Introduction – Welcome to CSCI 1301!

https://csci-1301.github.io/about#authors

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Contents

For this first lab, we would like to discuss three important topics for you to succeed in this class.

1. How to access the material and naviguate our resources,
2. What to read first,
3. How to get help.

As you may have noted, the list of topics was already included a first time below the title: we generally try to include table of contents and presentations, along with numerous links, to make our guides easy to navigate.

Action: *Before you get started with this lab*, please complete the short survey we have designed for you on LMS[1] (formerly D2L), on the CSCI 1301's page, under assessments, then surveys. This brief series of questions are **anonymous** and **not graded**: they are purely for statistical purposes, and to make sure that this class suits your need. You can read more about why we survey our students[2].

1 Navigating our Resources

We strive to provide to our students all the material they will need to succeed in one place, at https://csci-1301.github.io/. On this website, you will find

[1] https://lms.augusta.edu/
[2] ../../survey.html

- "The book"[3], which contains the lecture notes to cover one semester, and is available in `pdf`[4] (for printing, typically) and in `odt`[5]/`docx`[6] (for editing, typically. docx included for Microsoft Word compatibility). Along with the `html` version[7] (i.e., the website), this gives four convenient ways of accessing the content of this course.
- Slides accompanying the lecture notes (in `pptx`).
- The labs[8], which are tied to particular lectures, and contains hands-on practice exercise as well as instructions on how to use computers to complete this class.
- Along with other useful documents[9] about this class or studying at our school[10] in particular.

The main purpose of this first lab is to help you navigating those resources. We want this reading to be pro-active, so we will include questions and actions like the ones below every now and then to help you being engaged in the material.

Question: We used five different file formats in the text above you may not be familiar with. Along with *markdown* (`md`), that's five: can you make sure you know them all and know their purposes? Looking them up on wikipedia[11] and reading the first paragraph of each of their pages can be a good way of getting started!

Action: On the `html` version of our documents (so, on the website), you will always find on the footer links to the `pdf`, `odt`, and `docx` versions of the document you are currently reading. Download them by clicking on the "↓ pdf", "↓ odt", and "↓ docx" links, then make sure you can open them both. You should realize that their content is identical to the page you are currently reading![12]

You may also have seen the Source code[13] and About[14] links on the footer: the first one will give you access to the "frame" we are using to construct all of those resources, and the second contains information about the authors, copyrights and tools used to construct this website. Even if you do not need to understand the source code and details of the implementation of those resources (that uses, as you may have guessed … markdown!), being curious about them may be extremely useful for the sake of learning, if you want to become an Undergraduate Course Assistant (UCA), are interested in contributing to open-source project, or simply wonder how the magic is done!

2 What to Read First

Your instructor will be your primary guide when it comes to the order in which you need to read the material hosted here. However, you should feel free to explore our other useful documents[15], that contain information you may be interested in fairly early in the semester (like…today!). Typically, the Installing Software[16] page should probably be one of the first document you should read: it explains in details how to set-up your computer to be able to execute, compile and study the code we will be discussing in class and lab, and how to access and use the computer labs.

[3] https://csci-1301.github.io/book.html
[4] https://csci-1301.github.io/book.pdf
[5] https://csci-1301.github.io/book.odt
[6] https://csci-1301.github.io/book.docx
[7] https://csci-1301.github.io/book.html
[8] https://csci-1301.github.io/labs/
[9] https://csci-1301.github.io/#other-documents
[10] https://www.augusta.edu/ccs/
[11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_file_formats
[12] Even this sentence will be displayed, even if it makes fewer sense to discuss the links on the footer of a `pdf` file, as there is none!
[13] https://github.com/csci-1301/csci-1301.github.io
[14] ../../about.html
[15] https://csci-1301.github.io/#other-documents
[16] ../../software_install.html

Action: Reading instructions is not always easy. You should try to always to understand what is crucial, what is important, and what is optional. Although you may have overlooked that subtlety, the previous paragraph actually meant

> Go read Installing Software[17] as soon as possible, you want to be ready for next lab!

This is particularly true for labs asking for you to set things up: there is little to gain in postponing that step, and if you are facing difficulties, it is better to ask earlier rather than later!

Some of the resources on this website are still in the flux: the instructors are working hard to construct the material from scratch, and we are sorry if at times you feel that you are going through dry runs. On the flip side, remember that you did not have to buy a textbook, and that those resources will be tailored for your use and course of study here at Augusta University: among many other specificities, like using C#, we are making sure that security and other cyber-related issues are regularly discussed!

You should also remember that the internet is (also!) a wonderful place where many useful resources are shared. For instance, this guide on open source[18] is an excellent place to understand what open source is and why it matters. Our resources are supported by Affordable Learning Georgia, who strives to share good, accessible and free (as in "free coffee" *and* as in "free speech") Open Educational Ressources (OER) to students in Georgia: reading their "About"[19] page may help you understand the importance and benefits of developing resources here, for you!

