

COSC 100 — Elements of Computer Science

Patrick Juola

W 6pm–7:40pm, FISH 611

Welcome to COSC 100!

This course is an introductory survey of some of the major topics that form the basis of the modern field of computer science and some of the major issues regarding computers today. The textbooks we will be using are *Exploring Office XP*, by Grauer and Berber, *Computers Are Your Future*, by Daley, published by Prentice-Hall. You will also be required to purchase a pen/flash disk for storing and submitting programs. I also strongly recommend getting some floppy disks as well.

According to the course description, this course covers: *A survey of topics necessary for basic computer literacy*, basically fundamental computer skills and survival concepts. If you’ve ever heard the jokes about “cup holders” and “whiteout on the screen,” or if you have been wondering how to get your computer to print Greek letters for a theology class, then you already have an idea about what you’re supposed to get out of this course.

There are basically two aspects to this course, a technical/practice aspect detailing the *how* of using computers (“How do we get the computer to do such-and-such?”) and a theoretical aspect covering the *why* (“Why does the computer do this?” “Why do we do it this way?”). Each session will incorporate elements from both, giving you knowledge not only of how computers work, but why they work the way they do.

Course/Topic Agenda

Week	Topic(s)	Theory Readings	Tech Readings
11 Jan	Introduction	Intro	Getting Started
18 Jan	Hardware Basics (CPU) [MLK Day]	Ch. 1	PowerPoint 1
25 Jan	Hardware Basics (Peripherals)	Ch. 5	PowerPoint 2
1 Feb	Networking/The Web	Ch. 2	Internet/WWW
8 Feb	Hardware Basics (Storage)	Ch. 3	Word 1–2
15 Feb	Internet Ethics [1st Midterm Exam]	Ch. 4	Word 3
22 Feb	Software Basics : Applications	Ch. 5	Word 4
1 Mar	Algorithms	Ch. 6	Excel 1–2
8 Mar	SPRING BREAK (no classes)		
15 Mar	Software Basics : Systems	Ch. 7	Excel 3
22 Mar	[2nd Midterm Exam]		Excel 4
29 Mar	Databases	Ch. 8	Access 1–2
5 Apr	Multimedia	Ch. 9	Access 3–4
12 Apr	Advanced Networks		Internet/WWW
19 Apr	Final Exam		

Rules of the course

Grading This course will be graded on the standard ABCDF scale, with plusses and minuses *for graduate students only*. I will try to use a standard 90+=A, 80-89=B, etc. scale, but I reserve the right to alter the curve *in your favor* (i.e. to lower the requirements for an A). My intention is to have the midpoint of the class receive a low B or a high C, subject of course to work of “acceptable”

quality being received. *Verbum sap* : this is a harder curve than most other college courses and almost certainly lower than you were used to in high school.

Grading will be on the following basis : 30% will be on the basis of periodic homework assignments, 30% on the basis of your midterm scores, and 40% on the basis of your score on the (comprehensive) final exam. All examinations will be in-class, closed-book/note, and comprehensive over all material thus presented. I will not include your single lowest homework score in calculating your average.

Homework Homework will normally be assigned on Tuesday or Wednesday and due on the following Tuesday/Wednesday. Homework is typically due at the *beginning* of class. Late assignments will not, in general, be accepted. Yes, I'm serious about this. Start your assignments early and come for help if you need it.

Class conduct Attendance in class is not mandatory. Of course, strictly speaking, passing the class isn't mandatory either. Attendance *is* strongly encouraged. Students are still responsible for homework assigned or due on missed classes. Furthermore, I hope to be providing interesting, useful, and relevant information in lecture that won't be available just by reading the text. I will also be answering questions and providing explanations for the benefit of the bewildered. For this reason, I hope you all see fit to attend. And on this note. . .

Questions are good. Questions are the easiest way for me to figure out if everyone understands. Questions are also one of the best ways for you to have your difficulties cleared up. I hope you feel comfortable asking questions as confusion occurs. For this reason, I hope (and expect) that everyone will participate in classroom discussion, but it will not be a part of the grade.

Students with documented disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations if needed. If you need accommodations, please contact the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services in 309 Duquesne Union (412-396-6657) as soon as possible. Accommodations will not be granted retrospectively.

Academic integrity Modern programming is not often a single-person project. However, students will still be expected to abide by all the rules of conduct outlined in the Student Handbook. This specifically applies to copying or plagiarizing other people's work. Unfortunately, due to some recent abuses, I have been forced to tighten up my policies.

The Student Handbook specifically (but not exclusively) forbids

- cheating
- misappropriation of credit
- failure to clearly identify other people's work
- lying to instructors/officials
- assisting another in any of the above

Any student violating any of these rules *will* fail the course and have appropriate disciplinary measures initiated against him or her. This specifically applies to programs as well as to papers and essays; although I encourage you to help each other on program *design* and *debugging*, but I do not want (and will not allow) you to copy each other's code, to submit joint or plagiarized work as your own, or to copy blocks of code or essays from the Internet, even with attribution. If you didn't write it, don't submit it. For further information and procedures, consult your Student Handbook.

Similarly, due to prior abuses, there will be *no* late submissions of assignments and no makeup tests available. Don't even ask. Exceptions will only be made in cases of genuine emergency (medical, death in immediate family, expected military callup, &c.) *as documented by appropriate professionals*, or with the written permission of the Dean of the College.

Getting in touch Office hours are there for your benefit; please use them. There are few things as frustrating, from my end, as sitting for hours on end in an empty office, getting no questions, and then grading a bunch of dismal homeworks showing that no one understood a word of the lecture. I also have a telephone in my office and check Email frequently.

And if things start to go dreadfully wrong, please tell me. Despite the draconic tone of this syllabus, I do try to be reasonable in cases of dire emergency *if* you can tell me while things are still fixable.

Your expectations So that's what I expect from the class. What can you expect? Well, organized and useful class conduct, at a minimum. Accurate, responsive, and helpful feedback on things going badly or going well. Other than that, part of what I hope is that you will help me in telling me what you expect to help *you* get the most out of this course, this department, and this university.

Contact Information

Office Hours : College Hall 414, MW 2:30-3pm or by appointment
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