How do student evaluations of courses and of instructors relate?

Course evaluations are widely used by educational institutions to assess the quality of teaching. At the course evaluations, students are usually asked to rate different aspects of the course and of the teaching. We propose to apply canonical correlation analysis (CCA) in order to investigate the degree of association between how students evaluate the course and how students evaluate the teacher. Additionally it is possible to reveal the structure of this association. Student evaluations data is characterized by high correlations between the variables within each set of variables, therefore two modifications of the CCA method; regularized CCA and sparse CCA, together with classical CCA were applied to find the most interpretable model. Both methods give results with increased interpretability over traditional CCA on the present student evaluation data. The method shows robustness when evaluations over several years are examined.