data Science and R.
This is a great class to master data science principles and get your start in R. You'll be able to build something of consequence, that you're proud of, and meet great people.
It was overall a fun and interesting class. You will learn a ton but also have to put in quite a few hours each week.
Incredible class — take this as early as possible during your time at Harvard. Learning R will be invaluable for any research position, internship, or job you will want to pursue across every discipline. The first couple weeks were an INSANE amount of work (like 20+ hours a week) as someone with zero coding experience prior. But it gets MUCH better, and the course provides a "bear hug" of support all throughout — replete with course staff study halls, one on one recitations (sections), and helpful lectures. Amazing class over Zoom as well. Take full advantage of going to study halls to get your problem sets done to get direct help from staff and other students. Start working early in the semester on your final project. Sometimes it will feel like you have zero clue what you are doing and you will wonder why you took the course — but keep pushing and do all the work and your grade and understanding will be great (and remember the quip "fail to plan, plan to fail"). Preceptor was an excellent instructor, and the course staff and TFs were similarly excellent and readily accessible. Take advantage of Slack too, students are asking a lot of the same questions you have. Preceptor got a ton of flak during the semester, but I believe much of the knee-jerk convulsion was deeply misguided, reactionary, and counterproductive (the Crimson and other students cherrypicked many of his alleged former statements to craft a dubious narrative fit to their own realities). He is an incredible instructor and certainly a unique but independent character.
This class is relatively time consuming, but you will enjoy it, and 10 hours is not as time consuming as it seems. Find people to do problem sets with.
It will take a lot of time but it is worth it if you commit time and effort
The TFs are absolutely fantastic and you genuinely will learn so much no matter what respective R or data science background you come from.
Excluding the revelation about Preceptor (which I will address after this), I loved this course. I learned a lot about data science and stats and really feel comfortable with R now, so if you are looking to get a tangible skill in the data science field this is a great course for someone with no stats or coding background. Preceptor— I honestly did not get any bad vibes from preceptor during lectures prior to the revelation of his personal politics/opinions, but afterwards there was definitely some discomfort/uncertainty about the course (especially since he claims to be teaching "ethical" data science). If you are a student like me (person of color with zero stats and coding background but a desire to learn some data science) I think you're in a really difficult spot. If you are young enough, I would probably say wait it out, don't take the course, and hope Preceptor gets replaced in the future.
This is a great class for people who have little to no coding/stats experience.
This class is definitely hard and time-consuming, but it is a pretty good intro to R and data science. Start assignments early and don't hesitate to ask questions in Slack or at study hall as that's saved me hours of troubleshooting. However, if David Kane is still teaching the course and holding required lectures, you may definitely not feel comfortable in this course in light of everything that came out about him.
I would tell them not to take it if David Kane is still teaching it, but otherwise I would say it is useful. It is probably not the only nor the best course for everyone interested in using data but they will learn something. I would also tell them to utilize study halls.

Comments
This is a great class to take—I really think all students should consider it for their future, as the skills you learn in this course are evermore applicable in today's world.
Don't take this class.
The content of this class is very interesting and useful. The teaching assistants were super helpful when it came to learning the material. While there is a lot of work in the beginning, I would not say it was difficult. The work can be a lot but it is necessary to learn how to code. You really leave this class with a valuable skill and a portfolio of work. If you are considering taking this class in the future, I would check if Kane is teaching or if the TAs or another professor is teaching. Not only was Kane's reaction to this whole situation very disastrous, but his teaching wasn't even that great. Honestly, instruction improved when we transitioned to having the TAs lecture. If Kane is still teaching and you still want to learn R, there are a lot of other classes that cover similar material and also have great reviews.
you will learn so much in this course. this class is worth it
Study halls and pset groups will save your life
A great class! Aside from my personal opinions about the Preceptor, the material learned in this class is incredibly useful. I really, really enjoyed it. It's also far more chill than I expected – it is not that much work, very doable! I had previous CS experience (CS50), so I can't speak for those without this experience. In comparison to CS50, however, this class is *far* less stressful and *much* more enjoyable (it's also way more practical in what you learned).
I really can't stand Preceptor's approach to statistics and data science, but the format of the class – if it remains relatively similar to this year – will teach you a ton about coding. If you want to learn how to code, take the class. If you want to understand a quantitative social science paper and maybe write one yourself, make sure to take a real statistics class before or after this class.
Don't let David Kane's reputation scare you off if you're interested in the class. If he's still around, I don't imagine that you'd have to interact with him if you don't want. The TFs and CAs are all amazing and very supportive. Would enthusiastically recommend the class for its content and the teaching staff.
The course content is great. you learn how to manipulate and display data in beautiful ways. You don't learn much about statistical concepts outside of the Bayesian focus; such as pvalues, and other statistical concepts.
Problems with David Kane aside, the curriculum itself is great and the teaching staff are supportive. This year they changed the format of the assignments from Datacamp, so there were some mistakes, but that's it. Super good way to learn R and some basic stats.
This class is amazing. It will teach you so many essential skills that you didn't even know you needed but will probably start using so much once you have them. I thought I would never do anything STEM again and I was a lost cause, but this course gave me the confidence I needed to apply to a data scientist job, and actually get it. Also, despite David Kane, the teaching staff for this course is fabulous.
DO NOT TAKE THIS COURSE IF DAVID KANE IS THE PRECEPTOR. The TFs are incredible but this course should not be ran by a racist preceptor. The course itself is very work heavy, so be prepared to dedicate a lot of time and patience.
This class is a data science class and if you are looking for academic growth and a strong data science background in a foundational class I think this definitely fits the bill. Obviously Kane's beliefs are dangerous, but in my semester, I have not felt impacted by them because of the incredible teaching staff which acts as a mediator in the situation. If all of the teaching staff were to leave, then I think that's grounds for taking the course; but, I really don't think Kane himself should be the reason you don't take the course.
The content covered in this class is super interesting and useful. However, I would not take this class if David Kane is teaching lectures. The smaller TF-led lecture format used in the second half of the semester was more helpful when it came to learning and applying new concepts.
The course is very well structured. It keeps students engaged every day, either with class or homework, it's constantly challenging but not overwhelming. By the end of the semester, I already used the material learnt in gov 50 for another class — I gathered some raw data, cleaned it, modeled it and used it for the final paper for my other class. In a few words, one of the best, most useful classes I took at Harvard. I realized how much I love statistics after this class, and will most likely look for a spring internship to use the skills I gathered in this class.
This is more of a class on data cleaning and visualization in R than one on statistics/data science. It does live up to its reputation in terms of workload. But it is accessible for those without a quantitative background, and it equips you with very practically useful skills.
If you haven't taken a CS class before, take this one! You'll learn useful skills within the semester, guaranteed. 10/10 would recommend.
tl;dr I think the structure of his class and his support of students' careers is really valuable. As a Black student, I stayed in the course because I think that the things I learned from him will help my career.
David Kane did a great job creating a structure that allows for students to learn by doing and to practice networking. That structure is

Comments
so strong that the experience of learning R did not feel much different after Kane stopped being the main lecturer. I think we did lose out a bit on his pressure for us to make the most of our alumni network and use him to help us "achieve our dream career."
Remarkably, his teaching involved almost none of his politics. He was always really, truly eager to help students succeed in the class and beyond. I don't think students would lose out on much if Kane were replaced by someone equally enthusiastic about students' professional success. However, in my very limited time at Harvard, I don't think I've seen or heard of any faculty who match that enthusiasm.
This course is a lot of work; you'll have about 3 long assignments per week. That being said, it's definitely worth it. The class is completion based.
You learn a lot. Hopefully there will be a new course head by then. It's a grind but I am glad that I took it. Just be ready to dedicate 10–12 hours outside of class time to the course each week.
This is a wonderful course because the TFs and CAs made it a wonderful course this time around. You will work hard, and you will learn a lot. I would take this course as an effective intro to R—if there are changes to the course head position.
It's a good course. If you're concerned about the workload – take it. It really isn't that bad, and you certainly learn a lot. If the section lecture format still applies, I would recommend taking it. The TFs are great, despite the extremely problematic preceptor.
Great class, 100% worth it. Not terribly difficult for learning data science and getting capable in R. Will help you in any field you pursue
Be ready to put in work from the start.
Take this class. Be prepared to work like a buffalo if you don't have any background in R and data science. But it is worth it. I was so afraid of coding, but after this class I feel confident enough to take higher classes. Tyler Simko is a wonderful human being. Preceptor's motivational speech will make you feel obligated to work when you want to slack off. Actually, there is no way you can slack off, because the class structure gives you assignment almost every day. Endure the suffering and you will learn tons – I have been there, you can do it!
Despite the controversy around this class at the beginning of the year, this was actually a good class once things settled down (and kudos to the amazing course staff for supporting everyone throughout that period). It's one of the few classes that teaches you skills that will be explicitly useful in the workforce. The fact that course staff is constantly seeking feedback is also a positive aspect about the class. I would warn about the occasional wonkiness of grading (and sometimes, we did not receive particularly timely feedback), but those are my only two gripes with the class.
This class was exactly what was advertised to be in terms of the R, basic stats, and practical skills that I learned, and I'm quite pleased with the final project I created!
Oof.
Despite the turmoil in the middle of the semester, I found this to be a very good class. I imagine that most respondents will be wholeheartedly against Preceptor Kane, yet that was not my experience. Preceptor remained a passionate and accessible educator, who I believe cares a lot about his students. I don't agree with a number of the points that he brought up on his blog, but I also believe that he is often intentionally contrarian to try to generate conversation. I don't think he is a bad person, as many people might say. To those considering taking this class, I would recommend it.
It's a very helpful course for developing very practical, applied, hands-on technical and programming skills. You'll learn a lot that can be applied in other coursework, research, and projects. R is an incredibly useful language to learn.
As I sit here writing this evaluation, it is hard to know what to tell future students about the course. I don't expect David Kane to be around longer than the Spring semester. If he is, it would be an outrage.
If there is a new professor who comes in to teach the course, there is real value in taking it. You learn visualization in R very well, and some *very* basic modeling. If you suck at math and don't know how to code, don't worry. If you want an A, you can get one — it's just time-consuming.
When they tell you this class will take 10 hours a week, it will. That said, the course staff is incredibly helpful and makes sure you understand the concepts. Finding people to take this class will make the assignments easier.
Take this class. You will learn so much. It's a ton of work, but the work is not actually hard. As long as you put in the time, you will have no problem doing well. This is coming from someone with zero coding/statistics experience.
Despite the controversy, this class is 100% worth taking. Data Science was a completely new field for me and I ended up discovering it was a subject I loved. The class does require a fair amount of work but the course provides you so much help that you really don't ever feel like you're struggling. My best advice is use study halls and your TFs. They are such good resources and are always available and willing to give you help. This course really is a great introduction to R and data science and I highly recommend it to anyone on the fence about it.
You will learn very practical data science skills
Take it if tyler is teaching it .

