**CMSC 150-04 – Introduction to Computing**

**Fall 2024 Syllabus**



**Instructor**: Dr. M Charity (they/them)

[First name: M (yes, just the letter); Last name: Charity]

**Email**: [mcharit2@richmond.edu](mailto:mcharit2@richmond.edu)

**Office**: Jepsen Hall 218

**Office Hours**: Monday + Wednesday [3:30pm – 5:30pm]

(Send me an email if you can’t make those times)



**Lecture**: Monday, Wednesday 9:00 - 10:15a Jepsen G06

**Lab**: Friday 1:30 – 3:30p Jepsen G06



*Intro to Python for Computer Science and Data Science: Learning to Program with AI, Big Data and The Cloud.* 1st Edition. Paul J. Deitel, Harvey M. Deitel. ISBN: 0135404673.

Free online version through UofR library

1. Goto [library.richmond.edu](https://library.richmond.edu/)
2. Type in the book title in the OneSearch search bar
3. Find the book with the rainbow elephant on the cover and click “Available Online”

Course Goals

This course is about not only learning the basics of the Python programming language, but coding in general. You will learn to analyze and breakdown a problem, write code to solve said problem, and maintain and optimize the code to make it more efficient. This course will also teach you how to debug your own and others’ programs, how a computer works, programming etiquette, and the fundamentals of logic.

Some of the topics we will cover in this class include variable assignment, expressions, statements, scope, functions, parameters, file I/O, object-oriented programming (OOP), documentation, IDEs, error debugging, program tracing, and more. The topics specifics are included in the class schedule.

**You** -- not an AI -- will learn to write code and take the first steps towards becoming an expert programmer. Ideally, you will come out of this course with the confidence to tackle any real-world computing problem and ready to learn more and contribute to the fast-paced field of computer science.

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All course grades, and announcements will be posted on Blackboard. There will also be a forum on Blackboard for general questions and discussion.

I check my emails and the Blackboard forums Monday – Friday from 9am-6pm. If you email me outside of those times, I can’t guarantee that I’ll get back to you immediately. The best way to reach me is to come in person to office hours.

Course Schedule

Please see the class schedule document posted complement to this syllabus. It may be subject to minor changes as the semester goes on.



All assignments (homework projects and lab assignments) will be done via Python files (.py) Supplementary files will be posted as a zipped file (.zip.) This code and the assignments will be posted and submitted on Blackboard.

There will be random pop quizzes throughout the semester. This is to regularly test your understanding of Python syntax and coding logic. These and the exams will be completed on paper.

The course grade weighting is as follows:

| Homework | 40% |
| --- | --- |
| Lab Assignments | 15% |
| Quizzes | 15% |
| Midterm + Final | 30% |

Final grades are based on the standard grading scale:

| Number Grade | Assigned Grade | Grade Points |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 93 – 100 | A | 4.0 |
| 90 – 92 | A- | 3.7 |
| 87 – 89 | B+ | 3.3 |
| 83 – 86 | B | 3.0 |
| 80 – 82 | B- | 2.7 |
| 77 – 79 | C+ | 2.3 |
| 73 – 76 | C | 2.0 |
| 70 – 72 | C- | 1.7 |
| 67 – 69 | D+ | 1.3 |
| 63 – 66 | D | 1.0 |
| 60 – 62 | D- | 0.7 |
| 0 – 59 | F | 0 |

\*Note: For the Bachelor of Science Degree in the Computer Science department, no course grade may be below C- (1.70)[[1]](#footnote-0)



Assignments are due on Blackboard promptly at 11:59pm. Late submissions will be penalized by *h*% for every hour *h* that it is late. The latest file submitted will be the one that is graded*. There will be no class-wide extensions whatsoever.*

If you cannot come to class or complete an assignment because you are sick, injured, or for some other serious reason, let me know *before* the class or assignment deadline or *at least* 3 days after the class period. Contacting me for an excuse after an assignment deadline has the same *h%* penalty apply. If you miss a quiz or fail to turn in an assignment without contacting me about it or after the grace period, I’ll put the grade in as a 0.

Policies

Course Conduct

Congratulations! You are officially college students! So don’t act like children. Please be respectful, kind, and gracious to everyone in the class. There are no stupid questions whatsoever, and everyone should feel welcome. I have zero tolerance for any form of racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, xenophobia, or any other form of harassment or discrimination in my class. If there is any issue, please let me or another administrator know.

Academic Integrity

As Spiders, I expect you to act and conduct yourselves with integrity and honor; not just socially but with your work and academic career.

