

Course evaluation PSY9511 – Fall 2025

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Assessment of the course

The course aims to teach the students about core methodology in machine learning, including both traditional statistical approaches, deep learning, and encompassing principles. The course is taught via eight physical seminars and six mandatory assignments. The seminars are structured as two-hour lectures (with student engagement), and one hour reserved to help students with practical issues, often relating to the mandatory assignments.

Student's feedback

Generally, the students seem happy with the course, reporting high academic benefit and satisfaction with both teaching and assignments. Some students report that they would like more teaching, and that they would prefer that the practical part of each seminar (currently reserved for hands-on help with assignments) were instead used for more teaching. This has been further corroborated by the fact that very few students have attended that part of the seminars this semester. The students are satisfied with the course content and the assignments, although one student suggests that the assignments should use more relevant data (e.g. datasets containing psychological variables). Half of the students are content with the workload, and the other half find it slightly high. Some of the students report problems finding relevant reading material, beyond the book that is used in the course. On the practical side, one student reports that they would have preferred that the course was more focused in time, e.g. as an intensive course over a couple of weeks, a suggestion that has been raised before. Finally, the students are not too happy with the location that was used for the seminars this semester.

Overall assessment and further development

Overall, the feedback from the students suggest that they are pleased with the course and how it was organized. However, based on their adjustments, informal chats during the semester, and previous course evaluations, some adjustments should be made:

- Reinforcement learning should either be removed from the curriculum (I think this is the best option, to avoid introducing another complex topic) or get a place in the seminars. I think we already did this (although it is not reflected in the current course description on the website), so maybe this is already in the books?
- A more precise description of the usage of R and Python in the course. This year all students seemed content with Python being used in all the live coding sessions, but it would be nice to be concrete about what role each of these languages have. I suggest writing out explicitly that Python will be used for examples/demo-code, but that students can hand in the assignments in both R and Python, and that solution proposals will be made in both languages (but this would entail someone making the solutions in R, as they don't exist).
- A list of optional reading materials should be developed
- It would be interesting to try some other format for the final hour of each seminar, which is currently reserved for students working on their own assignments. For instance, this time could be used to facilitate a discussion on a specific topic.