Comments
This class is extremely helpful. The amount of work you put into the classes will be what you get out of it.
What you will learn in this class will equip you with solid skills that will be immensely beneficial for any career you choose to pursue. So far, this class has been one of the few classes at Harvard that taught me a concrete skill that I actually believe I will use and benefit from in the future. Highly recommended!
Might be worth it to check on the staff situation before you enroll.
Learning R is really exciting!
The class is difficult but worthwhile. If the preceptor was a different person, this class would be nearly perfect.
Teaches you important skills. Not hard to do well if you put in the time. Glad I took it, even though...
The teaching staff is amazing, but the issue with Preceptor is a true shame. Overall, the course material was very fun, even for someone like me who has never liked cs or was good at it.
DO NOT TAKE THIS CLASS IF DAVID KANE IS STILL INVOLVED.
This course takes up a good amount of time, but there is so much help available that the work can always get done. If you can make office hours, you can do the course
Great class to dip your toes into data science and R. The final project is also highly flexible so you can use it to advance multiple goals. For instance, you can use it to complete a quantitative thesis chapter, you can use it to build a portfolio for jobs, you can use it to satisfy the requirement of an internship, and you can use it to just fool around and do something cool. So, I recommend this class (even if the drama of it was completely unnecessary and the way they teach basic stats is hot trash).
It is generally useful and usually well thought out.
Take this class once in your life, a very worth class, unlike any other I have ever taken my whole life.
This class is a lot of work – as advertised – but you will learn a lot about how to analyze and visualize data using R. If you want a strong foundation in statistics, however, this is probably not the place to start. This course would probably complement an entry-level statistics course.
The pros:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You will leave the course fluent in R and comfortable wrangling/cleaning/visualizing data. 2. I would say that the final project and the one-on-one attention/help you get from your TF is a unique advantage of this course. 3. You will leave the course having created a Shiny app that presents your work in a visually-pleasing interactive website. 4. The TFs are fantastic – especially Wyatt!
The cons:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kane holds unappealing political views – and frankly, he’s not even a great teacher. Because his presence already added little to the class (lecture is mostly coding in breakout rooms), transitioning to TF-led instruction was seamless. You deserve better than to learn from Kane. Hopefully he’s been replaced, but if not, you’ll have to weigh that decision. 2. The Gov 50 textbook is poorly written, piecemeal, and surface-level. Because each chapter was largely written by separate students, it lacks cohesiveness. In addition, the attempt to explain statistical concepts in a partial manner only serves to confuse students further. This textbook should be improved, or should be switched. 3. The tutorials were less helpful as the semester went on. Many were exact replicas of problems in the textbook – resulting in a lot of copy-pasting vs. testing actual comprehension of material.
The difficulty: The course was not as difficult or time-consuming as expected. Reading a chapter takes ~1 hour. Doing a tutorial requires ~1 hour. Doing a problem set requires ~2–3 hours. The amount of time you spend on your final project depends on how far you want to take it.

What did you take away from your experience in this course? What did you learn? How did this course change you?

Comments
I took away a confidence in working with R that I did not expect, and a community of friends.
I've become much more familiar with coding in general
Learned some practical data analysis skills
Learned to use R and realized I wanted to continue using it.
I learned a lot of tangible skills that I've already been able to put to use with my research lab. I found myself enjoying the process of coding unlike any other class before. I absolutely loved and learned a lot from Gov50.
I learned R sufficiently and I made friends through my TF led lectures. I would recommend this class only if the preceptor changes.

Comments
More than anything else, I went from being scared of R to being decidedly competent at it (and sometimes even good at it!) This is a skill that I am very grateful for, as knowing how to handle datasets is so useful.
My data skills are miles better than they were before. I can clean up any data set and feel comfortable creating all different kinds of graphics.
I learned the basics of R and how to build a statistical model using R. The final project also allowed us to actually apply what we had learned, from data cleaning to visualization to analysis, and also made me learn a lot about Shiny apps along the way! I'm definitely glad to have these skills to draw upon in the future and look forward to taking more courses like this.
The course is great; you'll learn a lot of data science principles/statistical knowledge. You'll also become much more comfortable in R.
I has learned a ton about coding of course, but also problem solving and networking.
I learned R. I learned to think critically with sophistication about data science, work effectively with a team, improvise and learn on-the-fly with difficult and abstract concepts, reach far beyond my comfort zone.
I take away a skillset that can help me work with even complicated data and create beautiful graphics and draw conclusions.
Coding is hard but worth it
As a course with Preceptor still there, I would not recommend at all. If, however, he is removed, I'd definitely recommend. This course managed to teach me R in one short semester and I genuinely learned more than I ever expected to.
I learned a TON about coding in R and actually really learned to enjoy data science. The stats components are still iffy for me, but I definitely think I got some great skills from the class.
This course has a lot of potential to be a really good intro to data science. I definitely learned a lot and I am interested in the data science track for the Government concentration because of this course. However, I have a hard time recommending the course in this state unless the course is taught by someone new and dedicates more time to educating students about how data science can be used for social good, not just as a data scientist.
I learned a great deal about data science, particularly focused on using R to answer interesting questions (also how to pose such inquiries). This course definitely affirmed my interest in data science and government as a whole.
The real world and academic world collide, and that's just reality. I'm proud of myself for working through it and learning an entirely new language in the process.
This class taught me many useful coding and data science skills. I was able to explore a topic of my own interest in my final project. I am leaving this class with a good starting portfolio of data science and coding work. The content was interesting and I liked how we focusing solely on learning R. This class makes me want to pursue the data science track. I would recommend this course.
learned R and how to analyze big data!! extremely valuable skills that can be applied to many fields (not just government)
I learned a very practical skill – how to extract insights from data! I also learned R, which I feel so happy to be proficient in
By far the most important thing I got out of this course was the confidence to code, not just in R but in any language (I'm currently teaching myself Python!) I learned how to deal with errors, look up information, get help and structure coding problems.
Provides basic understanding of tidyverse and R in general. Great way to learn the basics and see the broader applications of the skills. Opened my eyes to how data can be incorporated into pretty much anything.
I loved having the skill and freedom to apply the concepts to cool real world issues.
Learned how to use R, actually feel comfortable working with large datasets.
I love R and want to do much more of it now. It made me much more confident in my quantitative skills too! And I'm so happy to have my final project to show for it.
The course itself was very informative—in the changing world of data science this course serves as a great (but very fast) introduction to coding.
If you want to learn data–science or improve your R skills, take this course. If it comes down to whether or not Kane is the reason you are thinking about not taking the course, I'd take him out of the equation and think about the great structure of the course as well as the unreal teaching staff.
If anything, this course gave me a lesson in resilience. The circumstances that occurred halfway through the semester left many of us (myself included) unsure of what to do. However, I am happy that I stayed in the course with the new format, as it enabled me to continue learning R and Bayesian statistics without too many disruptions.
I learnt a lot of practical skills, that can literally be used in the real world the second day after you get them. I'm thinking of changing my concentration now, or get a secondary in stats. Such as good class!
I learned how to code in R, wrangle data into usable formats, and visualise that data in helpful and informative ways. I also learned how to create predictive models based on datasets and interpret those predictions. As this was my first foray into computer science, I also learned that I enjoy coding! As a result, work for this class ended up being the work that I did as a means of procrastinating other classes' work, because it was fun, engaging, and rewarding.

