

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

of

Indira R. Guzman

**SCHOOL OF INFORMATION STUDIES
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY**

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1. Teaching Responsibilities

During my professional experience, I had several teaching responsibilities before and after I started the doctoral program in the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University.

My first formal teaching experience was teaching Russian to international students as part of the Russian teaching certification program during my first graduate studies at the Polytechnic Institute of Donetsk, Ukraine in 1991.

Later, while I was working in the information technology field in my country Bolivia, I taught as a part time instructor in undergraduate programs at three different academic institutions for more than eight years. In those teaching jobs I was in charge of preparing the material following the program of the academic department and I had between 25 and 50 students. Table 1 has a summary of the classes I taught and the academic institutions where I worked.

Table 1: Prior Teaching Experience

Years	Course	Department	Academic Institution
1992	Data Structures II	Computer Science	National Center of Studies in Informatics
1992	Introduction to Informatics	Computer Science	National Center of Studies in Informatics
1994-1998	Computer Fundamentals	Computer Science	Bolivian Technological University
1996	MS Access	Education	Bolivian Catholic University
1996	Operating Systems II	Education	Bolivian Catholic University
1994-1998	Introduction to Informatics	Computer Science	Bolivian Catholic University
1997-1998	Object Oriented Analysis and Design	Computer Science	Bolivian Catholic University
1998-2000	Improvement of Processes and Reengineering	Business Administration	Bolivian Catholic University
1998-2000	Decision Support Systems	Business Administration	Bolivian Catholic University

In year 2000, I received the fellowship from the Fulbright Faculty Development Program to study in the United States sponsored by the Bolivian Catholic University

(BCU). This is a competitive fellowship awarded to qualified faculty in universities of Latin America.

Teaching Experience at Syracuse University

Following the requirements of the doctoral program in the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University I completed four teaching practica which consisted in working in teaching activities under the supervision of a faculty member. In Fall 2002, I completed my first teaching practicum assisting Dr. Jeffrey Stanton with the class IST335 – Introduction to Information Based Organizations at the undergraduate level. My activities included developing of assignments, small group discussions, grading, evaluating and providing feedback to students.

In Spring 2003, I completed my second teaching practicum with Dr. Diana Gant in the graduate class IST642 – Electronic Commerce. In this teaching practicum, the focus was on course management, including course content, updating the course Website, managing student assignments, and preparing a case study and its discussion materials.

In summer 2003, I assumed responsibility for teaching a section of IST195 - Information Technologies, at the undergraduate level. Dr. Susan Bonzi supervised my teaching and oriented me with the content development. She also provided me with important guidelines for improving my teaching skills.

Finally, I taught as an adjunct faculty for three terms until summer 2004. My teaching activities at S.U. have included responsibility for the development of course content and assignments, and all duties associated with course administration.

The table below summarizes my teaching activities at Syracuse University and the evaluation of the faculty who supervised my work.

Table 2: Teaching Responsibilities at Syracuse University

Term	Course	My Role	Faculty supervisor	Grade / Evaluation	Activities Performed - # of students
Fall 2002	IST335 Intr.to Inform. based Organizations	Teaching Assistant	Jeff Stanton	A Exceptional	Group discussions, tutoring, grading, evaluation
Spr 2003	IST642 E-commerce	Teaching Assistant	Diana Gant	A Exceptional	Case development of E-Commerce
Sum 2003	IST195 Information Technologies	Instructor	Susan Bonzi	A Good	Class teaching – 10 students
Fall 2003	IST195 Information Technologies	Adjunct Faculty	N/A	N/A	Class teaching – 25 students
Spr 2004	IST195 Information Technologies	Adjunct Faculty	N/A	N/A	Class teaching – 28 students
Sum 2004	IST335 Intr.to Inform. based Organizations	Adjunct Faculty	N/A	N/A	Class teaching – 7 students

2. Teaching Philosophy

I believe that my primary responsibility as an instructor is to guide students so they can acquire skills, knowledge and experience necessary to achieve their professional goals. During my classes I encourage students to discuss not only class objectives but also their own academic objectives so we all recognize the importance of taking the class seriously and keep us all motivated. In addition, I use current real world examples for my teaching that would also emphasize the importance and validity of the class topics.

