Syllabus for COMS 261 - Computer Science I

COMS 261 - Fall 2024

- **Instructor:** Brian Lins
- **Office Hours:** See my weekly schedule, and by appointment
- **Office Location:** Pauley 301
- **Free Textbooks:**
  - Think Python by Allen Downey
  - An Intro to Programming and CS with Python by Clayton Cafiero

Announcements

- There are no announcements yet

Course Description

This is an introductory course on computer science and algorithmic problem solving using the programming language Python. We will cover the topics listed in the schedule below. We will also focus on writing, running, debugging, and documenting computer programs.

Tentative Schedule

Week	Topic
1	Variables, expressions, & statements
2	Functions
3	Conditionals
4	Recursion
5	More on functions
6	Iteration, **Midterm 1**
7	Strings
8	Lists
9	Dictionaries
10	Tuples
11	Files
12	Classes and objects
13	Classes and functions, **Midterm 2**
14	Classes and methods
15	Inheritance

The schedule above is tentative, and may be subject to change. Changes will be announced in class, and you are responsible for knowing about any changes even if you miss the class when they are announced.

Attendance Policy

Attendance in this class is required. Repeated absences may result in a forced withdrawal from the course. You are responsible for any material you miss due to absence. Please let me know ahead of time if you know that you will not be able to attend class.

Grading Policy

The term grade will be based on the following factors.

Component	Proportion
Midterms	30%
Projects	45%
Final Exam	25%

I use the following grading scale for projects and exams.

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	96 - 100
A-	92 - 95
B+	88 - 91
B	84 - 87
B-	80 - 83
C+	76 - 79
C	72 - 75
C-	68 - 71
D+	64 - 67
D	60 - 63
F	0 - 59

In-Class Labs

Programming is something that you can only learn by doing. During most class periods you will be asked to write short pieces of code. If you aren't able to finish a task, then you should try to figure it out later on your own or come to office hours for help. These in-class programming exercises won't be collected, although similar questions are likely to appear on tests and projects.

Projects

There will be several programming projects throughout the semester. You must complete these projects on your own. Do not ask AI or other students in this class for help on projects. If you include any code from another student or from the internet, that is plagiarism and will be treated as such. To avoid plagiarizing other students, you should avoid looking at other students' code because you cannot "unsee" it. You should also never share your code with other students. If you need help with a project, see me or one of the student tutors for this course.

Projects will be graded based on several factors. Code should be written following the Python PEP-8 style guide with clear comments. It should make sense, and it should run correctly on all test cases. These factors will be graded holisticly using the following rubric.

- **Grade: A.** Every part of the assignment is complete and your code is clear and runs correctly.
- **Grade: B.** Almost every part of the assignment is complete and your work is clear. There may be a few minor mistakes, but no major errors.
- **Grade: C.** Most of the assignment is complete, but is either not clear or has significant mistakes.

- **Grade: D.** You submit something, but it has major errors or omissions.

All projects will be posted at least 4 days before they are due.

Exams

There will be two in-class midterm exams and a cumulative final. These exams will be announced in advance, and you will know exactly what concepts will be covered on each exam.

Office Hours

My office hours are shown on my weekly schedule. I am also available by appointment. If you can't stop by during my regular office hours, just ask me after class or by e-mail, and I'll be happy to make an appointment that works for both of us.

Special Accommodations

Students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of the impact of a disability are encouraged to meet with me privately at the beginning of the semester. Students also should contact Melissa Wood, Title IX/504 Coordinator (mwood@hsc.edu, 434-223-6061) to verify their eligibility for reasonable accommodations. Early contact will help to avoid unnecessary inconvenience and delays.