Comments
Learned a lot about R and data science. Piqued my interest in data science for sure.
I learned hard skills in using R. I even used R to analyze data and make visualizations for another final project this semester, and it was great!
The course also reminded me to think about how I can leverage the alumni network to learn more about career paths that interest me.
This wasn't part of the curriculum, but it definitely made me think about how we engage with different perspectives at Harvard and what the right way to approach that is. :)
After taking this course, I feel that I have a very strong grasp of R, and I know how to use this knowledge in practical ways to learn more about the world. With the tools I gained from the course, I can gather data, organize it, and gain insights from it. Very satisfied.
Glad I took it. Learned a lot. Course changed me because I started thinking like a data scientist.
I really enjoyed taking this course and felt like I walked away with lots of valuable skills.
This course is a very good course. However, it was the TFs and CAs who truly made the course spectacular, not Preceptor Kane.
I learned so much in R. It felt amazing! However, I have reservations about recommending, because the workload is very hard.
Gave me an important skill (data science) and fluency in a language (R)
I learned how to code and analyze data.
R and Data Science. I know there are hiccups along the way, but Preceptor's charisma kept me motivated. This course also changed me because I was inspired by how the TFs – especially Tyler – and some CAs are so kind and dedicated to making sure we understand and are able to do pretty complicated work even when many of us coming without any background.
Coding mechanics of R and basic data science frames of reference
To be quite honest, this class was the most stressful part of my freshman fall semester just because of all of the backlash to inviting Charles Murray to come speak and the blog posts that a student found. I was mainly concerned with having my peers and my TF label me as racist if I chose to stay in the class. I suddenly felt like I had to take the time to look into the allegations and try to decide what I thought, but it seemed like everyone else had already made up their minds so quickly without even examining all of the details. I thought about just switching out of the class to get away from all of the drama, and I looked into switching to CS50 (since I'm planning on doing CS I didn't want to switch into Gov 51) but I would have had to make up four problem sets and labs and quizzes and that seemed difficult. It was just a lot to deal with while my classes and everything were still going on and I still had all of my usual work to do. I didn't want to talk to any academic advisors or mentors or anyone because after all of the coverage the issue got in the Crimson, everyone had already heard about it and already had an opinion about it without really knowing the full story. And even after I chose to stay, having to choose between going to Preceptor's lectures and the TF-led lectures was also stressful for the same reasons. Now I pretty much avoid mentioning it to anyone at all costs, which is why I put "Not Applicable" for how I would recommend the course to my peers. It's not that I agree with everything that Preceptor said on the blog or with Charles Murray's views, but I do think that he should be allowed to say what he wants to on a private blog and invite a controversial speaker to an optional speaker series. And I think it's sad that a very good and useful class was completely disrupted because he did those things. Anyway, putting that aside, I think that this class was what I expected: I learned R, basic stats, and lots of practical skills that I don't think very many other classes teach.
It gave me a great introduction to data science
Coding is easy and so empowering!
The course taught me how to approach data.
I had no coding experience and this class was a great introduction. I learned more than I have in any class at Harvard.
This course was an opportunity for me to see data science as a subject as an absolute beginner. I quickly realized that I loved the subject and want to do as much with the field as I can in college. I learned a lot about not just how to use R but how to use the internet. Lots of this class was just learning how to google questions I had or how to seek out my CA's in study hall. I really learned how to use my resources to the fullest. Overall, I absolutely loved this class and it really showed me a new subject of interest.
Developed a deeper appreciation for data science and coding
It was a good class that gave a basis in coding. the final rproject gave us an opportunity to apply what we had learnt
I am now able to use R at a proficient level.
I learned a set of very valuable skills in this course that I would have otherwise probably not attempted on my own. Props to the Government Department for making this course a requirement and suggesting students take it. Preceptor Kane and his way of teaching were the main reasons why this course became so popular in the first stage; I hope it stays that way.
Amazing teaching staff and subject. The lectures were really well done. The disruption caused by David Kane was distracting though, and I am glad that the department found a solution.
The most supportive teaching team EVER! Made me confident that I can even learn to code in any form.

Comments
I learned tons. I didn't know how to write one line of code, but now have the capability of doing lots.
I learned how to code. I feel confident with a computer and with data, and that is a great feeling.
def would not recommend if david kane continues to teach the course. otherwise, with some improvements i would recommend.
I learned so much, I feel that there is a lot I can do that I could not before. I also learned about my own resilience and perseverance, and have no problems asking for help.
If they can cut the drama, great class. If they can improve the textbook by focusing on basic stats and data science rather than made up make-believe fairyland terms, that would be even better. Otherwise, great class at Harvard to dip your toes into a bit of data science and R. Probably the best you'll be able to find in terms of friendliness for anyone from a R beginner to someone who is a CS major and well-versed in other languages.
This course showed me that undergraduates are nasty, vindictive creatures, and people who have blogs are never to be trusted for anything.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – coding – data visualization – data analysis
That I need to do more networking with Harvard alumni!
Fluency in writing R code to wrangle/clean/visualize data. Final project/Shiny app presenting my work in a visually-pleasing interactive website.
An understanding of the limits of Harvard administration's willingness to "walk the talk" on putting students first.

Instructor Comments

Please comment on this person's teaching. (Your response to this question may be published anonymously.)

Comments
Unfortunately, David Kane had a secret blog.
He was aight...if he wasn't a racist/sexist.
David Kane's personal use of data science aligns with belief in eugenics and race as an indicator of ability. Despite sounding like he supports all students, especially FGLI ones, his personal record counters that starkly. Highly recommend not taking the course with him. Most of the class material, parts, tutorials, and textbook were not made by him either. He really just teaches lecture, but I accomplished more in my TF led lecture than I ever did in the main large lecture.
The teaching style itself was fine, but he shouldn't be teaching any classes.
I'm sure this comment is being mentioned by everyone, but David Kane's presence in this class had a profoundly negative impact on my experience. Beyond what we already know about his white supremacist blog and his invitation to Charles Murray to come speak to our class, Kane showed absolutely no remorse for his actions. Every time he addressed this issue, he treated it flippantly; several surveys or emails he sent us treated the issue as if it were insignificant and used an almost mocking tone. If the administration can't find a way to fire him because of his outwardly white supremacist beliefs — and it's shocking to me that this is not reason enough to terminate his position — his blatant carelessness and lack of empathy for his students should give enough reason to fire him. I'll also note that during the earlier lectures that he ran (before his white supremacist statements were revealed) he failed to cover most of the material and spent an unreasonable amount of time bragging about how past students praised him; my TF, on the other hand, regularly finishes the material for each class and creates a healthy learning environment for all of his students.
He did not actually teach much. The way class was formatted had students working by themselves majority of the time.
Overall excellent. A refreshing style of teaching that needs to be replicated across disciplines and classes at Harvard. Clear expectations, consistent philosophy, articulated vision — a somewhat rare set of assets in any teacher, let alone any individual. Most of all, an undervalued independent thinker who embraces a free market of ideas, intellectual conflict, and ultimately growth against the grain of sometimes suffocating groupthink and a culture of intolerance.
Frankly speaking, Preceptor Kane does not teach. He start(ed) class, went over announcements, and then sent people into breakout rooms to work on problems. After a period of time he would call us back, cold call someone to share what they have, and then eventually share the correct code. However, there was never really any explanation on WHY we should use certain pieces of code, and no review on the the material from previous classes or the reading.
I say all of this to provide a reason BESIDES his personal statements outside of class and on public forum to consider removing David Kane from this class. I honestly didn't feel like he added anything to the class besides a personality, and transitioning to taking lectures from Dan I felt that he actually TAUGHT, rather than just be there like Preceptor Kane.

Comments
I had a lot of respect for David Kane until the Charles Murray event. As a kid who grew up poor and went to public schools, the networking activities were really appreciated. But I was very disappointed with how the Murray incident was handled — I appreciated that Kane was very open to discuss his views in an extended office hours session, but the whole ethos of “learn from people who disagree with you” is misplaced with Murray. I went to the event and didn’t learn anything useful: he’s clearly a pseudo intellectual firebrand who just knows how to argue with people. It could have been relevant to the stuff in the class about “temperance” and the limits of data science, but the experience wasn’t framed as a constructive interrogation of methods.
His personality and way of teaching definitely felt a little off before everything about him came out, but afterwards, it all made sense. He’s not the kind of person I’d ever be comfortable with. From the way he demands we call him “Preceptor” to his fixation on how highly-rated but time-consuming the class was, he definitely came off as someone focused a little too much on his ego.
In the first few weeks of the semester, Preceptor's "lectures" were useful and inoffensive. Truthfully there wasn't much teaching going on so much as trial by fire, but it was fine and it worked. Unfortunately Preceptor created a hostile environment for his students by not only inviting (and never uninviting!) to campus a man whose work has been discredited as racist pseudoscience but also by publishing racially insensitive posts on his blog and then failing to ever take responsibility for it. Were it not for the course staff stepping up, I imagine this course would have been absolutely dead in the water. Those events and the subsequent trajectory of the course demonstrated to me that there was nothing Preceptor was doing for this class that could not have been done by the course staff. They did the grading, wrote the tutorials, wrote the Primer, and eventually led the class meetings with grace and tact, and their handling of the course made me realize that Preceptor is borderline obsolete.
I though Preceptor was a great teacher, and I especially liked the small group setting that comes with the class when working through problems. I especially enjoyed his style of teaching without lecture—despite this, he took the time to explain important concepts as we worked through the problems.
Fundamentally acted as a detriment to our learning.
Aside from the whole controversy of his racist views and how that leads to bad learning environment, he really wasn't that great of a professor. We were often just put in break out rooms to work on problems among students. The TAs and CAs were very helpful but he wasn't. He was also very focused on the business side of data science which made the materials seem more boring. Instruction improved when we switched to TAs teaching.
Kane's teaing method emphasized his personal biases, which clearly stemmed from a racist perspective against minority communities.
I think Preceptor cares about his students and wants to help them. I think he has built a really amazing course. However, I do think that the way he cold calls and addresses people is not very nice and can make students feel insecure (when they shouldn't be made to feel that way).
Obviously Preceptor (David Kane) was in the Crimson for a certain clandestine blog and political beliefs, but that didn't really affect the quality of the material or the course content. To his credit, he organized a class that was pretty seamless from a content standpoint. I think we all learned a lot, and if you wanted to interact with him (I did not.) he was available and eager to talk. Some of his personal views I find abhorrent, but he runs a good class.
He seems talented; but he did not create a positive learning environment. he did not seem to consider students feelings and did not apologize or acknowledge the hurt his actions caused in a genuine manner
In the lectures we had with him at the beginning of the semester, David Kane was a little intimidating. Also, I had no idea what was going on most of the time — he would do very little explaining, and sent us to breakout often with no clue what we were supposed to be doing.
David Kane has been placed in a postition to teach eager students data science while using the same techniques to display his personal racist pseudoscience online. When his racist views were exposed and students expressed their discomfort with his leadership, he responded with audacious, disrespectful dismissiveness and showed no remorse. That aside, he did not "teach". He simply put us in breakout rooms and had us figure it out or answer our questions with questions of his own. I understand this is a method of teaching but he in no way offered any consttuctive guidance, just called students out. Kane is not qualified to teach.
David Kane is great at creating enthusiasm for the subject. I took the class because he convinced me to in shopping week, and I loved his attitude towards learning.
That being said, he isn't the best teacher per say. He doesn't teach much, just puts us in sections with the TFs and CAs. He is a bit intimidating because he cold-calls, but that can be a good thing sometimes.
Now, one of the things I appreciate most about my instructors is honesty. Not many professors are fully honest, but I thought David Kane was. I was a bit disappointed with his behavior this semester, particularly the fact that he wasn't honest about whether he wrote or not those article, and whether he holds those beliefs or not. That being said, one's personal opinions are their own, and I don't want to address that as part of “comment this person's teaching.” I just wanted to say that he might not be as honest as he seems, and that could be annoying to some students, myself included.
Despite the controversy re: his comments, I felt like Preceptor was really quite effective as an instructor. His lectures were pedagogically excellent and he was very accessible outside of class.

