

CSC 361: Computer Communications and Networks (Fall 2025)

Programming Assignment 1: Web Tester

Deadline: 23:59, Sep. 30, 2025

1 Goal

The project is to build a tool that collects information regarding a web server. The purpose of this project is twofold:

- to provide students with hands-on experience with socket programming **in Python**,
- to help students understand the application-layer protocols HTTP/HTTPS. Note that HTTPS is not a standalone protocol. Instead, it is HTTP over Transport Layer Security (TLS). In this assignment, your main focus is on HTTP, not TLS.

2 Background

2.1 HTTP

HTTP stands for Hyper Text Transfer Protocol and is used for communication among web servers.

The web client initiates a conversation by opening a connection to a web server. Once the connection is set up, the client sends an HTTP request. The server sends an HTTP response back to the client and closes the connection. An HTTP request consists of two parts: a header and a body. The header specifies whether a body follows a header or not.

Using *single-line header of HTTP request* as an example, the first line of any request header should be:

- the method field: The method field can take on several different values, including GET, POST, HEAD, etc.
- the URL field: It is the field to identify a network resource, e.g., “http://www.csc.uvic.ca/index.html”.
- the HTTP version field: This field is “HTTP/1.1”.

The response from a server also has two parts: a header and a body. The first line of a header should be:

- the HTTP version field,
- the status code field,

- the phrase field.

Two main status codes include 200 and 404. The status code 200 means that the request succeeded and the information is returned in the response. The status code 404 means that the requested document does not exist on this server. Two example response messages are: “*HTTP/1.1 404 Not Found*” and “*HTTP/1.1 200 OK*”. Another two status codes 505: “HTTP Version Not Supported”, and 302: “302 found” for URL redirection are also useful for this assignment.

2.2 URI

URI stands for Uniform Resource Identifier and is also known as the combination of Uniform Resource Locators (URL) and Uniform Resource Names (URN). It is a formatted string which identifies a network resource. It generally has the format: *protocol://host[:port]/filepath*. When a port is not specified, the default HTTP port number is 80, and the default HTTPS port number is 443.

2.3 Cookies

An HTTP cookie is a small piece of data that a server sends to the user’s web browser. The browser may store it and send it back with the next request to the same server. Typically, it’s used to tell if two requests came from the same browser keeping a user logged-in, for example. It remembers stateful information for the stateless HTTP protocol. Cookies have many applications in web, such as tracking, authentication, and web analytics. Due to this reason, cookies also cause many concerns on security and privacy breach.

The textbook includes simple introduction on cookies. More detailed information could be found at: <https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/HTTP/Cookies>. Python includes dedicated modules to handle Cookies: <https://docs.python.org/3/library/http.cookies.html>. Nevertheless, you are not allowed to use this package because it defeats the purpose of a network-course assignment.

3 Project Description

You are required to build a web client tool, called *WebTester*, in Python. **Note that for consistency, program in other language will not be accepted!**

Given the URL of a web server, your *WebTester* needs to find out the following information regarding the web server:

1. whether or not the web server supports http2,
2. the cookie name, the expire time (if any), and the domain name (in any) of cookies that the web server will use,
3. whether or not the requested web page is password-protected.

Your program first accepts URI from stdin and parses it. Then it connects to a server, sends an HTTP request, and receives an HTTP response. You should also implement a routine that prints out the response from the server, marking the header and the body. When you finish the client, you

67 can try to connect to any HTTP server. For instance, type “https://www.uvic.ca/” as the input
68 to the client program and see what response you get.

69 As an example output, after you run your code with

70 `% python WebTester.py www.uvic.ca`

71 Your *WebTester* may output the received response from the server (**optional**), e.g.,

72 `---Request begin---`

73 `GET http://www.uvic.ca/index.html HTTP/1.1`

74 `Host: www.uvic.ca`

75 `Connection: Keep-Alive`

76

77 `---Request end---`

78 `HTTP request sent, awaiting response...`

79

80 `---Response header ---`

81 `HTTP/1.1 200 OK`

82 `Date: Tue, 02 Jan 2018 22:42:27 GMT`

83 `Expires: Thu, 19 Nov 1981 08:52:00 GMT`

84 `Cache-Control: no-store, no-cache, must-revalidate, post-check=0, pre-check=0`

85 `Pragma: no-cache`

86 `Set-Cookie: SESSID_UV_128004=VD3v0JhqL3YUbmazSTJre1; path=/; domain=www.uvic.ca`

87 `Set-Cookie: uvic_bar=deleted; expires=Thu, 01-Jan-1970 00:00:01 GMT; Max-Age=0; path=/; dom`

