

# **Syllabus: DSCI 510**

## **Principles of Programming for Data Science**

(4.0 units)

**Instructor:** Itay Hen

**Teaching Assistant:** TBD

**Course Graders:** TBD1 and TBD2

**Data Science Program**

Thomas Lord Department of Computer Science

Viterbi School of Engineering

University of Southern California

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# Administrative

## 1.1 | General information

**First day of classes: Tuesday August 26, 2025**

For more information please visit: <https://classes.usc.edu/term/20253/catalogue/school/ENGV/program/DSCI>

Please refer to the following table 1.1 for class times and location:

*Table 1.1: Class times and location*

Type	Time	Day	Location
Lecture	10:00 - 11:50am	Tuesday	SLH100
Lab	10:00 - 11:50am	Thursday	SLH100

*Please make sure to arrive on time for both lectures and lab sessions. However, if you are late - use the back door to enter the room as to avoid disrupting the class when you come in.*

## 1.2 | Description

### 1.2.1 | Catalog Description

Introductory programming course for non-Computer Science majors. Learn how to program in Python for retrieving, searching, and analyzing data from the Web. Learning to work with large data sets.

### 1.2.2 | Expanded Course Description

This course is designed to serve as an introduction to computer science concepts and basic programming skills that are specifically geared towards Data Science, and forms a part of the introductory coursework for the program in Communication Informatics. The main objective of this course is to introduce the fundamental concepts behind general computer science and programming, and to give students practical hands-on experience reading and writing computer programs, in order to give them the tools to manipulate large data sets.

The course is designed to be accessible to non-Computer Science major students with little or no programming experience, and emphasizes writing programs that are capable of retrieving and

manipulating large amounts of data. The first half of the course focuses on Python as a first programming language, while the second half of the course covers selected advanced topics including data visualization, web scraping, database access, and more.

The course will combine lectures, labs, in-class discussion and problem solving, readings, written homework assignments, a midterm exam and a final project.

### 1.2.3 | Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to teach students to write computer code capable of retrieving data, working with (large) data sets, analyze data and visualize the results. Specifically, students successfully completing this course will achieve the following main objectives:

1. Acquire basic concepts in computer science and programming
2. Develop sufficient proficiency in Python programming language to write applications capable of retrieving, searching, manipulating, analyzing, and visualizing data
3. Be able to package, present and deliver a complete Python project

### 1.2.4 | Methods of Teaching

The primary teaching methods will be discussion, case studies, and lectures. Students are expected to perform directed self-learning outside of class which encompasses, among other things, a considerable amount of programming practice.

There will be weekly lectures and lab meetings, a midterm exam, lab/homework assignments (from the labs) and a final project.

Students are expected to have access to a computer (preferably a laptop) that can run the Python programming language and a recently updated web browser, and to bring it to class. Beyond that, no special computing facility, hardware or software will be necessary for this course.

# Communication

## 2.1 | Office Hours

Class announcements will be made on Brightspace - make sure you have the notifications enabled for those announcements as they can be last minute and rather important.

Last but not least, to reach any one of the teaching team - simply click on the names on the title page of this document to send us a direct email. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions, we're here for you!

### 2.1.1 | Instructor's office hours:

Tuesdays 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM, location TBD.

Otherwise, send me an email ([hen@usc.edu](mailto:hen@usc.edu)) in order to schedule a quick zoom meeting. (please mention **DSCI510** in the subject line for faster response)

### 2.1.2 | TA's office hours:

Thursdays 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM, location TBD.

Otherwise, send an email in order to schedule a quick zoom meeting. (please mention **DSCI510** in the subject line for faster response)

## Resources

### 3.1 | Textbook

We will be using ***Python for Everybody*** book as our official textbook, which you can access for free here: <https://www.py4e.com/book.php>. This book comes with lots of useful examples, some of which will be used in lecture slides and lab session code tasks.

Realistically, we probably won't be able to cover everything that's in the book. However, we will refer to the specific chapters when we go over specific subjects. In Table 4.1 you will find references to relevant chapters in the book where you can find more information on the subject matter that is discussed that week.

For more experienced folks we would recommend reading ***Fluent Python, 2nd Edition*** book published by O'Reilly, which you can access for free through [USC Libraries](#).

Go to **Find** -> **Databases** -> **S** -> **Safari Books** and sign in using your USC credentials. From there, search for *Fluent Python* and you should be able to see it at the very top as the first result (look for a lizard on the cover of the book).

### 3.2 | Other Resources

Throughout the course we will be using various other resources links to which will be shared within the corresponding slides and/or handouts. These additional resources are to help in understanding more complex programming constructs. All of these resources are free and easy to access, an example of such resource would be <https://pythontutor.com/>.

# Class Structure and Schedule

## 4.1 | Class Structure

The class is broken down into two phases before and after the midterm exam. Phase 1 deals primarily with becoming familiar with computer programming and learning basic programming constructs in Python. The midterm is there to test your knowledge of the programming language and various constructs learned in the process.

Phase 2 comes after the midterm and goes more in-depth on data structures, how to gather data from the Web, how to clean, format and analyze the data as well as visualizing data for the final project.

In short, the students will learn how computer programming works as well as how to write their own programs in python. From there, the students can take their new skills and apply them on (large) data sets.