Comments
tl;dr I think the structure of his class and his support of students' careers is really valuable. As a Black student, I stayed in the course because I think that the things I learned from him will help my career.
David Kane did a great job creating a structure that allows for students to learn by doing and to practice networking. That structure is so strong that the experience of learning R did not feel much different after Kane stopped being the main lecturer. I think we did lose out a bit on his pressure for us to make the most of our alumni network and use him to help us "achieve our dream career."
Remarkably, his teaching involved almost none of his politics. He was always really, truly eager to help students succeed in the class and beyond. I don't think students would lose out on much if Kane were replaced by someone equally enthusiastic about students' professional success. However, in my very limited time at Harvard, I don't think I've seen or heard of any faculty who match that enthusiasm.
His teaching is decent enough. He exists to makes student feel uncomfortable, which is...uncomfortable as a student. I noticed that even before we became aware that he was an open racist who posted to a racist blog. He should not have stayed on with the course or affiliated with Harvard, but to his credit he did his best to remain professional through the matter.
Regardless of ideological leanings, Preceptor has set the pedagogical bar at Harvard.
Preceptor Kane has an obvious passion for data science, which he works hard to impart to his students. Giving credit where credit is due, he is very knowledgeable on the subject matter, and he does his best to be helpful through Slack channels. It was, therefore, all the more disappointing when it was found out that he holds such hurtful views.
Preceptor is a good teacher who knows how to keep his students engaged. Setting the unfortunate event aside and talking strictly about his teaching style, I appreciate it.
Great professor! He does cold call on people, but I don't think that's a bad thing, especially when the class is online, because it helps you stay engaged and focused, which can be difficult on zoom. You'll never get points taken off for not knowing the answer to something. Very supportive and willing to give help with final projects during office hours. Answers questions in the Slack channel quickly as well.
Though Preceptor Kane got a lot of (perhaps warranted) flack this semester, I found that he remained a passionate and accessible educator who cares about his students. My only critique is that at times, in his attempt to remain accessible to students of every background, he can obscure the technical details of concepts to the point that they become a black box that students are asked to just accept.
David Kane's teaching was good, but he was not necessary in the course. I learned even more once we switched to TF-led lectures.
Despite the controversy surrounding him this semester, I found Preceptor to be a great communicator of the content. In his "lecture" sections, he was very helpful in pointing out shortcuts to use and flaws in code that could make it more efficient.
Very practical and very helpful. The cold email is not fun but it's his style.
Preceptor Kane did a great job during the first half of this course. There is no doubt that he is an effective educator. Even though I didn't attend his section after the structure of the course changed, I personally feel sorry that everyone had to put so much effort and time after the obvious events to redesign the course. Regardless, I think Preceptor Kane is a good man who just happens to have different political views than the majority of the class. I genuinely hope he keeps teaching and is not punished by the Department or the University.
It is fair to say that David Kane's conduct this semester alienated people in this course, resulting in many people switching to a different course.
His checkered history disgusted me and lots of other students. Made us want to drop the class if it wasn't for the support of the TFs.
An extremely disrespectful person especially given the whole situation that happened. not even an apology or acknowledgement of any wrongdoing and caused people to leave the class and everyone so much stress.
We only had him as a lecturer for a few weeks. While he did lecture, it was okay, but he seemed very indifferent to the way in which he made students feel after his blog scandal and that was disheartening. I didn't quite appreciate the comments he made towards me during lecture either, as though he was suprised to see me, a black woman, taking lead in breakout rooms. I quote "Oh wow, I see you are trying to "flex" on us all jasmine. interesting," and then he left the breakout room.
Setting aside his other issues, David Kane is simply not a very good teacher. The classes he ran were inefficient, slow, and painful to plow through, especially since he did not seem to be a huge fan of letting students experiment. Instead, he made everyone do things as he would, which was just not effective.
Does not seem like the best person to hang out with, but I honestly don't think he deserves to receive any administrative punishment over and above the social punishment he is already facing
David Kane should be replaced as an instructor as soon as possible for three reasons: 1) He is unfit to be an instructor that teaches ethical data science. 2) He is unresponsive to student concerns. 3) He will only harm the educational experience of students, rather than add to it.

Comments
Kane is engaging, enthusiastic about data science, and interested in improving the course. He is very responsive on Slack to students' questions. He clearly cares a lot about the course.
However, Kane's handling of the blog situation mid-way through the semester was unfortunate and shameful. Being in the position to shape minds at Harvard is a privilege. Using data to call into question the existence of students of color at a university like Williams or Harvard is surely not in line with the values of "Justice" espoused in the Gov 50 textbook? Not meaningfully responding to student concerns in any public way when more than half your students are dropping your class is surely not the sign of a responsible and caring instructor?
Due to the way this course is structured (lectures are largely spent coding in breakout rooms), removing Kane from the course would have little impact on its success. The TFs did a great job teaching the rest of the course this semester. Keeping Kane on as an instructor will only result in lower enrollment.

Custom Questions

Please provide some comments for your assigned Teaching Fellow. We will share these comments with them. Please include their name.

Comments
Beau is very dedicated to his students and is very accessible. Was greatly helped by him.
Beau was a great tf, very professional and gave comprehensive feedback on ideas.
Dan, thank you. You have been an excellent TF this semester. I hope you become a professor soon! Natural teacher, kind, positive.
Tyler is the best teaching fellow one could have. He is always available to help and so patient with his students. I have learned so much from him. Keep doing exactly what you are doing.
Dan — Dan has been such a kind, constant, and supportive presence through this semester. He always makes us excited about data science, answers questions/provides individualized help with so much patience, and was great about the transition. He should cold call or call or more/different people in lecture, including people from Shivi's recitations!
Mitchell Kilborn was my lifeline in the course. Sincerely the only reason I stayed. He took time in lecture to check in on students and ask how our weekends went. If a student's background was noteworthy or funny he'd comment and ask how the student is doing. By the last class we had multiple inside jokes in our lecture section. He treated section with the same energy. He is there to help us and guide us. He'd always check with the other students in section who weren't sharing their screen to make sure we were following along. He got to know us personally. My final topic was a bit emotionally heavy and he would ask to make sure I'm ok after seeing some of the negative tweets I'd scraped. When I needed to use code we hadn't learned in class, he took extra time after our section to walk me through it and teach me material not covered in class. When a family member passed away during the semester, he was so understanding and gave me the space to take time away from class work. He signed on to be a TF and took on the extra responsibility of teaching us and emotionally supporting us. I am so grateful he was my TF, and he is truly the reason why I learned and enjoyed R this semester. Infinite thank you's to him.
Wyatt is an incredible TF. He was so knowledgeable about everything, and when he didn't immediately know how to answer a question, he always made an effort to follow up after further research. Every interaction with him on Slack and over Zoom left me feeling more positive about my understanding of the course material and about life in general. I tried to think of any constructive criticism to add to this question and I came up blank—that's how great of a TF Wyatt was. One of the best instructors of any status that I've had at Harvard.
Tyler, you were absolutely amazing this semester. You replied so quickly whenever I had some problems and you explained complicated parts so well.
Beau, you really helped me along with my project and explained difficult concepts fantastically.
Mitchell was the best TF I've ever had! He was so supportive, not only in terms of teaching us R but also in other ways as well. He walked us through R and the many cool things we could do with R so patiently, and I have learned so much from him. His explanations of all of the complicated concepts we discussed were extremely clear, and he often came up with creative ways to explain some concepts — I definitely would never have understood some of the more complicated concepts we learned without Mitchell's fantastic explanations. His lectures were also fantastic and managed to cover all of the materials while also having the best learning environment. I'm so so so thankful to Mitchell!
Tyler Simko, you are fantastic.
Dan, thank you for a great semester! I'm so glad I was able to have you as a TF. You're such a fantastic instructor and your empathy for your students is unparalleled. In the future, my once piece of feedback is to potentially use Zoom and its features to your advantage to clearly lecture on abstract topics.