I also believe it is important to use Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) as efficient and effective as possible. Having been in the information field for more than fifteen years I have witnessed the development of ICT and its great impact on the society. Accordingly, my teaching activities bring together issues about ICT not only as a topic of study in classes but also as a tool for effective teaching. During my classes I use technology such as WebCT, a course management system accessed over the Internet, for the following: a) to obtain updated information and keep up with current events; b) to distribute information to others as we may publish web pages, or participate in group discussions on the web; and c) as a way of communicating with each other

(instructor and students) actively. I use WebCT to give students prompt feedback, post teaching material and assignments, and keep track of all the information exchanged.

I believe that teaching is a privilege of communicating with people who have interest in learning, show them the skills and finally witness their scholarship. I genuinely respect their eagerness to learn. The most gratifying experience for me is when students can apply their new skills, feel confident on doing it, and finally, when they are willing to learn more.

As a teaching philosophy I think it is important to incorporate practical examples, motivate students with grades and personal feedback and make the class fun. Although I consider that classes should be demanding and include the completion of several assignments for practice, they should be completed with enjoyment. To accomplish that, I use examples related to current topics in the society that would be interesting and encourage everyone's participation. I pay closely attention to the number of participations of each student in order to promote equal participation from all of the students.

Finally, I believe in the value of students working in small groups or teams in order to collaborate with each other and simulate situations of the real work environment and brainstorm together. Therefore, some of the assignments in my classes include group projects. Again, the use of technology is encouraged to facilitate group interaction.

3. Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness and Development

While I was teaching at the BCU in Bolivia the student association kept track of the student votes for best faculty. In 1999 I was awarded with the best Teacher Award in Decision Support Systems Class for 1998 and 1999.

Based on student evaluations at Syracuse University, I was fairly effective teaching. The results of the anonymous evaluations from students are presented in table 3, with the item scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. The last column has the mean of each item. The highest mean so far in my teaching is 4.63 (out of 5) for the item “Instructor showed willingness to hear ideas from students” which describes the high interaction with students and my interest on their opinions and their learning process. The lowest mean is 3.70 for the item “I felt that this course provided an intellectual challenge for me”. While this indicator calls for evaluation and revision for improvement, I think this is related to the emphasis on practical components of technology-oriented classes. However, as I said before I pay close attention to students’ feedback and look for improvement strategies. Taking the totals by groups, the highest means are for ‘Instructional Interactivity’ (4.35) and next ‘Evaluation and Progress’ (4.26) which again illustrate the great interaction that I promote in my classes.

Table 3. Instructional Evaluation of Courses Taught

	IST195 Sum03 N=10	IST195 Fall03 N=23	IST195 Spr04 N=16	IST335 Sum04 N=7	Mean
Part 1: Overall Effectiveness					
1 Overall effectiveness of instructor teaching this course	4.20	4.35	3.50	4.50	4.14
Part 2: Course Characteristics					
2 Course had clear objectives and requirements	4.40	4.65	3.63	4.00	4.17
3 Given objectives, course had high quality, relevant assignments	4.20	4.41	3.56	4.00	4.04
4 The instructional materials were appropriate for this class	4.30	4.41	3.19	4.43	4.08
5 In readings, etc., course included relevant professional issues	4.20	3.81	3.25	4.43	3.92
6 Throughout course, instructor's expertise matched topics we covered	4.40	4.55	3.44	4.29	4.17
7 Looking back at whole semester, course was well organized & managed	4.30	4.52	3.63	4.29	4.19
Mean of responses: Course Characteristics	4.30	4.43	3.45	4.24	4.11
Part 3: Instructional Interactivity					
8 Instructor communicated effectively with students	4.00	4.36	3.50	4.86	4.18
9 Instructor demonstrated ability to involve students in course material	4.30	4.27	3.69	4.71	4.24
10 Instructor encouraged student discussion and questioning in class	4.50	4.33	3.75	5.00	4.40
11 Instructor showed willingness to hear ideas from students	4.60	4.64	4.27	5.00	4.63
Mean of responses: Instructional Interactivity	4.35	4.40	3.75	4.89	4.35
Part 4: Evaluation and Progress					
12 Instructor demonstrated concern for my progress in the course	4.10	4.57	3.88	4.43	4.25
13 Over the course of the semester, I frequently received useful feedback	4.40	4.43	3.56	4.43	4.21
14 My grades in this course accurately reflect the amount of work I did & my abilities in this area	4.30	4.41	3.88	4.71	4.33
Mean of responses: Evaluation and Progress	4.27	4.48	3.77	4.52	4.26
Part 5: Intellectual Component					
15 For me, this course stimulated critical thinking	4.00	3.74	2.69	4.43	3.72
16 For me, this course provided new viewpoints	4.50	3.83	3.06	4.29	3.92
17 I felt that this course provided an intellectual challenge for me	3.90	3.86	3.31	3.71	3.70
Mean of responses: Intellectual Component	4.13	3.80	3.02	4.14	3.77

