

Purdue University, Department of Computer Science  
CS 352, Fall 2000  
Compilers: Principles and Practice  
Course and Instructor Evaluation

Jens Palsberg

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The course webpage:

<http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/palsberg/cs352/F00/index.html>.

The 110 students anonymously rated the course and the instructor on this scale:

Excellent=5, Good=4, Fair=3, Poor=2, Very Poor=1.

The average ratings were:

the course: 3.8

the instructor: 4.2.

Here follows a complete copy of what the students wrote in their anonymous evaluation of the course, knowing that their comments would land on the course webpage.

## Mostly Positive

Best CS class ever.

Good job. Professor Palsberg is DA MAN!

Dr. Palsberg was the best CS professor. He showed concern for the students and was available at all hours. Jens was the best fucking professor, and I hope I have him for some other class.

This course was, by far, the best CS course I have taken. Jens was able to explain difficult subject matter in a way easy to understand. The TA's actually knew something, unlike the cluefucks in previous courses. Jens is the best fucking CS prof. Give this man a raise.

Jens Palsberg was the best CS prof so far and CS 352 was the first well-organized CS class I've taken. In fact I wrote him a haiku:

You are the coolest  
Compilers are the coolest  
Good Good, Good Good Good.

Even though my grade in this class is fairly low (average) I feel that I've learned so much this semester. I wish I could redo the early programs! I would not want to take this class without Palsberg teaching it.

`` This class was the most organized CS class, I have been in.

Jens Palsberg is a name that to me is more than a name. Multiple pronunciations aside, I believe that Jens can only be translated one way – THE SHIS-NIT, THE MOTHERFUCKING BOMB, etc. Not many men can bring to the CS "table" what Jens Palsberg can. His incredible style is unmatched by any previous or future CS professor, including Monster Mav or Smooth Sammy Wagstaff. In closing, I would like to say that the CS 352 website was a remarkable one. Thank you for your time, and blessed be this man we call Jens. Good bless Denmark, and her true son, Jens Palsberg.

Dr. Palsberg is the freaking best professor in this school! I have never seen a professor care more about his students than Jens. My own *mother* shows less concern for my well being than Jens. The projects in this course were *smoothly* designed, quite possibly making this *best* CS class I have *ever* taken. Give this man a raise! He utterly destroys every other professor I've ever had.

It has been obvious that you and the TA's did a lot of work on the projects. They were well organized. The TA's were really great. They were always available to help us. They always answered questions promptly, even if there were a whole lot. The projects were reasonable, and clearly designed to help us understand the material. It as a hard course but it is probably the best I've taken so far. I'd never want to take this class with a different set of TA's and professor. Great job!

Professor Palsberg was an extremely good instructor for this course. From what I have heard from past compilers classes, this one seems to have been handled much better than the course has been in the past. The only bad thing about this course was the book. I particularly enjoyed spending a vast majority of my free time in computer labs, completely exiled from society. I think in future semesters, this class' work load should be increased ten fold.

You rock :-) The TA's and you both seemed very concerned that we learn the concepts. Rock on, homeslice :-)

The class lectures went by pretty fast; I think of the use of the overhead to go step by step with exercises and examples. The projects were very helpful and helped me understand the materials. I really enjoyed the projects. They were fun and challenging. You were very helpful in your office, but the lectures need to be more exciting. Everyone was sleeping and not really paying attention. I think the next time you should try to get more attention from the class. In my point of view, you just read the slides and didn't make sure we understood. On the other hand, when attending your office hours, you were very helpful and made sure we understood the material.

This is the best course I ever took at Purdue. The instructor is very good in the sense that he cares the student's learning, sets up a very good (best) TA team, and is very responsible. The TA's are the best I ever met. Very responsible and well prepared. The course materials are well prepared, well designed. The loads for course projects are reasonable; not too low and not too high either. The textbook is the *worst* I have ever used, despite some good chapters in it. Especially at the beginning of projects, where the textbook is supposed to serve as a good resource. This textbook is almost useless. I strongly suggest a change of the textbook! Overall, this course is excellent. I'm more than 100% satisfied.

All of the projects were reasonable, except for the first compiler project. It would help if we had some previous knowledge or more working experience with JTB and Javacc.

Pretty challenging class. I think I learned a lot. It may be more difficult than other CS courses, but it should be considering this subject is kind of core of computer science.

This class was definitely a challenge, but I feel like I learned a lot. Professor Palsberg was very helpful and very available to help students. Hi Mom!

The only thing negative I have to say is that the notes were hard to read at times; same w/ book didn't completely fit what we were doing. Professor Palsberg was a good and fair professor in my opinion.

Compilers are exciting! Especially after this course is in the past. Once I spend 3 hours reading 40 pages of MIPS code and comparing with the solution to find one little problem in the 38'th page. The course is very, very cool!

I enjoyed this course very much! However, a book (or notes) focused on our intermediate languages would have been helpful. Overall, I learned a great deal and would enjoy taking a course from you again!