Comments
Dan was super helpful and always excited to answer any questions. He sometimes went off on tangents or brought up concepts more complex than the questions warranted.
Beau was incredible. Readily accessible, equipped with advice and clear expectations, and came prepared with a solid agenda for group recitations.
Shivi is extremely invested in her students and went above and beyond to make sure we were successful. She is deeply engaging and knowledgeable in class, and I could not have had a better TF. Thanks, Shivi!
Tyler, thank you for an amazing semester. You have been amazing!!!
Mitchell was absolutely amazing and deserves a raise. He answered every panicked email, helped with every coding crisis, and was a wonderful lecturer and class leader as well. It was an absolute privilege being in his section this semester!
Dan Baissa was simply the most ideal person to learn Gov 50 content from. He was clearly very knowledgeable but empathetic to us (which I appreciated as complete newcomer to R) and our paces of learning, answering any and all questions in earnest. I was able to feel so much more comfortable and confident in our TF-led lectures every week, and sections were also so much more productive with him!
This is what I left for my evaluation on the last page, so I figured I'd just put it verbatim here. Name: Dan Baissa Dan was the MVP of the course for me. He was my hype man, a source of support, a thorough teacher, a limitless well of knowledge and resources, and he was doing all of this during a pandemic and while his mother struggled with Cancer (that's the only reason he got "good" on being accessible outside of class— he simply didn't have a lot of extra time outside of teaching lecture plus holding recitations with like a third of the class). Dan really boosted my confidence in my skills, while also knowing when to push me and ask me more difficult questions to help me find better solutions. 10/10 TF.
Thank you Dan for being such a great and helpful TF during such turbulent times. I really appreciated how you were always willing to help, and never judged me or anyone for asking a "stupid" question.
Mitchell was great! Very enthusiastic and kept everyone engaged
Dan Baissa, you were a really great TF and one of the highlights of the course. My only comment is that sometimes you got a little sidetracked with cool methods you wanted to show us beyond the scope of the course, but honestly that just shows how passionate you are. Keep it up!
Rucha was an absolute pro. She always ran recitations with a smile and patiently guided us through the process without giving us the answers. I honestly couldn't believe how helpful and knowledgeable she was just given the fact that she herself is still a student. She expressed genuine interest in our final projects and seemed just as excited as I was to fix any issues and finally see it work. I have nothing but good things to say about her.
Rucha was a great TF! She provided enough guidance that I figure out how to solve problems on my own, yet still enough so it is useful. I think she could improve on making the recitations a little more structured in some sense.
Mitchell Kilborn Mitchell was the best part of this class. His enthusiasm is the reason why many students stayed in this class following the ordeal with the blog. He genuinely changed the entire experience of my semester, and I am exceedingly thankful to him for that. The entire Government department needs to express concrete gratitude to the entire teaching staff for all of their work.
Mitchell was an excellent TA. He was always so helpful at explaining content, teaching how to code, or providing helpful resources. I loved how he was willing to tailor recitations to what we wanted to learn.
Rucha is wonderful TF! She's patient, and balances 'walking you through the answers' & 'sitting back and let you solve it out' perfectly
Dan Baissa. Best professor and one of the highlights of the course! Dan did a great job leading lectures and was a great resource and support system throughout the course.
Wyatt Hurt is an incredible teacher. His relaxed yet productive style helped us get done everything needed in recitations he was leading without feeling rushed or stressed. When he was in our small groups during lecture, he let us take the lead and work through problems ourselves, but was always willing to help answer questions, which he did thoroughly (sometimes with follow-up after class!), and sometimes in such a way that we would get to the answer ourselves, if it was something we should have already known how to do. He was incredibly responsive and helpful on Slack, yet another sign of how hard he was working on our behalf and how much he cares about us succeeding.
Forgive me for writing this for the third time in this Q report, but if there is a teaching award for graduate students, I would wholeheartedly nominate, endorse – you pick the word – champion Mitchell Kilborn. He was always eager to help, accessible, knowledgeable, and skilled at connecting basic concepts to more advanced ones in a way that encouraged students to learn more about the topics covered and expand their knowledge of R. I am taking more data science classes (and considering a graduate degree in it now) because of him and Tyler Simko. That last sentence alone should tell you about his teaching ability and his relationship with students, but I can spell it out further. Mitchell is unequivocally the best TF I've ever had in the Government department when it comes to teaching, his dedication to students, his knowledge of the course content – everything. Mitchell is simply the best and I hope that the Government department gives him (and the rest of the teaching staff) the academic

Comments
equivalent of a bronze star for going through a mid-semester restructuring of the class.
Beau worked hard to help his section. He was genuine and easy to access.
Tyler is absolutely amazing. He cares so much about his students, and dedicates so much time to helping us figure out any issues we have or things we don't understand. He is incredibly responsive and accessible outside of class, even for R-related but not course-related questions. He did such a great job at transitioning to TF-led lectures, even though he wasn't supposed to be teaching us initially. His lectures were so well prepared, and he spent so much time making sure everyone understood the content we were learning. He is also so supportive and encouraging. He deserves an award for his work this semester honestly. Thank you Tyler for making our time in Gov 50 so worthwhile!
Dan Best TF I have ever had hands down—very patient and genuinely invested in our learning experiences and how we applied them to our lives at large. Textbook genius who is very down to earth but knows his stuff. Very relatable and professional, and made this course incredible despite the abysmal start with Preceptor.
Tyler is the greatest. No changes needed.
Mitchell has been a fantastic TF! Having switched TFs halfway through the semester, Mitchell was super helpful with making this transition. His lectures were incredibly helpful and fun at the same time, and the same goes for his recitations! Having Mitchell as a TF has made me have absolutely no regrets about deciding to stay in the course!
Wyatt Hurt was probably the best part of this course. He is so so kind, and spends hours on end helping his students.
I just don't know how this class would have been without him. I think probably 70% of everything I learnt was from his explanations, so I absolutely love him.
Shivi was great! I could not have gotten through the final project without her patient guidance and very helpful suggestions. She also took the time outside of recitations to send me material that I needed to complete my project on more than one occasion. I am very grateful to have had her as a TF this semester.
Hi Rucha! It was a pleasure to work with you this semester, I appreciated all the feedback and advice you gave me for the final project. I guess my one piece of feedback for you would be re: managing the recitations; when we shifted to 30 minute chunks it felt like sometimes too much time was spent on explaining the context for the problem I was facing rather than working on it.
Dan Baissa is the best TF I have ever had in my time at Harvard. Always brightened the mood, was easy to reach, did extra work to help us with our projects, all around incredible person. I learned so much because of Dan and he is the reason I am interested in data science going forwards.
Shivani was an outstanding Teaching Fellow. Her enthusiasm for the subject matter was contagious, her explanations were clear, and she was always there to help. She really made this course so much more enjoyable.
Dan Baissa is awesome. Generated enthusiasm for the subject matter, approachable, etc. Everything you would want in a teaching fellow.
Wyatt Hurt is the best TF I've ever had. His dedication to the course material and to the students is unmatched. His feedback is constructive, easy to understand, but most importantly, kind. And he is always accessible and supportive. Please, Wyatt, don't change anything about how you teach!
Mitchell was an A+ TF. One of my favorites from Harvard. He saved the semester for all of us. Can't say how thankful I am.
Shivi was amazing every single time I got to interact with her. She was always positive, extremely helpful, and supportive. PAY HER EXTRA
Shivani is what made this class what it was. I couldn't imagine taking this course without her as my TF. She truly cares about her students and wants them to succeed. I can't think of many TFs who would spend 3 hours helping their student figure out a problem with their final project all while having assignments of their own to do! Extremely thankful for all the help she gave all year.
I have talked about you so much already haha I'm not sure what else to say. You are the best Wyatt. I appreciate you. Please continue to be the kind and dedicated person like you are. Students will learn from you and appreciate you so much like the way all of us did.
Beau was a really great TF, I couldn't have asked for anyone better! In recitation he consistently gave me really helpful feedback on my final project and he would check in with me sometimes too (one time he reminded me about an exam due date for example).
Dan. Great TF. Big Dan fan. Here's an acrostic poem: Don't take this class unless Dan is your TF. A good guy. Never a bad guy.
Mitchell Kilborn was absolutely fantastic. He went way out of his way to help me with my final project; my project was significantly improved because of his help. His lectures were warm and effective, and he is highly competent in the material of the course. Thank you, Mitchell!

Comments
Tyler Simko is the best TF I've had in my time at Harvard College. He cares about his students so much, and he is an extremely good teacher. He was put through so much this semester, and I — along with my classmates — am so grateful for his perseverance and calm nature throughout.
The Government Department owes Tyler a thank you.
Rucha was absolutely wonderful. She was incredibly accessible and ensured I had mastered the course material.
Dan was an amazing TF. This semester was crazy and stressful for many reasons, but Dan was great. He made lectures and sections engaging, and was easily available for help whenever we needed it.
Tyler is the greatest TF ever. He is so helpful and responsive. I definitely would not have gotten through this course without his constant willingness to help.
Wyatt was great!!!
Tyler was an amazing TF. Despite the dramatic changes mid-semester, he was able to adapt the course and keep the class amazing.
Wyatt is easily one of the best TFs I had at Harvard. He has been patient, helpful and reachable at all times. Very happy to have been in his recitation group.
Thanks for all of your expertise Shivi, you're amazing!
Wyatt Hurt is the BEST. I have learned so much from Wyatt this semester, who is kind, patient, encouraging, and skilled on all fronts. By the end, I wanted to do my best to make Wyatt proud! Great respect to Wyatt, who is an incredible teacher :)
My teaching fellow (Beau) was amazing. No complaints.
Rucha was so helpful, so thoughtful, and so fun to work with. I am very grateful she was my TF this semester.
TYLER IS LITERALLY THE BEST. He stepped up during a really tough situation and actually taught the material when with very clearly and made the class so much more enjoyable after the scandal. He seriously deserves a bonus and promotion because I would not have done well in this class without him. Also he understood us and was constantly our advocate through everything. He was always there to answer questions with speed and I really really appreciated that. Tyler should get an award or be able to be a professor for this class for all that he has done this semester.
Mitchell is the absolute best and was incredibly helpful from section, lecture, to final project help.
Mitchell
A course savior. I would say that the one thing you can improve on is being a bit more professional in how you speak about course material. I think it's great to be the compassionate, kind person you are when interacting with students directly, but given how most academic programs (at least on the east coast) emphasize the suit and tie manner of teaching to lectures, it might be good to start practicing that skill.
Dan Baissa is the best. I literally have nothing negative or even constructive to say to him. He is so good that he simply cannot improve as a teacher anymore.
Mitchell is awesome!!! He is one of the best TFs that I have had at Harvard, and he was a big part of the reason that I stayed in the course. He cares so much about his students and always went above and beyond to ensure that we were supported. From holding extra office hours ("recitation") to beginning to teach his own lecture partway through the semester, Mitchell never failed to demonstrate his exceptional dedication, adaptability, expertise, and positive attitude. I truly do not know how he did it all. I would describe him as a hero for many students in GOV 50 this semester. Because of Mitchell, I can honestly say that this course was a positive learning experience for me.
Wyatt is incredible! He was always so patient, helpful, and responsive to all of my data science questions. Having him as my TF really changed my Gov 50 experience this fall for the better.

