

Computer Science I

Syllabus

Department of Computer Science & Engineering
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

CSCE 155E – Fall 2020

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“If you really want to understand something, the best way is to try and explain it to someone else. That forces you to sort it out in your own mind... that’s really the essence of programming. By the time you’ve sorted out a complicated idea into little steps that even a stupid machine can deal with, you’ve certainly learned something about it yourself.”

—Douglas Adams, *Dirk Gently’s Holistic Detective Agency*

In my experience, you assert control over a computer—show it who’s the boss—by making it do something unique. That means programming it... If you devote a couple of hours to programming a new machine, you’ll feel better about it ever afterwards”

—Michael Crichton, *Electronic Life*

The readings were the most underrated things ever (I’ve never actually read them but I wish I did) thanks for providing them and leaving the whole course available to us.

—Former student a year after taking this course

Enjoyed the videos. Did not really watch them videos until [later], realized that it was a mistake now.

—Former student a year after taking this course

1 Course Info

Prerequisites: MATH 103 or equivalent.

Description: Introduction to problem solving with computers. Topics include problem solving methods, software development principles, computer programming, and computing in society.

Credit Hours: 3

Postrequisites: The course after this course, CSCE 156 – Computer Science II requires that you receive a grade of C or better in this course to move on. If you are a Computer Science or Computer Engineering major you will need to receive a C or better in this course to continue in the major.

For all other information, see the course website.

2 Skills Objectives

This course has several learning objectives and “skills objectives.” These are the skills that, upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to exhibit.

- You should have a mastery of the fundamentals of programming in a high-level language, including data types and rudimentary data structures, control flow, repetition, selection, input/output, and procedures and functions.
- You should be able to approach a reasonably complex problem, design a top-down solution, and code a program in a high-level programming language that automates solutions.
- You should have a familiarity with problem solving methods, including problem analysis, requirements and specifications, design, decomposition and step-wise refinement, and algorithm development (including recursion).
- You should have a familiarity with software development principles and practices, including data and operation abstraction, encapsulation, modularity, code and artifact reuse, prototyping, iterative development, best practices in coding design, style, and documentation, a good understanding of proper testing and debugging techniques and a familiarity with development tools.
- You should have exposure to algorithms for searching, sorting and other problems, graphical user interfaces, event-driven programming, and database access.
- You should have a foundation for further software development and exploration. You should have a deep enough understanding of at least one high-level programming language that you should be able to learn another programming language with relative ease in a relatively short amount of time.

3 Schedule

See the course website.

4 Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodations to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 232 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

5 Grading

Assessment (grading) will be based on readings, labs, “hacks”, a semester project and two exams with the following point distributions.

Category	Number	Points Each	Total
Starter Points			15
Attendance	0	0	0
Reading (zyBooks)	13	15	195
Labs	14	10	140
Hacks	14	25	350
Project	1	100	100
Midterm	1	100	100
Final	1	100	100
Total			1,000

5.1 Starter Points

It is important to start out positively. Put yourself in the mindset that you *will* succeed in this course and commit yourself to putting in a full effort in every aspect of it. To get you started, we’re giving you 15 free points. You have a perfect score in this course already! Keep it up!

5.2 Attendance

Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the following policies and accommodations will be made for this course.

- No assessment will be made based on any synchronous attendance for instructional sessions (which includes lecture, lab, hack, and office hours). The choice to attend face-to-face instructional sessions is left entirely to your own judgment. If you have a medical condition or other consideration or simply do not wish to unnecessarily expose yourself, you are *encouraged* to refrain from face-to-face sessions. You will not be judged nor will you be required to provide any documentation.
- If you feel sick, have a fever or other related symptoms, you *may not* attend face-to-face sessions. Please attend remotely.
- At most, 1/3 of the normal capacity of any room may be utilized. To accommodate this, attendance will be staggered and at most 1/2 of enrolled students will be allowed to attend face-to-face while the other half must attend remotely. The following schedule has been designed to give you as many face-to-face learning opportunities on a weekly basis as possible under these conditions.

If your NUID ends in an **even** number:

- You *may* attend lecture face-to-face on Mondays
- You *must* attend lecture remotely on Wednesdays.
- You *may* attend face-to-face for *even* numbered labs
- You *must* attend virtually for *odd* numbered labs
- You *may* attend face-to-face for *odd* numbered hacks
- You *must* attend virtually for *even* numbered hacks

If your NUID ends in an **odd** number:

- You *must* attend lecture remotely on Mondays
 - You *may* attend lecture face-to-face on Wednesdays.
 - You *may* attend face-to-face for *odd* numbered labs
 - You *must* attend virtually for *even* numbered labs
 - You *may* attend face-to-face for *even* numbered hacks
 - You *must* attend virtually for *odd* numbered hacks
- All students, learning assistants, and faculty that do choose to attend face-to-face instructional sessions will be required to adhere to reasonable safety precautions as prescribed by UNL. This includes:
 - *Properly* wearing face mask protection at all times. Both mouth and nose

must be covered at all times including entering and exiting facilities

- Observe social distancing by not physically interacting with anyone and keeping a minimum of 6 feet (2 meters) distance between you and anyone else.
 - Choosing a seat that is at least 2 seats away from any other person (in any direction). This may require you to move to a different seat in order to accommodate the proper number of students.
- Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in you being asked to leave class and to attend class sections remotely.