88 `Keep-Alive: timeout=5, max=100`

89 `Connection: close`

90 `Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8`

91 `Set-Cookie: www_def=2548525198.20480.0000; path=/`

92 `Set-Cookie: TS01a564a5=0183e07534a2511a2dcd274bee873845d67a2c07b7074587c948f80a42c427b1f7ea`

93 `Set-Cookie: TS01c8da3c=0183e075346a73ab4544c7b9ba9d7fa022c07af441fc6214c4960d6a9d0db2896a8c`

94 `Set-Cookie: TS014bf86f=0183e075347c174a4754aeb42d669781e0fafb1f43d3eb2783b1354159a9ad8d81f7`

95

96 `--- Response body ---`

97 `Body Body (the actual content)`

98

99 Note that some lines in the above output were truncated. Your code may need to send multiple
100 requests in order to find out the required information. In particular, if you get an HTTP response
101 with code 302 or 301, you need to send further HTTP requests to the new URI provided by the
102 Location header.

103 Your code should output the final results (**mandatory**), for example:

104

105 `website: www.uvic.ca`

106 `1. Supports http2: no`

107 `2. List of Cookies:`

108 `cookie name: SESSID_UV_128004, domain name: www.uvic.ca`

109 `cookie name: uvic_bar, expires time: Thu, 04-Jan-2018 00:00:01 GMT; domain name: .uvic.ca`

```
110 cookie name: www_def,
111 cookie name: TS01a564a5
112 cookie name: TS01c8da3c, domain name: www.uvic.ca
113 cookie name: TS014bf86f, domain name: .uvic.ca
114 3. Password-protected: no
```

115 **Note that the above output may be outdated and does not necessarily reflect the**
116 **ground truth of the current configuration of www.uvic.ca.**

117 3.1 Other Notes

- 118 1. Regarding other printout: Anything not specified in Assignment 1 is optional. For example,
119 you can decide whether or not to print out the IP address, port number, and so on. When
120 TAs test your code, if your code works fine without any problem, you are fine even if you
121 do not print out anything not required in Assignment 1. Nevertheless, if your code does not
122 work, TAs will not spend time to figure out what is wrong and you get a zero mark on the
123 required function (Refer to the table in Section 5 of Assignment 1). In this case, if your code
124 includes some printout to show intermediate results, TAs will have an idea on how far you
125 have achieved and give you some partial mark based on their own judgement.
- 126 2. Regarding readme file. Readme file is important. Without it TAs will not know how to
127 compile your code and how to run your code. It would waste our time to deal with your
128 complaint if TAs cannot run your code and give you a zero.
- 129 3. For more information on HTTP, HTML, URI, etc., please refer to <http://www.w3.org>. It is
130 the home page of W3 Consortium and you will find many useful links to subjects related to
131 the World Wide Web.

132 4 Schedule

133 In order to help you finish this programming assignment successfully, the schedule of this assignment
134 has been synchronized with both the lectures and the tutorials. Before the final deadline, there are
135 three tutorial sessions arranged during the course of this assignment. A schedule is listed as follows:

Session	Tutorial	Milestones
Tutorial 1	P1 spec go-through, design hints, python	design and code skeleton
Tutorial 2	socket programming and testing	alpha code done
Tutorial 3	socket programming and last-minute help	beta code done and demo

136 5 Deliveries and Marking Scheme

137 For your final submission of each assignment you are required to submit your source code to
138 brightSpace in a single zip file (double-check your zip file to make sure all required files have
139 been included before submission!). You should include a readme file to tell TA how to compile and
140 run your code.

141 **Note:** For consistency and ease of test, you should test/run your code on the server linux.csc.uvic.ca
142 by running python3 and the python packages supported by the server linux.csc.uvic.ca. In other
143 words, TAs will test your code on linux.csc.uvic.ca and give marks based on the test results over
144 linux.csc.uvic.ca rather than the results from your local computer.

145 The marking scheme is as follows:

Components	Weight
Error handling	10
Correct output for “support of http2”	20
handling http redirect 302/301	20
List of Cookies	30
Correct output for password-protected	15
Readme.txt	5
Total Weight	100

146
147 **Important Note:** listing cookies is a very tricky business, and it is possible that you will not get
148 a unique, static answer due to the dynamic changes in some cookies created dynamically based on
149 users interactive input. Some online tool, such as <http://www.cookie-checker.com/>, can find cookies
150 that are triggered by javascript or php code. Nevertheless, finding those cookies is optional for this
151 Assignment.

152 6 Plagiarism

153 This assignment is to be done individually. You are encouraged to discuss the design of your solution
154 with your classmates, but each person must implement their own assignment.

155 The End