Recitations --- both small group and individual --- are one of the biggest differences between this class and other introductory statistics classes. Should we keep using them? How, if at all, should we change them?

Comments
Recitations were fantastic, definitely keep them. Having a zero-pressure space to make some silly mistakes with a small group is definitely a plus.
I believe it should be conducted one-on-one basis from the beginning, focusing only on the final project.
YES! Keep them as it is.
Yes keeping doing them, they are great. Maybe we should start individual recitations sooner in the year though.
Yes, recitations should be kept. Can they be one on one from a little earlier in the semester? Can we work on our projects sooner in

Comments
the semester instead of copy pasting code to learn some random skills from the back of the textbook initially?
Yes, they're super useful and actually how I made some friends in this class. Also, the later ones that are one on one are super useful and TFs take their time to help you in general. For my final project I had to learn new content not covered in class and my TF took two recitations to teach me it. So helpful.
Individual project recitations were EXTREMELY helpful and should absolutely be kept—this, in my opinion, is one of the biggest strengths of the course.
I have more mixed feelings about small group recitations. I think they may be more effective if they were stratified by level of prior knowledge? I personally always got something useful out of them, but that useful thing probably could have been learned in 15 minutes rather than an hour; the remaining 45 minutes were spent with the TF helping other students troubleshoot. I think perhaps recitations should focus on Shiny apps/the final project from the very start rather than toggling between course concepts and final project work.
Absolutely – they helped a lot with my learning. More emphasis on how to go about shiny app.
Yes! I really enjoyed recitation and found the individual meetings to discuss the final project quite valuable.
I like them a lot I feel like it was a great time to ask some individual questions.
Yes, keep them! But I would make them (especially in the second half of the course) much longer (at least 1 hour).
I think it be nice to reserve more time for specific questions about class, psets, tutorials, exams, etc.
Yes, they were great. Individual recitations were ideal for final projects later in the semester, and group ones were awesome for going over concepts in the tutorials or extra stuff like animations, census APIs, and other appendix material. Made the course material feel much more accessible and it made me, as a student, feel anchored in the class knowing that I could get help and review concepts more effectively and intimately. Also gave me a great support group of fellow students in the course. It would be excellent if other classes could model this framework.
Yes, and I wouldn't change them. They are a truly great time for small group instruction. Perhaps working on tutorials could be something they do.
It was nice having one in one time to address your concerns
I think recitations are super useful, though one way to improve them would definitely be to have more structured activities scheduled class wide.
Recitations should definitely be kept. I like the method of starting with a small group and then honing in on one-on-one recitations closer to our final project deadline.
YES! I loved the recitations. Having them in small groups was great for the beginning part of the course when they were focused on reviewing and expounding materials from the reading. I also though the shift to individual recitations came at the right time where we had adequately discussed the readings and could now just focus on our final projects.
Do not have individual ones. I felt that they were unnecessary and if people want checkins they can sign up through a TF's calendly. I did appreciate the small group recitations though, because they helped me better understand content covered in a large group in a lower stakes environment.
yes! small recitations were a great way to connect with TFs and classmatesz
Recitations should continue as is.
Absolutely keep using them. Some of the group ones covered things that were never addressed in lecture and I don't think that is ideal—consider covering animation and Shiny in lectures as well as recitations.
I really like recitation—it's great to get personal help and get to know some of your classmates in a smaller group setting, which is great in this virtual world. One aspect that I think could be improved is the structure of the recitations; sometimes they try to cover too much at one time without going into enough depth into a new area or a sufficient review of an old. I also wish the individual recitations for the final projects were a little bit more structured, perhaps with some lessons more tailored to your specific project (whether that be working on animations, maps, etc.)
Yes.
Yes, please keep them.
Yes, recitations are great
I found group recitations at the beginning helpful, but once we started working on our shiny apps, I think it would be great to transition to individual recitations.
Love the recitations! Felt like a very relaxed way to learn more material and get to know other students in a no-student-left-behind way. I also thought the switch from group recitations to one-on-one recitations to talk about our final projects was well-timed.
Keep them. They were especially helpful at the end when the project deadline was approaching.
There should be more structure to them. Similar to lectures, having a format to follow and guided exercises would be nice. I feel like the format lost its place by the end of the course.

Comments
Yes! They definitely were helpful, though they were far more helpful at the end of the semester rather than the beginning.
Yes, keep doing them — more rigorous intro to Shiny would be good
Yes, small recitations are great. I think you should probably shift to individual recitations a bit earlier in the semester, because there are few weeks where one person awkwardly does nothing as someone else is troubleshooting their project.
Yes—the super small recitations allowed for constant feedback and one on one learning.
YES! Recitations especially via zoom are the best way to meet the rest of the class and actually get assignments done.
Recitations were incredibly helpful when it came to working on our final project. However, they would likely be even more helpful if one-on-ones started earlier.
Yes!!! Recitations and small groups work is so so useful. I just can't imagine the course without them. I think both the first half of the semester, when we were 3 or so per section, was very useful, and the later part when we were just 1. I wouldn't change a thing.
Yes, they were helpful especially when working on final projects.
100% keep them, they were one of the highlights of the course!
Yes. Maybe start individual recitations earlier.
I thought recitations were great, but sometimes you just haven't made enough progress for them to be helpful. Perhaps having recitations as the default, but allowing them to be cancelled when unnecessary, would be optimal. (This may already be happening as it is.)
Yes, recitations were helpful. They were a great chance to go over material that we didn't quite get. In the main lectures, we mainly learned by "doing" code, which is a great approach. The recitations offered a valuable "teaching" component to the course.
I liked recitations, specifically the transition from small recitations to one-on-one meetings.
Make them one-on-one from the start.
Recitations are very helpful. I would not change them.
Transition to personal meetings a bit earlier in the semester to get students thinking about the final project.
Keep using them. if anything, make them longer
Recitations are awesome, don't change them.
YES!!!
I liked recitations as they were, so I have no complaints or suggestions for them. They were good for getting one-on-one advice and feedback.
I haven't been in other intro stat classes, so I guess I'm not sure, but I liked the recitations! The one-on-one recitations towards the end where we worked on final projects were really helpful in particular.
yes
I would keep them, and not change much about them.
I think recitations are good, but a bit redundant when the course became taught in sections. It's possible that optional recitations may be more fruitful.
Yes, they work well.
Yes, keep it at 2 per section and then break it down to 1 halfway through.
Yes recitation was very necessary. However, I think they would be better used at the beginning of the semester to go over course material instead of getting started on final projects so early.
Recitations were so helpful. Only advice I have is to start individual sessions earlier. I found them so much more helpful than in the group setting.
Keep the recitations. It's nice that they are small so students get the help they need
Wyatt went out of his way to help us. I like the small groups.
These are helpful. They allow for more individualized support.
Yes, recitations are what made this class different than the other classes I took at Harvard. I would definitely keep them.
Yes! They're one of the most helpful parts of the course.
Yes!
Yes, recitations were amazing.
Recitations were the best part of the class in my opinion. Wouldn't change them at all.
Please keep them!

Comments
yeah they were fine. i think there should be more review of the concepts and material as opposed to just copying and pasting code from the textbook
Keep using them, they are the class's savior for exams, big concepts, text book clarifications, and lecture debriefs. Keep them exactly as they are, small and focused,
Yes. I liked the flexibility of these recitations and think they should be kept as is.
Recitations were very useful, although it may make sense to give a bit more time between them and due dates.
Yes, they were very helpful.
I think that one-on-one recitations should start earlier, as group recitations were not very useful for the week or two before one-on-ones started.
The individual recitations focused on the Final Project were very helpful troubleshooting sessions.
The group recitations weren't that helpful. I would recommend getting rid of them or making them more focused on solving problems like those in the problem set.

As you will recall, we share student comments on the first day of class. There will be students who are hesitant to take this course because of Preceptor's personal politics, at least as reported in The Crimson. What advice do you have for such students?