Research indicates that the students who are very satisfied or very dissatisfied generally provide written comments¹. Students have written large numbers of positive comments about my teaching. In the student evaluations, students indicated that I was “patient, organized and helpful”, “enthusiastic about helping students to understand the

¹ <http://cstl.syr.edu/cstl/T-I/int-stdrate.htm>

course material”, and “*very approachable*”. Appendix A has a detailed list of comments written in the student’s evaluations from students who took my classes.

I have received also unsolicited comments from students. The following is an example of a statement from a student who took one of my IST195 class indicating his satisfaction for learning the use of technology and his confidence after taking my class:

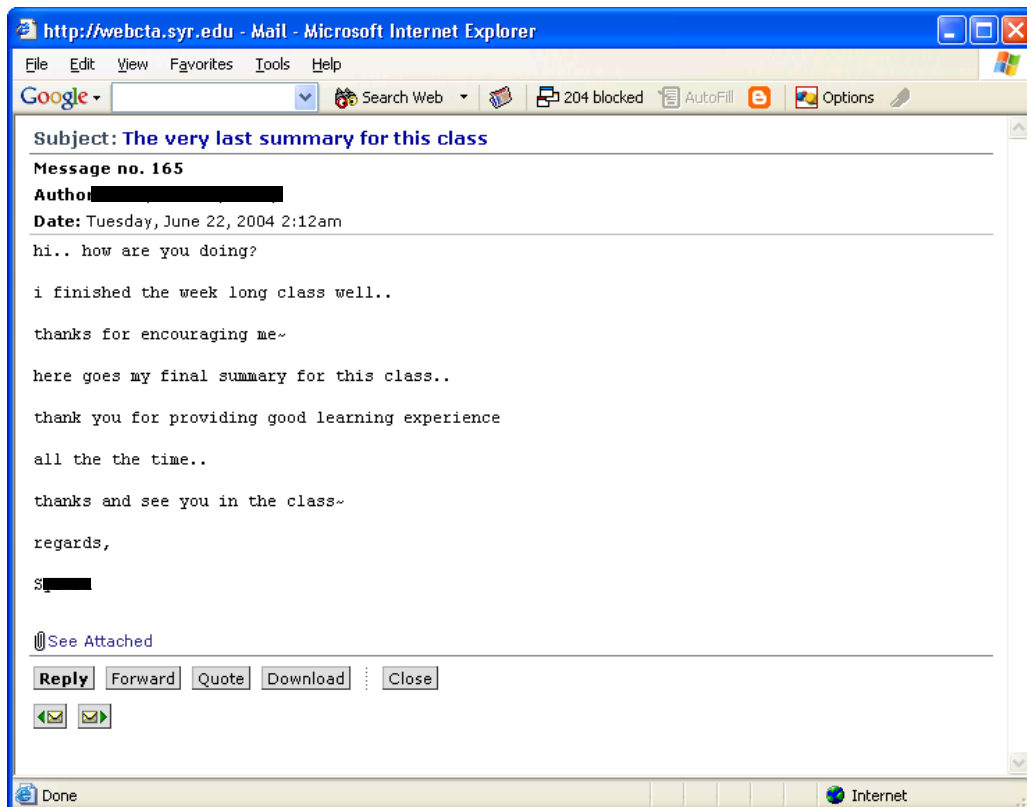
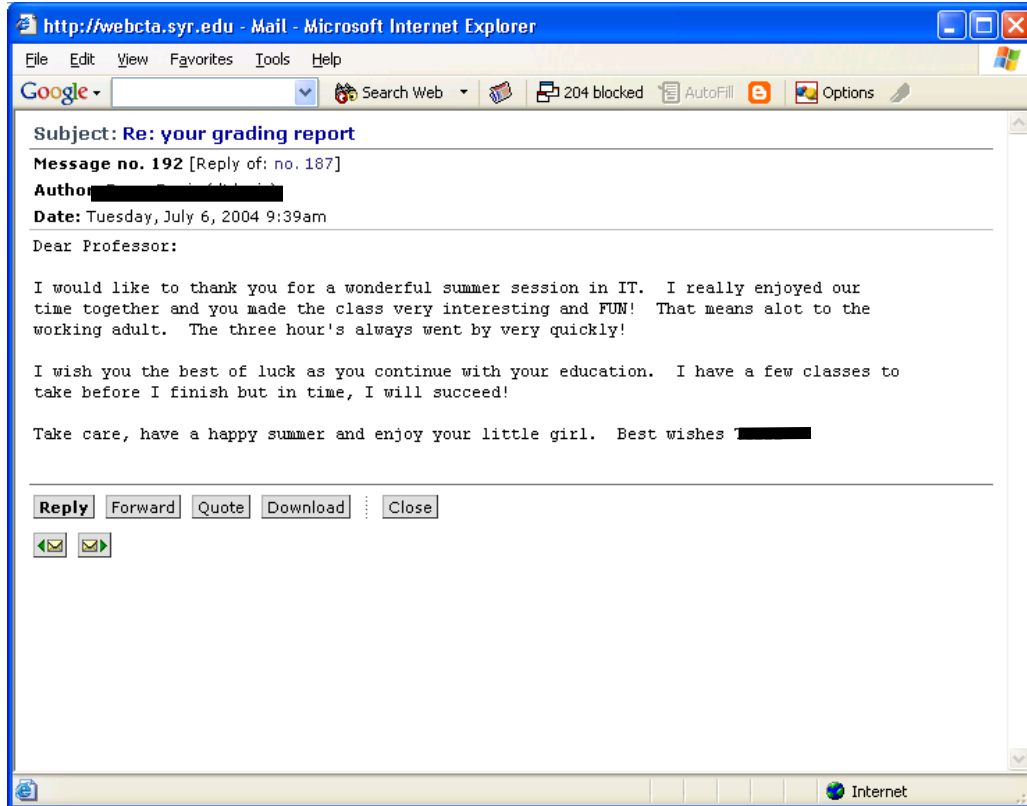
Hi Professor,