Question: What exactly is implied by "free" as in "free coffee" *and* as in "free speech"? Try to understand what "free software[20]" means: is it like coffee (some people say "beer") or like speech? Are the resources presented here free as in coffee, as in speech, or both? And what about your computer's operating system? Your media player? Try to look the licences of some of the software you use on a daily basis, you may realize that some important software are actually open source, and hosts their code on e.g. github!

3 How to Get Help

This may be the most important aspect of this lab: understanding when you get help, and how to obtain it, is critical in succeeding in your studies (be it in this class or other classes alike!). Your instructor should be your first point of contact for any question regarding the content of this class, but many other resources are available, through the University, for this class, or through clubs. Also, understanding *how* to ask is extremely important, and we will briefly discuss it.

3.1 At Augusta University

Some resources are available free of charge for all students:

- If you are food insecure, you are not alone[21], and the Open Paws Food Pantry[22] will help you.
- For tutoring resources, consult the Academic Success Center[23] (or "ASC"). It can help you, among other things, in the areas of time management, test preparation and study strategies.
- The Testing & Disability Services[24] (or "TDS") can help you–and your instructor!–accommodate this class.

[17] ../../software_install.html
[18] https://opensource.guide/
[19] https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/about/about_us
[20] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_software
[21] https://www.wjbf.com/csra-news/nearly-36-percent-of-college-students-are-hungry/
[22] https://www.augusta.edu/student-affairs/open-paws.php
[23] https://www.augusta.edu/academicsuccess/
[24] https://www.augusta.edu/tds/

- The Student Counseling & Psychological Services[25] (or "SCAPS") is here to assist students with a variety of personal, developmental, and mental health concerns.
- The Writing Center[26] can help you with any written, oral, or multimedia project.
- To get help with technologies, refer to our Instructional Technology Support[27] correspondent Sienna Sewell, whose contact can be found on the Continuity webpage[28].

3.2 For this Class

Again, your instructor should be your first point of contact. Make sure you have their email address, and understand their preferred means of communication: is it through LMS[29] (formerly D2L), Teams[30], their office hours?

Secondly, if your class have an Undergraduate Course Assistant (UCA), this may be the right person to ask all kind of questions: they went through CSCI 1301 and have been selected based on their capacities, grades, interest and skills, so they will be able at the same time to relate to your struggle and describe the program better than anyone else!

There is also a way of reaching *all the instructions of CSCI 1301* at once, and it is by commenting on this site's pages, as we explain below.

3.2.1 Commenting Using a Github Account

On the website, if you look below, you will see a box where you can comment. This will require that you create a Github account[31], which is free and may serve multiple purpose if you intend to study, use, or contribute to open-source projects. The comment can use the markdown syntax[32] (exactly like this resource!), which is also used on websites like stackoverflow[33] and extremely popular!

Action: *If you feel like it*, create an account on Github[34] and leave a comment! We'll be happy to read from you!

3.3 Through the ACM Club

The Augusta University chapter[35] of the A.C.M[36] is one of the university's best resources for Computer Science, Information Technology and Cyber Security students. It provides a platform to network with other students in similar majors; presenting countless opportunities to expand not only the people you know, but also a fantastic place to learn and ask questions. Because of Covid-19, they are holding meetings virtually in their Discord server[37]. If you are interested in joining these meetings, or you have any questions about Computer Science or Cyber Security, feel free to join through their link.

[25] https://www.augusta.edu/counseling/
[26] https://www.augusta.edu/pamplin/writingcenter/
[27] https://www.augusta.edu/continuity/index.php
[28] https://www.augusta.edu/continuity/
[29] https://lms.augusta.edu/
[30] https://www.augusta.edu/its/microsoftteams.php
[31] https://github.com/login
[32] https://commonmark.org/
[33] https://stackoverflow.com/editing-help
[34] https://github.com/login
[35] https://augusta.presence.io/organization/association-for-computing-machinery
[36] https://www.acm.org/
[37] https://discord.gg/QGuGmsF

3.4 How to Ask a Question?

It may seems silly, but asking a question "the right way" may not always be easy.

1. Once you've identified your issue, try again from scratch to see if you missed a point.
2. Go over the instructions, look in our resources[38] for some meaningful keywords.
3. Think about how you can describe your issue, what is the shortest route to reproduce it.
4. If you are still facing difficulties, be detailed and clear about what you think went wrong: if the question is related to computers, specify which operating system, what you have tried, the exact nature of the error message, etc. Screenshot are not always the right way to convey your question: try to be descriptive, and explain what you tried. If you want to refer to a particular lab or lecture, open the corresponding page, look for the closest title, hover over it, and you should see a "§" symbol appears: click on it, you can now share that link[39] so that your interlocutor knows precisely what you are talking about!

And, remember: your instructor knows that you are a student and here to learn, so you should *never* feel intimidated or assume that *everyone knows better than you*: many students struggle in this class at time, and you could actually make them all a favor by asking your instructor to go over a particular dimension that they may have overlooked or explained poorly!

Action: You may have noticed that multiple links point to https://www.wikihow.com/. Can you check if *the content* and *the software platform* of wikihow are free (as in coffee or speech)?

[38] https://github.com/csci-1301/csci-1301.github.io/search?q=ask+a+question
[39] https://www.wikihow.com/Copy-and-Paste-a-Link