These are difficult conditions. Under normal conditions attendance would generally be required and assessed as there is a *strong correlation* with students who regularly attend lecture, labs, and hacks and those who succeed academically in this course. For example, students who regularly attended hack sessions in Fall 2019 earned a full letter grade better in their hack submissions than those who did not.

This course will be ever more challenging by having fewer of these face-to-face opportunities. However, we hope to make up for it using virtual sessions (via zoom) and have eliminated additional assignments for this course offering (4 of the regular assignments have been removed to reduce course work).

5.3 Readings

This course is organized into modules (roughly 1 module per week) and each module has reading associated with it. Some reading is required and other readings are suggested/recommended and provide a deeper understanding of the topics. Some of the required reading will be assessed and will count toward your grade.

The assessed reading for this course is delivered through an online textbook provided by zyBooks (<https://www.zybooks.com/>). This is a web-based interactive text book that has you do some reading and then assesses your understanding through short quiz questions. You may retry these quizzes until you get them right. These readings are assessed based on completion and are generally due *before* the lectures on the modules in order to better prepare you for the presented material. If you do not complete the readings for each module, you will not receive any credit.

Not every set of required reading represents an equal amount of work. Some modules have more reading than others. However, all assessment is equally weighted since it is based on completion.

5.4 Labs

There will be weekly labs that give you hands-on exercises for topics recently covered in lecture. The purpose of lab is not only to give you further working experience with

lecture topics, but also to provide you with additional information and details not necessarily covered in lecture. Each lab will have some programming requirements and a supplemental worksheet.

Depending on logistics, those in the on-campus section may be randomly paired with a partner. One of you will be the *driver* and the other will be the *navigator*. The navigator will be responsible for reading the instructions and guiding the driver. The driver will be in charge of the keyboard and will type the code. Both driver and navigator are responsible for developing and working through solutions together. Neither the navigator nor the driver is “in charge,” it is an equal partnership. Beyond your immediate pairing, you are encouraged to help and interact and with other pairs in the lab.

For those in the online section or those attending remotely, you may work alone or we may partner you with someone in a zoom breakout room.

Each lab is assessed based on completion. In general you will need to submit code and an electronic writeup of your worksheet (plain text or markdown is preferred) through webhandin which can also be verified using the webgrader. You will have until midnight on the day of the lab (Tuesdays) to submit your solutions. Points will be awarded based on the results of the webgrader.

5.5 Hacks

There will be weekly Thursday *hack sessions* that will provide an opportunity to start working on exercises in an open, collaborative environment. Each hack session is a simple program or exercise. You may not necessarily complete the entire exercise during the hack session, but it is due by 23:59:59 the following Monday.

Further details are provided in the handouts, but you are highly encouraged to collaborate with any individual and to receive as much help as you desire on the exercises.

5.6 Project

There is an end-of-semester programming project due on the Friday of “dead week.” This project must be completed individually by each student and no collaboration is allowed. You may consult with each other at a *high level* but may not share or view other student code.

5.7 Exams

There will be one midterm exam and a comprehensive final exam. These will be open-book, open-note, *required computer* exams. The exams consist of live coding exercises for which you will need your own machine as you will be coding and submitting programs online for grading. More details will be announced closer to the exam dates. Due to

attendance limitations, these will likely be “take home” exams. You will be on your own honor to complete these exams alone and without collaboration.

5.8 15th Week Policy Notification

A per UNL’s 15th Week Policy (also known as “dead week”) available here:

<https://registrar.unl.edu/academic-standards/policies/fifteenth-week-policy/>

we are required to serve written notice that the final assignment as well as the final lab, hack, and assignment will be due during the 15th week.

5.9 Scale

Final letter grades will be awarded based on the following standard scale. This scale may be adjusted upwards if the instructor deems it necessary based on the final grades only. No scale will be made for individual assignments or exams.

Letter Grade	Percent
A+	≥ 97
A	≥ 93
A-	≥ 90
B+	≥ 87
B	≥ 83
B-	≥ 80
C+	≥ 77
C	≥ 73
C-	≥ 70
D+	≥ 67
D	≥ 63
D-	≥ 60
F	< 60

5.10 Grading Policy

If you have questions about grading or believe that points were deducted unfairly, you must first address the issue with the individual who graded it to see if it can be resolved. Such questions should be made within a reasonable amount of time after the graded assignment has been returned. No further consideration will be given to any assignment a week after it grades have been posted. It is important to emphasize that the goal of grading is consistency. A grade on any given assignment, even if it is low for the entire

class, should not matter that much. Rather, students who do comparable work should receive comparable grades (see the subsection on the scale used for this course).

