

University of Michigan

Winter 2025 Instructor Report

MATH 454-001: BV Prob-Pde

James Wheeler

18 out of 23 students responded to this evaluation.

Responses to University-wide questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	School/College Median	Univ-Wide Median
This course advanced my understanding of the subject matter. (Q1631)	15	2	1	0	0	0	4.9	4.5	4.5
My interest in the subject has increased because of this course. (Q1632)	12	2	2	1	1	0	4.8	4.2	4.3
I knew what was expected of me in this course.(Q1633)	13	4	0	1	0	0	4.8	4.6	4.6
I had a strong desire to take this course.(Q4)	9	5	2	1	1	0	4.5	4.0	4.1
As compared with other courses of equal credit, the workload for this course was (SA=Much Lighter, A=Lighter, N=Typical, D=Heavier, SD=Much Heavier). (Q891)	0	0	2	10	6	0	1.8	3.1	3.0

Responses to University-wide questions about the instructor:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median	School/College Median	Univ-Wide Median
James Wheeler seemed well prepared for class meetings.(Q230)	16	1	1	0	0	0	4.9	4.8	4.8
James Wheeler explained material clearly.(Q199)	12	4	1	1	0	0	4.8	4.7	4.7
James Wheeler treated students with respect.(Q217)	16	0	1	0	0	0	5.0	4.8	4.8

Responses to questions about the course:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median
Overall, this was an excellent course. (Q1)	12	4	1	0	0	0	4.8
The textbook made a valuable contribution to the course. (Q64)	3	7	5	3	0	0	3.6
The amount of material covered in the course was reasonable. (Q240)	5	9	2	1	0	0	4.1
Working with other students helped me learn more effectively. (Q256)	4	6	5	1	0	2	3.8
The grades in this course were fairly determined. (Q894)	8	9	1	0	0	0	4.4
My expected grade in this course is (SA=A, A=B, N=C, D=D, SD=E). (Q896)	11	6	0	0	0	1	4.7

Responses to questions about the instructor:

	SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median
Overall, James Wheeler was an excellent teacher. (Q2)	15	2	1	0	0	0	4.9
James Wheeler handled questions well. (Q200)	17	0	0	1	0	0	5.0
James Wheeler was willing to meet and help students outside class. (Q219)	15	1	2	0	0	0	4.9
James Wheeler used class time well. (Q229)	14	3	1	0	0	0	4.9
James Wheeler was concerned that we learn. (Q509)	15	2	1	0	0	0	4.9

The course lecture notes contributed positively to my learning.

(custom question added by the instructor)

SA	A	N	D	SD	N/A	Your Median
13	4	0	1	0	0	4.8

The medians are calculated from Winter 2025 data. University-wide medians are based on all UM classes in which an item was used. The school/college medians in this report are based on classes that are upper division with enrollment of 16 to 74 in Division of Natural Sciences in the College of LS&A.

Written Comments

Comment on the quality of instruction in this course. (Q900)

Comments
The instruction of this course was very good overall. If I were to have one complaint about the course, it would be the structure of the tests. I understand why the tests are made to cover every major topic in the course, but I feel like making them so long ends up making the tests more about how fast you can work than understanding of the content. Still, this is a minor complaint and the course instruction was very good overall.
Professor Wheeler was clearly very passionate about teaching this course, and I really appreciated how helpful he was outside of class. I think that the lectures were a bit heavy, where material was introduced very quickly and then we would move on. Especially the higher dimension wave content, I feel there is a lot of nuance and special practices with solving these equations, and I wish more time could have been spent there.
The material given in this course is sparse, and the assignments are not process-specific.
This course was very well taught, and I really did enjoy it. The instruction helped me learn the material but also understand its significance and relate it to a lot of other things I'm studying. The instructor himself was very skilled at delivering this complicated material in a way I don't think most people would be able to do. I must commend him for taking on this daunting task to cover so much material in a 3 credit course, let alone making sure we all understand it well!
Professor Wheeler is one of the best professors I've had during college. He is very good at explaining difficult concepts and really cares about our success as students. In terms of improvements of the course, I only have two comments. 1) I wish we had in-class review time before an exam rather than the next unit's content (he offers another session outside of class time, but most professors I've had do both). I understand there's a lot of content to get through, but I think it would be okay to remove 3 lectures for the sake of review. 2) The exams are super long in not enough time! From the averages (~55%) I estimate that only 25% of the class (probably less) can finish them on time. He curves VERY generously to compensate for this, which I do appreciate a lot, but it is still so demoralizing to study for over 15 hours, do very well on the homework, and still get below a 60 because I simply can't think that fast. The content covered is super fair (usually analogous to our homework) but it's just the timing that is bad. If possible, giving the same length of exam but booking a separate 2-hour evening exam time for midterms outside of class time (which is 80 minutes) could definitely fix this! (And this would also allow for in-class review time without cutting any lectures) I really loved this course, and I only give these criticisms because I know this is his first time teaching this course specifically (which he did super well!) and I think it can be even BETTER in the future. Outside of these minor things, this course was super well-organized and I learned so much!
good
Professor Wheeler is incredibly knowledgeable and personable. He explains material clearly and does not shy away from showing how formulas and properties are derived, which greatly helps my understanding. I also really appreciated the Desmos and Matlab demos. The PDEs we solve do model physical phenomena, after all, so it is nice to see that the mathematical solution jives with my expectation. The exams and homeworks were well written and fair.
Wheeler made a difficult course much more manageable with his positive attitude and true care for his students. He makes an effort to get to know his students and make sure all of their questions get answered during class and office hours.
Prof. Wheeler was always well prepared, diligent, and organized throughout the entirety of this semester. He is competent in explaining abstract concepts, and his patience for helping others gain understanding is extremely valuable. I am a first year Master's student at U of M, and, after my first year in the graduate program, Prof. Wheeler is one of the best instructors I have had. Both in and out of class, he answers questions thoroughly, and explains in a way to productively develop useful understanding. He does not give away answers, but is almost always able to point me in the right direction when I'm stuck. Prof. Wheeler's patience and willingness to help students is far better than very senior tenured professors I have had in other graduate engineering courses.
James Wheeler was absolutely amazing. Very personable professor, his physics background provided a lot of quality connections to the coursework, definitely would recommend anyone to take this class with him.
Insanely smart and office hours are very helpful as he breaks questions down. Very nice and thoughtful. Also, very patient with students learning the topics and questions or getting stuck on certain parts.
I think the HW was really well-designed! There was a balance between guided instructions and things we had to figure out ourselves. However, I could have used more practice with straightforward exam-type problems (for example, solve this 1D heat problem with simple ICs). The homework did a good job of helping me understand concepts, but more practice going through the procedure of solving simple problems would have been nice.
Dr. Wheeler is really a good instructor, always help us for homework and class contents, giving us extended time of office hours. I really appreciate his teaching this semester!