I just wanted to write to you and say how much I enjoyed the class. I was never very computer savvy and now I feel I know more than the average person about all facets of what can be done with computers. In the beginning of the semester you told us we should have expectations of what we wanted to learn and whether or not we achieved them. I certainly got everything I wanted from this class (I particularly like the FTP and learning how to make a web page the most along with the basic programming). I also wanted to thank you for having patience and always willing to help the class out. Thanks for everything and good luck in the future.

Sincerely,
RR

Figure 1 below shows other unsolicited feedback from two adult students who took my class IST335: Introduction to Information Based Organizations during Summer 2004. These comments emphasize my efforts of making the class fun and interesting and my concern about students’ learning process.

Figure 1: Unsolicited feedback from students



Participation in teaching and learning activities

My first formal teaching training started with my participation on the Teaching Certification Program of Russian as a second language back in 1990 during my graduate studies at the Polytechnic Institute of Donetsk, Ukraine. As part of the Russian teaching certification, I took pedagogy courses and I had initial practice in teaching as a final requirement of the program. As an instructor of IST195 in IST, I participated in several meetings with other instructors who had previously taught the course in order to set up consistent content and expectations of the class.

In addition, I have been actively participating in the activities of the Future Professoriate Project² at Syracuse University. I have been attending the professional development workshops and seminars sponsored by both the Graduate School and the School of Information Studies since I started the doctoral program in order to improve my teaching skills and obtain the Certificate in University Teaching. Some of the workshops that I recently attended included topics about the effective use of power point presentations in class, connecting with campus lectures, plagiarism issues, and online teaching:

Other important teaching training experiences I had are the following:

- Access to Higher Education and People with Disabilities: An International Dialogue. SUNY-Buffalo, USA. July and August, 2000
- Teaching Against Racism: Pedagogy, Curriculum, & Campus Climate. Syracuse, NY, USA. One day conference - November 2002

² <http://gradschpdprograms.syr.edu/programs/fpp.php>

- The Minnowbrook Conference - Future Professoriate Project/Preparing Future Faculty: “Representatives from the various partner institutions join Syracuse University faculty and graduate students at the retreat to discuss existing collaborative efforts, debate the current issues of higher education, learn about new pedagogical and technological advances in teaching and learning and envision possible future activities for the programs.”³ Four days in May 2004.
- Doctoral Student Consortium, Decision Science Institute (DSI) Annual Meeting, in Boston, MA, November 2004

4. Course and Curriculum Development

Appendix B has the syllabi of the two classes I taught at Syracuse University. In addition, the two screen shots below show the number of messages received and sent with a class of 28 students. There are 91 messages in the ‘Bulletin Board’ that include the assignments posted for the whole class. The ‘Private Mail’ folder includes the messages sent and received individually. Having a total of 1115 messages talks once more about the great interaction and communication with students that I promote and practice in my classes.

