

CMPSCI 120: Introduction to Problem Solving with the Internet

Fall 2007

<http://courses.umass.edu/cmpsc120/>

Course Overview: This course will provide non-CMPSCI majors with the basic skills needed to use the internet effectively. We will discuss keeping yourself safe online, various forms of online communication, searching and finding information and other resources online, web page construction, JavaScript programming, and social and legal issues pertaining to the internet. I am also open to student suggestions for topics they would like to learn about in this course.

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Please include the words “CMPSCI 120” in the subject line, that way I can immediately identify messages pertaining to this class.

Teaching Assistant: Yariv Levy. Email: ylevy@cs.umass.edu.

Meeting Times: This course meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30PM to 3:45PM in room 323 of the Engineering Lab (ELAB).

Office Hours: Regular office hours will be announced shortly. I am also available immediately after class for quick questions. If you have a short question (a minute or so), feel free to drop by my office any time. Please send me email if you can't make regular office hours, and we will set up an appointment. Don't be shy about doing this; I always set aside some extra time for these “unscheduled” office hours.

It is my standard policy to not answer questions related to the course content over email. This is what office hours and the online class discussion group are for.

Prerequisites: Some hands-on experience with PCs, Macintoshes, or UNIX. No programming experience required. You should understand the basics of using a computer and a web browser (e.g., Internet Explorer, Firefox, Mozilla, Opera, Safari, etc.)

Other Requirements: Since this course is all about computing and the internet, you will need regular access to a computer connected to the internet. A portion of the work for this class will be done on OIT's web hosting server; you can access this computer remotely from your own computer or the OIT labs. If you do not have an OIT account already, please visit room A107 in the Lederle Tower (lowrise) to get this set up as soon as possible. Incoming undergraduates are automatically issued accounts; they may be activated by going to <http://account.oit.umass.edu/UMActivate>.

Texts: (not required, but both suggested)

- Lehnert, Wendy G. *Web 101*. 3rd ed. Boston: Pearson Education, 2008.
- Quigley, Ellie. *JavaScript By Example*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004.

Note: it is likely you will be able to use the JavaScript textbook during the third exam.

Course Work and Participation: There will be a number of homework assignments (no more than ten). Parts of the assignments will be written and parts will be electronic (webpage creation and JavaScript programming); the written portions must be turned in on paper.

You will typically have one week to complete each assignment. The assignments are due at the start of class. Late assignments will not be accepted (so just turn in whatever you have done by the due date). Homework may be typed or hand-written neatly. You will not receive any credit for solutions we cannot read.

There will be three exams, all equally weighted. The first two exams will be given during regular class periods; the third exam will be given in our assigned time slot during finals week. This third exam will not be comprehensive; it will cover only material discussed since the previous exam.

A large percentage of your final grade will come from the final project. This is a website development project that will be discussed in detail a few weeks into the course.

I encourage students to ask questions during class. Please do not be shy about this; if you are confused about something, it is likely that one or more of your classmates are as well. I expect you to be active during class by asking questions when you have them, and answering questions I may ask of you. There will also be an online class discussion group. If you are shy about asking questions in class, you can use this resource.

As for attendance, while there is no required attendance policy, you are responsible for all material covered in class. Additionally, because of the speed at which we will cover material and the limited number of office hours, office hour time cannot be spent simply re-teaching an entire lecture if you miss one. Therefore, I strongly urge you to attend all classes. And finally, although failure to attend class may not result in a poor overall grade, the goals of higher education — which extend beyond grade-point averages — are achieved through a dialogue which can exist only when student and teacher have made the commitment to participate.

Online Discussion Group: There is an email mailing list set up for this class; the address is `cmpsci-120-1-fal07@courses.umass.edu`. This means that emails sent to that email address will be sent to all students in the class, the instructor, and the teaching assistant. This list is created automatically using your `student.umass.edu` email addresses, so please check your student email regularly. When you post a message to the list, make sure you are writing from your `student.umass.edu` mailing address, or else the message may be automatically rejected.

Please use the mailing list for asking questions related to the content of the course rather than emailing the instructor or TA. This way, there are around sixty people available to answer your question instead of just two. Students are encouraged to answer each other's questions on the list.