The course culminates in the final project, where all aspects of the course come together - from data gathering to analysis and visualization. As such we don't have a final exam, instead you will be graded on the quality of the final project and its components.

## 4.2 | Class Schedule

Throughout the course we will roughly adhere to the schedule as shown in table 4.1, please note that this may change slightly as we go through the materials depending on which subject requires more attention at the time.

Table 4.1: Class schedule

Week	Topics/Activities	Book Chapters
1 (8/25)	Intro to programs, variables, values, types, expressions and statements	Chapter 1, 2
2 (9/1)	Boolean/logical expressions and conditionals, functions and function parameters, flow of execution	Chapter 3, 4
3 (9/8)	Iterations (while and for loops), strings	Chapter 5, 6
4 (9/15)	Python exceptions, file input/output, lists	Chapter 7, 8
5 (9/22)	Dictionaries, tuples, sets, combinations thereof	Chapter 9, 10
6 (9/29)	Python objects, inheritance, operator overloading, creating multiple/dynamic objects/classes	Chapter 14
7 (10/6)	Function parameters, *args, **kwargs, modules and libraries	Chapter 1 - 10, 14
8 (10/13)	Midterm exam	-
9 (10/20)	HTTP, requests library, DOM, Web scraping with BeautifulSoup	Chapter 12
10 (10/27)	Using web services, XML, JSON, web APIs	Chapter 13
11 (11/3)	Web scraping and an introduction to pandas, numpy, and other libraries used in dealing with large sets of data	-
12 (11/10)	Regular expressions and an introduction to various database types	Chapter 11, 15
13 (11/17)	Data Visualization techniques, user interaction and experience	Chapter 16
14 (11/24)	Course review, final discussion	-
15 (12/1)	Work on Final Project	-
16 (12/8)	Final Project Due	-

For the official academic calendar please visit <https://arr.usc.edu/academic-calendar/>



# Grading

## 5.0.1 | Grading Scheme

We will be using the following grading scheme for the course:

Lab Assignments:	30%
Midterm Exam:	30%
Final Project:	40%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

Grades will range from A through F.

The following is a rough breakdown for grading:

94 - 100	= A
90 - 93	= A-
87 - 89	= B+
84 - 86	= B
80 - 83	= B-
77 - 79	= C+
74 - 76	= C
70 - 73	= C-
67 - 69	= D+
64 - 66	= D
60 - 63	= D-
< 60	= F

*Grading for the course will be based on the following components:*

## 5.0.2 | Lab Assignments

Following each lecture there will be weekly laboratory assignments. These assignments are designed to reinforce the content discussed in lectures. Lab assignments are comprised of various coding tasks and the students are expected to submit them online (the exact methods are to be announced in the first lecture). They are to be completed individually, during the lab session or taken to-go as homework. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, late submissions are not permitted.

There are no lab assignments in the weeks where we have a midterm exam or when we work on the final project.

### 5.0.3 | Midterm Exam

Halfway through the course we will have a midterm exam to test the students understanding of the general computer programming concepts as well as the Python programming language. Midterm exam will be held in person for the on-campus students. For off-campus students the midterm exam will be online, proctored by somebody from the DEN team.

### 5.0.4 | Final Project

The final project is a culmination of everything that was covered in class applied to a domain of your interest. This is particularly useful to students coming in from other disciplines than computer science.

For example, if you are interested in housing prices you can look up and find data pertaining to locations and average prices for homes in that area and compare that to crime rates as published by the police or sheriffs department. To get to the visualization of those results you will need to write a script that would gather the data, parse and clean the data before analyzing it and ultimately visualizing the data in a way that makes sense and yields new found insights. Some of the lab assignments towards the end of the class will be gearing up towards the final project and you may re-use that code in your final project - therefore it would behove you to start thinking of a subject for your final project as early as possible.

# Academic Conduct

## 6.1 | Plagiarism

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SCampus-Part-B.pdf>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct:

<https://policy.usc.edu/research-and-scholarship-misconduct/>.

## 6.2 | Use of AI/LLMs

Use of AI and specifically Large Language Models (LLMs) *is allowed*. However, it is only allowed as a tool to assist in learning. That is to say, that you may use AI models such as **ChatGPT** or **Claude 2** to help understand the assignments, to ask generic questions about programming in Python and help you by generating code samples that could be of use to explain how certain programming constructs work. Submitting assignments completely generated by AI ***is strictly prohibited*** and when discovered will be awarded 0 points for the assignment. We will be utilizing additional software to check for code generated by an AI.

## Support Systems

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 - 24/7 on call*

<https://sites.usc.edu/counselingandmentalhealth/>

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 - 24/7 on call*

<https://988lifeline.org/>

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355 (WELL) - 24/7 on call*

<https://sites.usc.edu/clientservices/>

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX - (213) 821-8298*

<https://eeotix.usc.edu/>

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

<https://campussupport.usc.edu/trojans-care-4-trojans/>

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776*

<https://osas.usc.edu/>

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/note-takers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710*

<https://campussupport.usc.edu/>

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

<https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

<https://www.usc.edu/emergency/>

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000; HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call*

<https://dps.usc.edu/>

Non-emergency assistance and safety information.



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