CS550 Programming Course Expectations and Policies

Class Goals: *In this class we will focus on…*

- Computational Thinking: Coding requires you to use logic and algorithms to solve problems. It requires you to break a task down into component parts and then work systematically towards a larger goal.
- Creativity and Design: Many of the projects we will complete in this class will require you to use your imagination and creativity to come up with interesting visuals, themes, and coding solutions. Coding is also inherently creative, as some solutions are more elegant than others.
- Communication and Collaboration: Coding is a highly collaborative process. As a coding student, the learning process will be more rewarding if you choose to collaborate. Successful collaboration requires tactful, reflective, and honest communication, which we will practice by writing comments in code, providing feedback to peers on their progress, and working on coding challenges in small groups.
- Empowered and Resilient Learning: You will have opportunities to revise and rework your projects to improve them. You will be taught how to research and problem solve independently, and you will be expected to maintain a balance between working through problems on your own, and knowing when to ask for help.

Preparedness

- Homework, handouts, quizzes, and grades will be posted with due dates on Canvas; *it is your responsibility to check Canvas regularly to stay on top of required coursework.*
- We need to use electronic devices regularly in this class; please bring your tech charged to class, and *please do not use the computer in a way that takes your focus away from our class.*

Class Participation

- Every student is expected to contribute during class meetings. This could mean answering questions or participating in discussions. It could also mean helping a neighbor debug their code, or actively listening during demos. Not all students feel comfortable participating in the same way, and I understand and value all types of student engagement in our class.

- Student engagement and participation can positively or negatively affect a classroom environment. You should keep this in mind and do your part to keep our classroom engaging and friendly.

Absences

- If you miss a class for any reason, please be sure to check Canvas for homework assignments and class demos. You are responsible for checking these sites and getting caught up.
- Please be in touch with me or a friend in class about follow-up questions you may have regarding the material you missed.

Homework Assignments

- Homework and in-class activities are opportunities for you to practice new skills, solidify your understanding of concepts, experiment, be bold, take risks, and try new things.
- Perfection on homework is never expected; putting time and effort into each homework assignment, though, is essential.
- Small, regular assignments will often culminate in larger projects and assessments. ***Regular, timely completion of your homework is necessary for success in this class.***
- When homework is due, it must be submitted through Canvas. If you experience issues with Canvas, please ask for assistance in class.
- Homework will be graded by completion as follows:
    - 2 points – Homework is on time and complete (each problem was carefully considered and attempted, and comments mentioning any issues were included)
    - 1 point – Homework was late, and/or incomplete, without comments explaining your challenges
    - 0 points – Homework was not submitted
- In programming, there are many good solutions, some that work clunkily, some that work by accident, and some that are more elegant than others; if you are unsure if your method is a good way of tackling a problem, always feel free to check with me.

Major Assessments

- You will have 3-4 major assessments throughout the term.
- These assessments will always be announced. They will most likely be larger programming projects that will span several days.

- If you think you will need more time for a project or the due date is difficult for you, you may always take an extension (see extension policy below.)
- Late submissions on major assessments will be penalized at 3% daily, per department policy.
- Projects will be graded out of 5; see the section on grades to understand the scoring system.

Extensions and Late Policy

- Life's tough. Things happen. Everyone needs additional time now and then. I want you to enjoy this programming class, as it is an elective, and reduce stress about the workload in this class if I can.
- On homework and major assessments, you may elect to take an extension of up to 2 class meetings beyond the due date for any reason, as long as you do so prior to the time the work is due. To opt into an extension, ***you must put a comment on the assignment on Canvas*** *saying you are choosing to take an extension, why you need the extension, and the date and time you will submit your work (up to 2 class meetings beyond the due date)*
- Some examples of Canvas comments for extensions:
    - Ms. Healey, I am taking an extension on this homework because it's my birthday the night prior and I want to go out to eat with my family. I will turn this assignment in by our next class meeting.
    - Hi Ms. Healey! I'm feeling a little stressed because this week has just been crazy with my schoolwork. Instead of turning this in on Friday's class, I will turn this in on Monday's class so I can take my time over the weekend to complete it, once I've had some rest!
- Work submitted past the deadline you set for yourself will be considered late. Work submitted past the deadline without an extension comment prior to the listed deadline on Canvas will be considered late.
- Extensions beyond 2 class periods are possible in certain circumstances, but they will require a conversation with me **prior** to the due date of the project.
- *This extension policy does not apply for final or end of term projects.*

Grades

- If you would like to know where you stand in this class at any time, for any reason, please come speak with me. I am happy to talk with you about your grade, share your overall score, or help you understand the class grading scheme at any time.
- Scores in this class will be out of 5, and grades out of 5 are broken down as follows:

    - A+ > 4.67
    - A > 4.33
    - A- > 4.0
    - B+ > 3.67
    - B > 3.33
    - B- > 3.0
    - C+ > 2.67
    - C > 2.33
    - C- > 2.0
    - D+ > 1.67
    - D > 1.33
    - D- > 1.0
    - F <= 1.0
- Students often see their grade of, say, a 3.5/5, and think they are receiving a C-, when in fact in this class, you are receiving a B. Please keep this in mind as your grades start to roll in this term!
- Full points will be deducted always. Further divisions of points will not be made, except in the instance of late penalties on projects. *Even if the mistake is small (say you forgot to add the date in your comments) the minimum deduction will be taken. Pay attention to details.*
- The general class rubric is as follows (based on the Choate Academic Handbook):
    - >=4: The work is excellent; it not only satisfies the basic expectations of the assignment but also excels in several of them for this course or grade level
    - >=3: The work is good; it satisfies the basic expectations of the assignment for this course or grade level
    - >=2: The work is competent but it reveals gaps in student understanding, mastery or presentation for this course or grade level
    - >=0: The work is of a poor quality; it is substandard in several areas for this course or grade level
    - 0: The work is unacceptable or missing
- Homework makes up 20% of your grade.
- Projects make up 80% of your grade.

Revisions

- On projects you will have the opportunity to receive feedback informally in class before submitting your final draft. Once a final score has been awarded, no revisions may be made. Please take advantage of work periods and extra help to review your work with me before submitting it, if you would like early feedback before your final submission.

Accommodations

- If you have approved accommodations, please make an appointment with me so we can discuss your accommodations within the context of this class.

Academic Honesty and Collaboration

- Please feel free to work together on tasks completed in the classroom. Working together is fun! Always **cite the names of your collaborators** and the nature of the collaboration in your comments.
- Partner work on major assessments (such as long-term programming projects) will be allowed only by permission. When you work together once you have received permission, you should cite all the contributors in the comments of your code and collaborate equally with each other on the project.
- The honor pledge is required on all assignments, homework and projects alike. When you place the honor pledge in your code, you are asserting that you wrote, understand, and are able to explain thoroughly all of the code you are submitting, including borrowed code, and code you borrowed from online sources is properly attributed and follows class guidelines (80/20 rule; see below), and that any assistance you received from classmates was purely conceptual.
- Programmers often reuse found code; this practice is acceptable provided you cite the source in your comments and include a thorough explanation of the code's function. A good rule of thumb is 80% original code, 20% borrowed code, and never take code that completes fully a task that was assigned as coursework. **Ask me if you are unsure**.
- With the prevalence of AI tools such as ChatGPT, it is conceivable that you may want to use these tools to help you with coding assignments. These tools and the code they generate must be cited like a website or other resource, and the same standard rules apply (you explain the code in your own words, and the code you borrow follows the 80/20 rule.)
- Review the rules for coding outlined in the MIT handbook, linked below. These are the rules we will generally follow this year.
- https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/writing-code