Please think before posting to these groups. For example, a good item to post would be asking for clarification about something from lecture, while not-so-good item would be asking "What's the answer to homework question number 3?"

Assignments and Grading: Assignments will be handed out in class and/or posted on the class webpage. You should check the class webpage regularly for updates. *You are responsible for changes announced in class or on the webpage.*

- Exams (3); 35% total, tentatively scheduled for October 11, November 15, and our assigned time during finals week
- Final Project; 25%
- Homework; 40% total

Grades of A-, B-, C-, D- are guaranteed with averages of 90%, 80%, 70%, 60%, respectively. Grades are not curved; your grade is based on your demonstrated mastery of the material, and is not influenced by the abilities or lack thereof of your fellow students.

Note: You must make a good-faith attempt at the final project in order to pass this class. In other words, regardless of your overall numeric grade in the class, you will not pass without completing the final project.

I will be posting grades on the class website under an “alias” you may choose. If you do not want your grades posted online, that is fine as well.

Excused Absences and Late Work: Excused absences are those due to serious illnesses, a death in the immediate family, religious observation, or other approved extenuating circumstances.

- Late homework will not be accepted under any circumstances. If you know you are going to be absent, homework may be turned in early to the Computer Science main office or placed in my mailbox in the Computer Science building. For excused absences, the homework assignment in question will not count in the grade calculations.
- Make-up exams will only be given in cases of excused absences on the day of the exam. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances (or other foreseen circumstances) in advance. Notice should be provided as soon as possible but no later than one week prior to the exam for the midterm(s) and the final.

Students claiming an excused absence from an exam due to unforeseen events must apply in writing and furnish documentary support (such as from a health care professional who treated the student) for any assertion that the absence qualifies as an excused absence. The support should explicitly indicate the dates or times the student was incapacitated due to illness. Self-documentation of illness is not sufficient support to excuse the absence. The instructor is not obligated to offer a make-up exam unless the failure to perform was due to an excused absence.

- Students wishing to turn in the final project late due to the extenuating circumstances described above should speak to the instructor. Otherwise, no late submissions will be accepted.

Students with Disabilities: If a student has a documented learning or physical disability, all reasonable efforts will be made to meet the individual needs of that student. If you need special accommodations, please make an appointment (within the first two weeks of classes) with the instructor to discuss your needs. All discussions will be strictly confidential.

Academic Honesty: Students should talk to each other about the subject matter of this class and help each other. It is fine to discuss the assignments and ask questions about them. I encourage such questions in class, in office hours, or on the class discussion group, as well as elsewhere. There are also various books and online resources available. While using these resources to help you understand concepts is fine, there is a line past which you must not go, e.g., copying someone else’s work — including computer code — without acknowledging the source is plagiarism. This is a serious academic violation, likely to result in failure of the course or worse. If a significant part of one of your solutions is due to someone else or something you’ve read, then you must acknowledge your source. Furthermore, everything you turn in must be written by yourself, in your own words. You may get an idea from somewhere or someone and acknowledge that, but you must still understand it and explain it yourself. A copied solution, even with the source acknowledged, will be considered plagiarism. The exception is if it is in quotation marks and cited specifically. But in this case, don’t bother because you won’t get credit for quoting someone else’s solution.

This class will comply with the academic honesty policy outlined at http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/code_conduct/acad_honest.htm.

Topics covered: The following list of topics is tentative, and may change due to student interest. For most of the duration of the class, class meetings will focus on “book” topics on Tuesdays, and webpage-related topics on Thursdays.

- Introduction (overview of computer architecture and the internet)
- Safety and Privacy Online (AUPs, passwords, hackers, scams, viruses, phishing, identity theft, etc.)
- Email (how it works behind the scenes, protocols, folders and filters, spam, etc.)
- Virtual Communities & Web 2.0 (email lists, message boards, instant messaging, blogs, wikis, etc.)
- Searching the Web (search engines, query construction, assessing credibility, etc.)
- Software on the Internet (types of software, finding, downloading, installing, etc.)
- Encryption (private-key encryption, public-key encryption, digital signatures, etc.)
- Webpage Construction (HTML)
- JavaScript (adding interactivity to your webpages with programming)