You are bound by the Student Honor Code, which you can review at <https://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/pdfs/statutes.pdf>. The honor code expressly prohibits cheating, plagiarism, and lying. Make sure you understand the honor council's definitions of these offenses, and make sure you understand the course Policies 4 policies, especially about using resources.

If you are not sure if something would violate the honor code, ask! If I suspect any violation of the code, I will report it to the honor council; sanctions can range from a 0 for the assignment to an F for the course to expulsion from the university. Don’t let one moment of doubt or lapse in character be the downfall of your career.

Resources and Collaboration

The homework assignments should be able to be completed using only the lecture notes and at most the textbook, so there will most likely be no need to consult external resources. But just in case, the homework assignments are individual, no grouping or collaboration is allowed. If you have a question, consult me. If you use any outside resource (NOT generative AI – see below; forums and tutors are allowed) cite the website source or the person.

The quizzes and exams are closed note – use only your brain.

Lab assignments can be done in pairs, no more than 2 people maximum.

If I suspect cheating of any kind, or dishonesty in the work done, I may ask you to come to my office one-on-one and explain your code. If you cannot explain or justify your work, there will be negative repercussions in the form of a 0 for the assignment, or at worse, an honor code violation and expulsion.

Generative AI

I’m an AI researcher, but I’m also an instructor – and I have very strong opinions on the use of AI in education. Because this is an introductory level class for learning Python, using generative models (including but not limited to ChatGPT, Gemini, Bard, Llama, Claude, and other LLMs) or code assistance tools (i.e. Github Copilot) to write code for the assignments is NOT allowed. Doing so violates the honor code policy and constitutes as plagiarism. If you need clarification on an assignment, ask me or your classmates. **Write your own code**. Having ChatGPT or another LLM *explain code* is allowed, but *strongly discouraged*.

*"Debugging is twice as hard as writing the code in the first place. Therefore, if you write the code as cleverly as possible, you are, by definition, not smart enough to debug it."*

- Brian W. Kernighan (Pioneer UNIX developer)

Generative AI is smart, but not always accurate; if you don’t understand the code output by the model, you probably won’t be able to fix it either. You’re here to learn how to code, not the AI, so why cheat yourself out of an education?



If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. My office door is almost always open. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements. [[2]](#footnote-1)

**Academic Skills Center** (<https://asc.richmond.edu/>): Academic coaches assist students in assessing and developing their academic and life-skills (e.g., critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, test preparation, time management, stress management, etc.). Peer tutors offer assistance in specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.) and will be available for appointments in-person and virtually. Peer tutors are listed on the ASC website. Email Roger Mancastroppa (rmancast@richmond.edu) and Hope Walton (hwalton@richmond.edu) for coaching appointments in academic and life skills.

**Boatwright Library Research Librarians**: (<https://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/> or 289-8876): Research librarians help students with all steps of their research, from identifying or narrowing a topic, to locating, accessing, evaluating, and citing information resources. Librarians support students in their classes across the curriculum and provide individual appointments, class library instruction, tutorials, and research guides (<https://libguides.richmond.edu>). Students can contact an individual librarian (<https://library.richmond.edu/help/liaison-librarians.html>) or ASK a librarian for help via email (library@richmond.edu), text (804-277-9ASK), or chat (<https://library.richmond.edu/chat.html>).

**Career Services**: (<https://careerservices.richmond.edu>/ or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor early in your time at UR.

**Counseling and Psychological Services**: (<https://caps.richmond.edu/> or 289-8119): Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and wellbeing, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include brief consultations, short-term counseling, skills-building classes, therapy groups, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.

**Disability Services**: (<https://disability.richmond.edu/>) The Office of Disability Services works to ensure that qualified students with a disability (whether incoming or current) are provided with reasonable accommodations that enable students to participate fully in activities, programs, services and benefits provided to all students. Please let your professors know as soon as possible if you have an accommodation that requires academic coordination and planning.

**Speech Center**: (<https://speech.richmond.edu/> or 287-6409): Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching and critique sessions are offered by teams of trained student consultants. During scheduled appointments, consultants assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations. We look forward to meeting your public speaking needs.

**Writing Center** (<https://writing.richmond.edu/> or 289-8263): Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work.

1. https://cs.richmond.edu/Academics/major-minor/index.html [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. From Syllabus Insert Regarding Academic & Personal Support Services Hope N. Walton, Director, Academic Skills Center. https://spcs.richmond.edu/\_common/document/facstaff/syllabus-requirements.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)