³ http://gradschpdprograms.syr.edu/programs/fpp_minnowbrook.php

Figure 2: Bulletin Board of IST195, Spring 2004

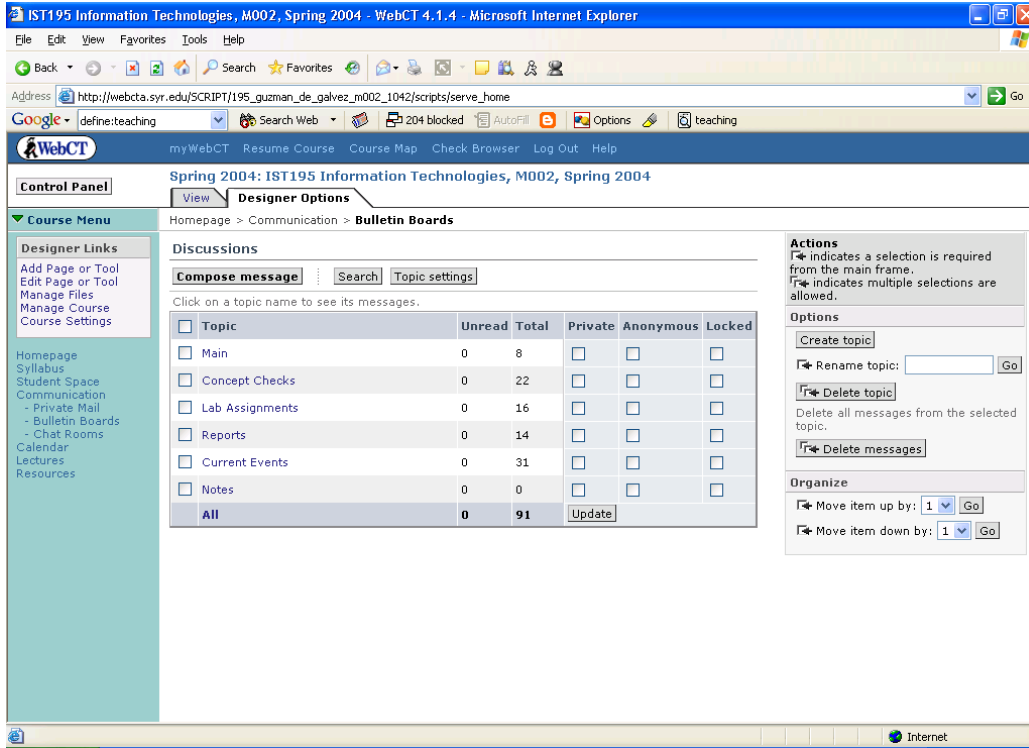
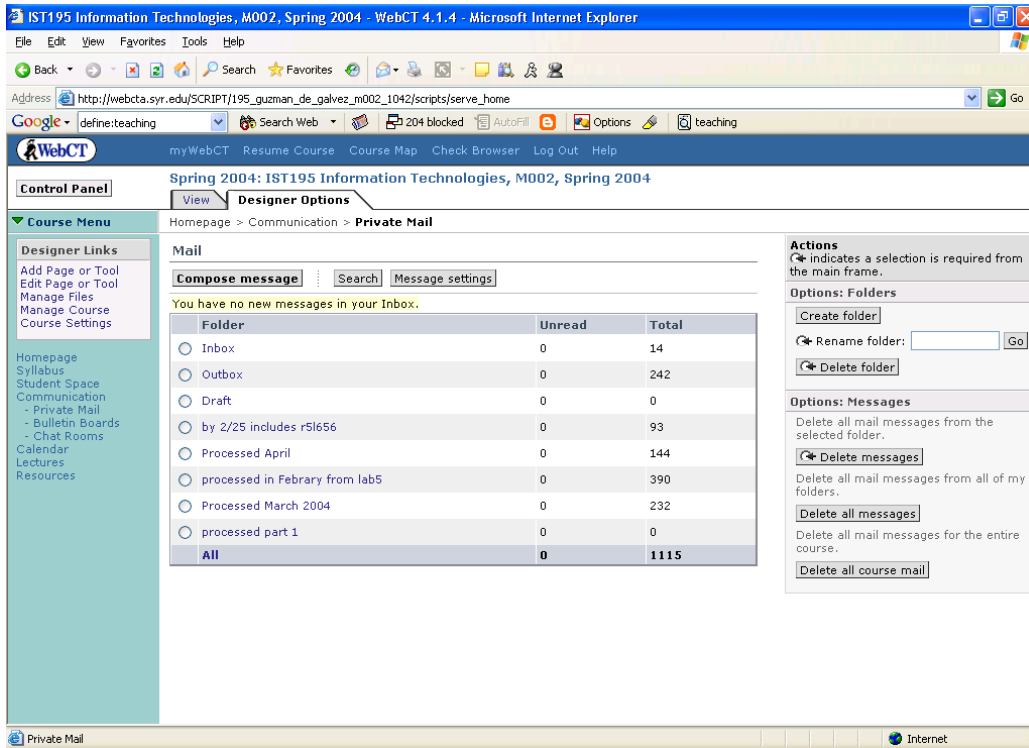