## Mostly Negative

This has been the most difficult course I have ever taken. I am certain I will fail, but not because I did not try. The course materials were almost completely unrelated to the assignments and were so theoretically oriented as to prevent any utility in practical matters. The assignments ranged from extremely difficult to insurmountable, and have a complete lack of documentation and specification. Most of the time I spent on the projects was attempting to guess what the instructor actually wanted. We were asked to produce output without clear specifications of what said output should be. The professor taught primarily by reading lecture slides which were written for a different course by someone else. We were given poorly documented tools to use and very little (practically none) instruction in the use of these tools. The professor was practically unavailable for the second half of the semester. The TA's barely spoke English and seemed at once uninterested and unavailable to the need of the students. While the professor is clearly very knowledgeable in this subject, his choice to use lecture slides as a sole resource for the class combined with a text which could best be described as baffling and lead to a wholly unsatisfying class experience. I hope that when I take this course again (as it is required by the CS major) it will have undergone a sincere redesign in its approach, its assignments, and its course materials.

First, and I could be wrong about this, but I fail to see why this course is required when other courses covering topics like Databases and Networking aren't. It seems that it is either another attempt to get students to drop CS as a major or they just know nobody would take the class if it wasn't required. Second, I don't understand why what could be the hardest class we will have to take has lectures only half the semester. Third, this class took way too much of my time. The projects were so long and complicated that I didn't have time for my other classes. Fourth, the book wasn't very helpful or easy to read. Fifth, they graded extremely hard. You could spend several hours on a project and still get a 0. There was almost no way to get partial credit. You either finished or you didn't. Sixth, there were no solutions given for the projects. I think the lectures should have been ran the whole semester and more should have been done in the PSO. Most of the time, they were just there to answer questions. They should have gone over what was covered in the lecture and showed how it applied to our projects The project need to be easier and less time consuming. Maybe we could have to write code only for selected non-terminals. Also, give solutions to projects.

Maybe you are expert in this, but you did very poor job in teaching. And your job as teaching would rate as F (60%) because that is avg grade of class now.

Did a bad job on teaching the visitors and generic java. Didn't understand projects till I turned them in. Need to have a special session at night during the week that is taught by the TA and is especially for helping students on the projects. Very flexible on project turn-ins (good thing).

Partial credit for projects wasn't fairly given.

This course was perhaps the most relentless, tiresome class I have ever taken. At the end of 4 months I have not developed any interest in compilers and in fact my interest in computer science has decreased. 100 hour walk? eh ... more like 200 hours - do I wanna be a code monkey? I don't think so ... I have better things to do with my life than code 6 hours a day ... I don't think so. You are a brilliant man ... very creative project but not my cup of tea really. Grading wasn't fair; no partial credit at all !!

This course sucked as for the following reasons: (1) What the hell did we do for the first month and a half? Nothing. We probably could have been given the front end during that time instead of during project 3. (2) Even if you got 95% of the project working, you could still get a 0. There has got to be a better way to give some kind of partial credit. The list goes on but I don't feel like writing.

Trying to figure out the visitors in time to do the first project sucked. Please, God, don't make me have to go through this again!

I think the final was much too difficult. It did not accurately reflect what we learned. The projects required much too much effort and hours. The topic of visitors should have been taught before the projects started getting assigned. Not having class for a month made the final virtually impossible. Overall this class was not fun and enjoyable.

The book does not follow along with the material covered in lecture or the projects.

It seems that this course always hide something. Why not simply tell us what is required and what is more important. Why not give us examples in the class and explain details. Because computer science is difficult and most of us are not talented. Finally, I wish all solutions of the homeworks are posted.

## Balanced, Constructive, Miscellaneous

The resulting size of the translated MIPS, Kanga, etc. programs made them difficult to debug at times.

Little white rabbits are fun to pet, but brown ones tend to nibble at your fingers. (Put *that* on the webpage.)

I appreciate the additional bullshit to my computer science curriculum.

Can we target the compiler to a handheld PC which should increase my interest a lot? I'm confused on what'll be in final exam. Please video tape the class, so I can watch it again after class.

It would be better if there were group projects!! and less in number, or if we were given more time to do them.

Hi Steve. I like pizza!

Two weeks was bit tight for some of the projects, maybe a longer period for harder ones and a shorter period for easier ones would have been better.

There shouldn't be any tests in here. Who has time to learn all the formal nomenclature/symbols when you are doing a project for 40 hours a week?

I never had an instructor who finish 5 weeks before the end of the semester, he could come up with something to teach.

I hate it when the compiler says, "oh shit, no more registers." Professor was quite "interesting", needless to say ...

Teach the visitor pattern and syntax tree in depth more. Lobby for a freshman required unix learning course like engineering has. Interesting projects.

Next time there is a 1 hour and 15 min class, instead of skipping the last five weeks, why not teach for 45 mins throughout the semester... Also, for the students to grasp the ideas better, it might be a good idea to give more examples, and not just read off power point slides.

This was a good course though the projects were graded a bit too harshly. Graph coloring was extra credit in previous semesters. It was just very discouraging to work really, really hard and then get slammed with a 0. With projects like these, I think some credit should be given for an intelligent submission. As it is now, kids who work hard (but something doesn't work perfect) get slammed with same grade as a kid who did not even bother to start. Just frustrating for those of use work work *real hard* but whose answers are not perfect. I did like the teaching staff, and the TA's were as helpful as they could be.

The size of the class (room size) is too big for 100 students. Students are completely lost in the classroom. Room size should be compact enough for an advanced course like compilers, so that students can easily interact with the professor. Though the projects were of very high quality, new specifications were added sometime in last minute. This was not good for students who don't check 100's of mails that get posted in the course mailing list.

What doesn't kill you only makes you stronger. Too bad I ran out of steroids half way through the semester.