Comments
While I understand the concerns, it would be a shame to miss this class and all it has to offer over them (we had the option not to see the Preceptor at all after the news broke, and if that carries over you'll learn just as much in a better environment).
I believe, as long as the class is concerned, Perceptor's political view is separatable from the positive attributes of the course. If we could choose not to engage with discussions of a purely political nature, taking this class should be fine.
Avoid this class, unless it is taught by another instructor. I say this not only because of David Kane's personal politics (which he brings into the classroom), but also because he's just an ineffective instructor. Search David Kane on Twitter and you'll see graduate students from +20 years ago who report poor experiences in his graduate classes at Harvard.
Please make the best choice for you – not just listening to what your friends tell you. Investigate for yourself and make a judgement whether or not it is appropriate to take this class given Kane's politics. Choose to be an independent thinker, not a follower!
Lol just don't interact with Kane. The TFs and CAs are more than qualified. You should take the class if you are interested in data science. You really do learn it. Just don't interact with Kane.
I am deeply upset by Preceptor's personal politics, but do believe the current course structure (with TF-led lectures) allows you to limit all contact with Preceptor (apart from the Slack) should you want to. Don't miss out on a potentially great class for this reason only.
I personally am not comfortable with taking a course taught by preceptor Kane, so I didn't. I felt more comfortable with my TF. If that option exists go with it. Otherwise, his contract is up for renegotiation at the end of the Spring 2021 semester. Wait and take Gov50 next fall, assuming he is not re hired.
I'm not sure what the case will be this semester, but at least last semester, we had very little personal interaction with Kane and it was really all TF's. None of Kane's politics affected my direct experience with the course materials or coursework in any way that I could tell. I likewise do not agree with his politics and hope that the University will reconsider hiring him in the future, but I can affirm that as an instructor he was very dedicated and respectful in the few interactions I did have with him.
Data analysis is a useful skill, and this course is one of the best ways to learn it. If you're worried about taking this course because you may feel personally uncomfortable: everyone has different experiences, but at least for me, Kane's politics didn't directly manifest in the course in any way, and the teaching staff worked very hard to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment. If you're worried about taking this course because you believe it will send a message to the university that students condone Kane's blogs: I personally do not think taking a course necessarily means you condone the instructor's political views, and I think it is possible to want to take one of the few courses that allows non STEM majors a window into data analysis while believing that the university ought to reconsider who is teaching that course.
Hopefully they'll have the same option where you can take the class with someone like Tyler. I would feel uncomfortable taking this class with Kane.
If David Kane is still the professor, I would recommend that you don't take the class. To clarify, David Kane's 'personal politics' are literally white supremacy. His 'personal politics' made this class incredibly uncomfortable and unsafe for many students. The only reason I remained in this class was that I knew that I would have limited contact with him; seeing his messages in the Slack or through emails genuinely made me cringe every time. If this class is taught by a different professor, though, I highly recommend it! It's a great way to learn a ton of new and interesting skills about data science and R!
Preceptor's personal politics did not effect his teaching at all I felt. He simply taught the mechanics of coding and even discusses

Comments
<p>being fair, just, and cautious with interpretations. Though he may not have done that himself, he did not once discuss his beliefs in class that I heard of and did not treat students different based on race or sex from what I have heard and experienced.</p>
<p>Seriously, don't believe everything cherrypicked by the Crimson and other students. I believe many of his alleged former statements were taken grossly out of context to fit a convenient narrative. The backlash in the semester was, in my opinion, overblown, misguided, reactionary, and frankly dangerous. It felt like Robespierre had returned to remove the heads of any who dare think differently. Group-thinking students and staff alike attempted to allow no room for critical analysis or honest dialogue. Instead, this was one instance where the course and teaching staff behaved horribly irresponsibly, essentially staging a knee-jerk coup based on limited information, intellectual conformity, silencing dissent, and cancel culture. My advice? Don't run away from or silence ideas that may initially scare you — debate them openly, engage with logic, and have a civil conversation. Preceptor was readily available to discuss any thing at any time and transparently clarify his positions that might concern students — take him up on this instead of taking the Crimson and rumors as gospel.</p>
<p>Don't let one person's political views dissuade you from taking a very enjoyable and useful course. I promise you that no one's political views will be imposed upon you.</p>
<p>If Preceptor is still with the class, I'd say that it may be better to avoid taking it. Despite being in a different section, I still felt very uncomfortable as a Black woman knowing that he was on the Slack, could see our grades, and so on. It made me a lot more anxious in an anxiety-filled online semester, and honestly, it was super detrimental to my mental health knowing that someone who is supposed to be my educator harbors these feelings about people like me.</p>
<p>Please get to know the TFs and feel comfortable with the other students in this class—there are a lot of resources apart from the preceptor that you can still use and benefit from, if interacting with him is one of your qualms about taking Gov 50! You will definitely learn a lot about data visualization in a very short period of time, so come prepared to do some time intensive study and work for this class.</p>
<p>If you have the option to take this course and then attend lecture with someone besides Preceptor, TAKE THIS CLASS. You are going to learn a ton about coding and pick up some really useful skills. If you have to listen to preceptor if you sign up for this course, I really think it's up to you. I honestly did not get any bad vibes from preceptor during lectures prior to the revelation of his personal politics/opinions, but afterwards there was definitely some discomfort/uncertainty about the course (especially since he claims to be teaching "ethical" data science). If you are a student like me (person of color with zero stats and coding background but a desire to learn some data science) I think you're in a really difficult spot. If you are young enough, I would probably say wait it out, don't take the course, and hope Preceptor gets replaced in the future.</p>
<p>As long as you can take this class without having to interact at all with the Preceptor, I would, because the content is valuable.</p>
<p>Read the blog posts The Crimson reported on and decide for yourself if you're comfortable with Kane as an instructor. He was open to talk about his personal politics with us outside of class, but it never manifested in class from what I could tell in the first few weeks. That said, even when his politics aren't discussed in the classroom, it sucks knowing he's written stuff that suggests you don't belong at Harvard.</p>
<p>If you're uncomfortable, as me and many others rightfully were, then don't bother with this class, unless TFs are still holding their own lectures, in which case you can avoid David Kane.</p>
<p>Truthfully, I think it's not an issue of "personal politics" so much as creating a hostile learning environment for students of color. I could care less who you vote for, but this is a different beast entirely. Hesitant students should not take this course if Preceptor is still teaching it. I would not have taken it if I'd had all the information at the start of the semester. If Preceptor were some kind of data genius who possessed knowledge that no one else could teach, it might be a different story—it might be worth it to learn from someone with questionable views—but the latter half of the course proved that the course staff is capable of handling lectures and assignments without him. I'm not really sure what kind of students will still be interested, nor which students will be interested but hesitant and seeking guidance on the first day of class, and I'm not sure what insight I can give at that point. If what you've heard about Preceptor skeeves you out but you think the class might still be worth it for the benefit you get, I'm here to tell you it isn't. There are alternatives that are just as good—there's not some magic Gov50 fairy dust, I promise. That said, if you choose to stay, you will learn something.</p>
<p>From my interactions with the Preceptor, and even before revelations about his political beliefs came to light, he makes no effort to push his his personal politics onto the student, and does not mention them at all. It does not get in the way of his teaching at all—take this class if you want to learn about R.</p>
<p>If the course returns to direct instruction after DK, don't take the course. It is not useful and will not be nearly as beneficial. He refuses to understand that it isn't a simple issue with politics—this is the livelihoods of his students that he negated and continues to diminish to this day. Without this awareness, especially to BIPOC students, PARTICULARLY to women in this community, I would not recommend this class.</p>
<p>Take Gov 51</p>
<p>The TFs and CAs are all extremely invested in this course. I learned a lot of useful material despite everything that happened this semester. If anything, take this class to learn the material</p>
<p>I unfortunately do not think there is another class like this in the department. If you are allowed to take lecture with the TFs again, I would highly, highly recommend taking this class.</p>

Comments
<p>I can't tell you how to feel about Preceptor's politics. Decide for yourself. I thought that the teaching staff, Tyler and Wyatt in my case, were better than the lectures taught by Preceptor at the beginning of the class. The lectures taught by Tyler felt less intimidating and more welcoming, and we learned just as much if not more. I think the strength of this course is the enormous and dedicated teaching staff and the overall approach to coding, not Preceptor or his teaching itself.</p>
<p>First of all, this question reads like Preceptor wrote it, and I would first suggest to him that he should not ask other people to exonerate him from highly insensitive and factually false comments about minorities. He made factually–incorrect and harmful comments and he needs to recognize that actions have consequences.</p>
<p>What I would tell students looking at the class – and I ask that if my testimony is cited, that it is cited in its entirety, not clipped or edited, but pasted in full:</p>
<p>Believe what the Crimson wrote about Preceptor, David Kane. He holds aberrant and abhorrent views that will likely offend you; he is not a revolutionary or accredited data science scholar (his few papers supporting his aberrant and abhorrent views have been debunked); but he has organized a solid class and you'll hopefully never have to engage with him directly if you don't want. So don't let his association with the class prevent you from taking it. If you want to learn data science or R, this is the best class to learn it in.</p>
<p>This course teaches you a lot of Rstudio and data visualization. use that experience to fuel an ethical and empathetic exploration of your data, and do your data analysis cleaning, thoroughly, and in an unbiased manner.</p>
<p>Preceptor does actually care about his students and will teach you well if you let him.</p>
<p>Don't take the class for David Kane. Take it because these skills will help you so much. Take it because the teaching staff is incredible. Don't let one racist person's opinions prevent you from taking the one class that will actually teach you useful skills in the real world. He shouldn't be able to have that power of you, and your career shouldn't suffer because of him.</p>
<p>Stay apprehensive, and stay knowledgeable. If the course is offered as it was this year with the option to be taught by the TFs, take it. If Kane is the preceptor, DONT. "Personal politics" refers to party alignment or policy preferences. Owning and posting on a website for racist bigots to fraternize is unacceptable. I would advise students to demand he is removed from the course before taking it.</p>
<p>This class is a data science class and if you are looking for academic growth and a strong data science background in a foundational class I think this definitely fits the bill. Obviously Kane's beliefs are dangerous, but in my semester, I have not felt impacted by them because of the incredible teaching staff which acts as a mediator in the situation. If all of the teaching staff were to leave, then I think that's grounds for taking the course; but, I really don't think Kane himself should be the reason you don't take the course.</p>
<p>I don't blame them for being hesitant and would advise them to not take the course if Kane is teaching it. His lack of acknowledgement regarding his actions was absolutely unacceptable, and it showed a lack of consideration for students who were hurt by the discovery of his actions.</p>
<p>In our semester, we got to pick whether we wanted to be taught by Preceptor or by the TF. I choose the TFs, and I think it was a good choice particularly because the sections were smaller.</p>
<p>That being said, I don't think preceptor's personal politics affected the course much. He is a respectable instructor, and does not share his personal opinions to the class. From my experience, his personal opinions have never made him biased in grading or in class.</p>
<p>To be honest, I think if you must take the class taught by Preceptor (and don't have the TF option), you should still take it. Of course, if the thought of his opinions makes you uncomfortable, than you shouldn't force yourself to take the class. However, I can honestly say that if you're afraid that he'd be biased in his grading or in class, you shouldn't be. He is a good instructor, and in my experience he has never brought his personal politics into class.</p>
<p>While I strongly disagree with Preceptor's politics, I honestly did not feel like they affected the class too much. Preceptor is effective and accessible as an instructor. The class itself is probably the best entry point to anything remotely quantitative/way to learn R for most humanities/social science majors.</p>
<p>If there is an option to take the course with the TFs and CAs running it with no contact with David Kane like there was this year, I would recommend it.</p>
<p>tl;dr I think the structure of his class and his support of students' careers is really valuable. As a Black student, I stayed in the course because I think that the things I learned from this course will help my career. His politics never influenced his teaching (as far as I could tell); they never even came up before a student raised concerns about the blog.</p>
<p>David Kane did a great job creating a structure that allows for students to learn by doing and to practice networking. That structure is so strong that the experience of learning R did not feel much different after Kane stopped being the main lecturer. I think we did lose out a bit on his pressure for us to make the most of our alumni network and use him to help us "achieve our dream career."</p>
<p>Remarkably, his teaching involved almost none of his politics. He was always really, truly eager to help students succeed in the</p>