5.11 Late Work Policy

In general, there will be no make-up exams or late work accepted. Exceptions may be made in certain circumstances such as health or emergency, but you must make every effort to get prior permission. Documentation may also be required.

Homework assignments have a strict due date/time as defined by the CSE server's system clock. All program files must be handed in using CSE's webhandin as specified in individual assignment handouts. Programs that are even a few seconds past the due date/time will be considered late and you will be locked out of handing anything in after that time.

5.12 Webgrader Policy

Failure to adhere to the requirements of an assignment in such a manner that makes it impossible to grade your program via the webgrader means that a disproportionate amount of time would be spent evaluating your assignment. For this reason, we will not grade any assignment that does not compile and run through the webgrader.

5.13 Academic Integrity

All homework assignments, programs, and exams must represent your own work unless otherwise stated. No collaboration with fellow students, past or current, is allowed unless otherwise permitted on specific assignments or problems. The Department of Computer Science & Engineering has an Academic Integrity Policy. All students enrolled in any computer science course are bound by this policy. You are expected to read, understand, and follow this policy. Violations will be dealt with on a case by case basis and may result in a failing assignment or a failing grade for the course itself. The most recent version of the Academic Integrity Policy can be found at <http://cse.unl.edu/academic-integrity>

6 Communication & Getting Help

The primary means of communication for this course is Piazza, an online forum system designed for college courses. We have established a Piazza group for this course and you should have received an invitation to join. If you have not, contact the instructor immediately. With Piazza you can ask questions anonymously, remain anonymous to your classmates, or choose to be identified. Using this open forum system the entire class benefits from the instructor and TA responses. In addition, you and other students

can also answer each other's questions (again you may choose to remain anonymous or identify yourself to the instructors or everyone). You may still email the instructor or TAs, but more than likely you will be redirected to Piazza for help.

In addition, there are two anonymous suggestion boxes that you may use to voice your concerns about any problems in the course if you do not wish to be identified. My personal box is available on the course webpage. The department also maintains an anonymous suggestion box available at <https://cse.unl.edu/contact-form>.

6.1 Getting Help

Your success in this course is ultimately your responsibility. Your success in this course depends on how well you utilize the opportunities and resources that we provide. There are numerous outlets for learning the material and getting help in this course:

- **Lectures:** attend lectures regularly and when you do use the time appropriately. Do not distract yourself with social media or other time wasters. Actively take notes (electronic or hand written). It is well-documented that good note taking directly leads to understanding and retention of concepts.
- **Lecture Videos:** Lecture videos are intended as a supplement that mirrors lecture material but that may not cover everything. Watch them at your own pace on a regular basis for reiteration or in case you missed something in lecture.
- **Required Reading:** do the required reading on a regular basis. The readings provide additional details and depth that you may not necessarily get directly in lecture.
- **Labs & Hack Sessions:** use your time during lab and hack sessions wisely. Engage with your lab instructors, teaching assistants, your partner(s) and other students. Be sure to adequately prepare for labs by reading the handouts before coming to lab. Get started and don't get distracted.
- **Piazza:** if you have questions ask them on Piazza. It is the best and likely fastest way to get help with your questions. Also, be sure to read other student's posts and questions and feel free to answer yourself!
- **Office Hours & Student Resource Center:** the instructor and teaching assistants hold regular office hours throughout the week as posted on the course website. Attend office hours if you have questions or want to review material. The Student Resource Center (SRC, <http://cse.unl.edu/src>) Monday through Friday. Even if your TAs are not scheduled during that time, there are plenty of other TAs and students present that may be able to help. And, you may be able to help others!
- **Don't procrastinate.** The biggest reason students fail this course is because they do not give themselves enough opportunities to learn the material. Don't wait to the last minute to start your assignments. Many people wait to the last minute and flood the TAs and SRC, making it difficult to get help as the due date approaches. Don't underestimate how much time your assignment(s) will take and don't wait to

the week before hand to get started. Ideally, you should be working on the problems as we are covering them.

- Get help in the *right way*: when you go to the instructor or TA for help, you must demonstrate that you have put forth a good faith effort toward understanding the material. Asking questions that clearly indicate you have failed to read the required material, have not been attending lecture, etc. is *not acceptable*. Don't ask generic questions like "I'm lost, I don't know what I'm doing". Instead, explain what you have tried so far. Explain why you think what you have tried doesn't seem to be working. Then the TA will have an easier time to help you identify misconceptions or problems. This is known as "Rubber Duck Debugging" where in if you try to explain a problem to someone (or, lacking a live person, a rubber duck), then you can usually identify the problem yourself. Or, at the very least, get some insight as to what might be wrong.

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