Figure 3: Private Mail of IST195, Spring 2004



Appendix A: Comments from student evaluations

In what ways could this course be improved regardless of who teaches it?	What qualities or characteristics helped to make this instructor and course effective?	In what ways could this instructor improve how he or she teaches this course?
<p>Summer 2003 They need tutors to help people who are computer illiterate because I struggled More current event issues Nothing it's fine I think if it wasn't based so much on the power point notes it would be better Do web pages later in course The time of the course was very inconvenient</p> <p>Fall 2003 More labs, fewer recitation Make it necessary to come to class Less labs During labs the instructor should walk it through on the overhead and then have the students do it themselves. Doing it overhead will save time answering questions No concept checks and reports Less critical thinking and more hands on work More time to do assignments and not just doing them None, fine the way it is Indira is very good To not be specific to IST majors This is the 2nd time taking IST195. I learned so much more this time than from XXX</p> <p>Spring 2004 A little more feedback on work we do. More detailed explanations about assignments Labs that would be more useful The course could be improved by posting all the assignments at the beginning of the semester The course is fine the way it is</p> <p>Summer 2004 More specific instructions Do more realistic business plan</p>	<p>Summer 2003 She knew her material, but unfortunately I was not available all the time Fun topic Very patient Just the idea of learning new things in the way I can communicate with others Organized The instructor was patient and very helpful Knowledge of IT</p> <p>Fall 2003 Very personable, intellectually stimulating Labs – hands on Willingness to help Instructor was nice, good She is very enthusiastic about helping students to understand the course material She knew the material and used many examples She was awesome, very considerable and always helped students She was very nice and concerned with my ability to do well WebCT, Labs Indira was very communicable about assignments and WebCT was very easy & dependable for the coursework The teacher was extremely nice and knows how to work with students well Indira was very approachable and so nice with everything. She is very understanding She is kind + willing to listen + help when having problems. Very reasonable on assignments + grading</p> <p>Spring 2004 Friendliness, concern, energy I learned more about computers The labs helped in understanding the material The slides, concept checks, labs</p> <p>Summer 2004 Great communication and interaction with students Teacher was very open and accepted all students She was very enthusiastic about teaching. Exercises helped a lot to learn</p>	<p>Summer 2003 Less work Use other sources than slides Less assignments and more time devoted to the others Possibly entertain the students more Keep us in one room Speak a bit clearly</p> <p>Fall 2003 n/a [Empty] Make more relevant to IST not everyday computer use [Empty] [Empty] She could show more & talk more about current things in technology No concept checks No changes No way Excellent [Empty] Go into more detail [Empty] More discussion of lab assignments [Empty]</p> <p>Spring 2004 More detailed explanations in Labs Change requirements for labs [Empty] She did a fine job. Do the same thing</p> <p>Summer 2004 [Empty] Great Job [Empty]</p>

Appendix B: Class Syllabi

[Link to the Syllabus of class IST195 \[pdf file\]](#)

[Link to the Syllabus of class IST335 \[pdf file\]](#)