Comments
class and beyond. I don't think students would lose out on much if Kane were replaced by someone equally enthusiastic about students' professional success. However, in my very limited time at Harvard (I'm a junior), I don't think I've seen or heard of any faculty who match that enthusiasm.
It was not a problem to stay in the course because I never had to interact with him after the whole fiasco happened. I think the course is awesome and work taking but I would have to consider long and hard if Preceptor was still teaching it.
This isn't a class on policy. It's a class on data. Preceptor may have some political views that I disagree with. Personality-wise, he's also weird AF. But there's no doubt he's a great teacher who has built one of the most important classes (GOV 50) at Harvard, and I strongly encourage any humanities or social science person to take this course.
This course is wonderful due to a dedicated cohort of TFs and CAs. It will make you work hard, but it will reward you with valuable skills. That being said, there are great alternatives to this course in the Gov department and beyond. If Preceptor Kane is still the course head and you disagree with his hurtful views, I would avoid this course in favor of another alternative. However, if he is removed from the course, I would recommend this course without reservation.
I don't blame you if you choose against taking it due to Preceptor's politics. I probably wouldn't have taken the course if I knew about some of those articles. If the TF led lectures remain, I would at least consider the course. The TFs are amazing.
If you want to learn about data and how to code but have no real experience with either of them, then this is a great class for you. It does deliver on its promises, workload wise and learning wise.
Sure! Hm, to be fair, strictly speaking about Preceptor's teaching style, I think Preceptor is a good teacher. The structure of the class is amazing. I personally learned a lot. Seems like Preceptor has a keen eye for talented and dedicated people too, because the whole course staff are incredible people. Study Halls are very unique and will give you support. Really, the only thing you need is diligence. If you have it, you will nail this course.
After the course staff made changes to the class, I had no contact with Preceptor at all, so take that as you will.
I think it's unfortunate that a well-structured and informative class that's pretty unique as far as I can tell was disrupted by the general reaction to the fact that the professor invited a controversial speaker to an optional speaker series connected with the class and wrote some posts on a personal blog. I don't necessarily agree with Charles Murray's views or with all of Preceptor's blog posts — I had never heard of Charles Murray before this semester, I've never read any of his books, and I didn't have time to read every single one of Preceptor's blog posts. I just wanted to take a class that looked interesting, not get caught up in a political firestorm, and I'm just a freshman so I'm still figuring out my own political views. But I don't think that the things Preceptor did or said warranted completely upending the class. I know that even just taking that sort of free speech stance isn't very popular, and to be honest I did consider switching out just to get away from the drama. I was worried that my staying would be interpreted as my agreeing with those things and I would be labeled as a racist. But in the end I did stay even though I was scared. I guess for you guys considering taking the class it's probably tougher because you can't have the excuse that you didn't know or that it would have been tough to switch so late. So in the end you'll have to make your own choice, but if you do choose to take the class, major respect to you for being brave. And it is a good class, so there's that.
Wow this is quite the question
As mentioned in the section above, I believe Preceptor is a passionate and caring educator. His personal beliefs did not much affect my learning in this course, nor did they ever come up in class. I would advise students not to view Preceptor as a villain, nor to have their opinion tainted by his coverage in the Crimson; he is not a bad person, in my experience.
Honestly, this is a really tough one. There is value in what you learn in this course. But if I were a prospective student, I would skip Gov 50 until someone new is brought in to teach it.
I urge Harvard to find another Professor for this class. David Kane was a good teacher, but this is an exceptional course that I think everyone should take. I don't think it's fair for Harvard to force students to be taught by DK if they want to take GOV50.
Best advice I have for students is to approach this class as a data science class, not a government class. We rarely, if ever, discussed politics and certainly never anyone's individual politics. There is also so much help available that if you wanted to, you could only personally interact with your TFs and CAs if you chose to and still have a good experience. This class was super interesting and really taught me data science as a complete beginner. I really loved learning the new subject and found this class rewarding so I hope the political aspect isn't a deterrent for anyone who wants to dip their toes into a really cool subject.
Preceptor is actually very respectful and professional in class. He does not involve or impose his political beliefs to his students. It would be nice however if preceptor can also be professional outside and understand that there are hurting people. Maybe keep your political beliefs to yourself and learn say sorry. Your students will understand and will love you do that..
That is a personal choice for these students. I wouldn't take it if David Kane is teaching it personally, but the gov department doesnt really have any other alternatives that give the same stat basis.
Preceptor Kane is a good man who just happens to have different political views than the majority of the students that took this class this semester. I think taking one of his classes would be a unique experience for any Harvard student who would be willing to talk to him or engage in discussions with him regarding his political ideology. Reflecting on everything that happened with this course this semester, I feel like we should all take a moment to realize that not everyone we will interact with in the future will share our political views. Preceptor Kane teaches well and teaches skills that would be immensely beneficial for every Harvard student, and that's what matters when it comes to the decision of taking his class or not.

Comments
If David Kane is the main lecturer, I would not take the course. His private politics aside, he also makes these weird and not-subtle jabs in the Slack about his opinions on things. I don't know why and I haven't had this issue in any other course, ever. I would encourage anyone to trust their gut about enrolling.
Such politics are not just "personal"; they have affected all members of this class community, and are unacceptable.
If you do not feel comfortable with the preceptor's checkered history, do not take the course. I would have dropped it if we weren't halfway into the semester when we found out.
I have really mixed feelings about this semester. This class taught me a lot, but if you won't feel comfortable being in this class, simply don't put yourself through that stress. There are other ways to learn data science.
You have every right to hesitate, and your decision is valid regardless of which way it swings. But if you do take this course, just remember that the course material is useful and engaging, and more importantly — you are taking this course for yourself.
don't take this class of Preceptor is still involved. not worth it, take gov 51 or stat 104 instead. waste of time and energy.
If section leaders can still do lecture, take it. It is so easy to have about 0 interaction with preceptor, and most students had that experience for the majority of the course, no issues at all. As a black and latina woman, although I needed this class for my concentration and couldn't drop, it felt really good to succeed in the course and disprove all of his perceptions about students of color in his own course. How ya like them apples
Don't take this course. Or, if possible, avoid the instructor in question by opting for lectures with a different teacher. You should never feel uncomfortable with an instructor as that sacrifices the amount you can learn and the amount you can experiment and grow with your classes.
David Kane is expected to teach this class again? I thought he had antagonized the Gov Department too much for them to renew his contract again in the future. Even if he does, the class is so TF and CA heavy that it is unlikely to matter, especially since TF led lectures are pedagogically far superior to and much more efficient than anything Kane ran.
There are some things in life sometimes we just need to be smart about. There is literally no other person who can teach data science (at least an introductory level) like him in Harvard. I would recommend you to, just like I did, suck it up and take this class. Well hopefully, you don't even have to meet him ever throughout the course depending on the course structure next semester.
In spite of the controversy related to Preceptor Kane and the resulting disruption to the course this semester, I still came away from the course feeling that I learned a lot. Overall, and this largely due to the work of the supporting teaching staff (the TFs and CAs), I had a very positive experience in GOV 50. After taking this course, I feel prepared to tackle data analysis projects in R, so I would encourage students to take the course if they are a) looking to learn similar skills, b) comfortable with the teaching staff and b) prepared to dedicate the (substantial) time required to learn/practice everything and do well in the course.
Kane holds unappealing political views – and frankly, he's not even a great teacher. Because his presence already added little to the class (lecture is mostly coding in breakout rooms), transitioning to TF-led instruction was seamless. You deserve better than to learn from Kane. Hopefully he's been replaced, but if not, you'll have to weigh that decision.
However, if you want to become fluent in R, learn how to clean/wrangle/visualize data, and make a cool final project, those are all still valid reasons to take the course. You just have to make the personal decision that you are comfortable learning from Kane in case TF-led instruction is no longer an option in your year.