

CompSci 161 Winter 2023 Syllabus and Course Reference

Lectures are held MWF 11:00 - 11:50 PM in ELH 100. Attendance is encouraged: it has been the instructor's experience that students who attend lectures tend to perform better in the class. You are required to attend exams, which are conducted **synchronously and in person**. You are responsible for the material covered in the lecture. **Students should not assume that a virtual-remote option will be available at any point in the quarter.**

Course announcements : On occasion, course announcements may be posted on the course webpage. You are considered to be aware of the announcement 24 hours after it has been posted, regardless of whether you read the alert. Check the course webpage every school day.

Students with disabilities: Any students who feel that they may need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Disability Services Center [online](#) or by phone at (949) 824-7494 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations, such as alternative test-taking environments or note-taking services, can be arranged for you in a timely way. *This was written pre-Covid. If you need to contact DSC and are unable to do so, please contact the professor ASAP and we will investigate together.*

Commercial note-taking: Students are prohibited from selling (or being paid for taking) notes during this course to or by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of the professor teaching this course. This includes, but is not limited to, a prohibition for providing notes, handouts, slides, assignment descriptions, or code to websites such as Chegg, Koofers, or CourseHero. Violations of this will be treated as a serious violation of the student code of conduct.

Lecture Recording: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, electronic video and/or audio recording by students is not permitted during classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities unless the student obtains express written permission from the instructor. If permission is granted, any distribution of the recording is prohibited. Students with specific electronic recording accommodations authorized by the Office of Disability Services do not require instructor permission; however, the instructor must be notified of any such accommodation prior to recording. Any distribution of such recordings is prohibited.

Primary Textbook: *Algorithms* by Jeff Erickson. This is available at algorithms.wtf ; students who prefer a printed copy have an option for that, too.

I also suggest reading:

Algorithm Design and Applications

by Michael T. Goodrich and Roberto Tamassia

The book is available in hard copy from the usual sources and online at a much cheaper rate.

It is expected that you be polite in all course related interactions, whether with your instructor, TAs, lab tutors, learning assistants, readers, or classmates. Disruptive behavior may result in an F in the class, as well as referral to appropriate authorities.

Grade calculation: The following relative weighting of assignments is based on the assumption that in-person instruction remains for the quarter. In the event that remote instruction is reinstituted by the university this will be revised and the new weights will be announced. Artifacts due prior to that point will retain their relative weights.

- Problem Sets 14%
- Warm-Up Exercises 10%
- Three mid-quarter topic exams 21% total
 - Weighted equally at 7% each
- Demonstrated Competency of Core Topics at Exams 55%
 - Using the Divide and Conquer Paradigm: 15%
 - Using the Dynamic Programming Paradigm: 20%
 - Proving the correctness of a greedy algorithm: 20%

Before you can have any work graded in this class, you must get a perfect score on the syllabus acknowledgement and agreement¹, sometimes known as a “syllabus quiz.” This quiz is not worth any points on its own, but no submissions made prior to completion of the syllabus quiz to full marks will be credited, nor will extensions be provided due to failure to complete the assignment. Furthermore, completing this successfully is required to be added to the system to which all assignments are to be submitted and to which all grades are posted.

Points towards the demonstrated competency of the core topics section must come from topic exams or the final exam. To pass the course you must pass the topic competency category and have an overall passing average in the course.

Letter grades will be assigned based on the aforementioned relative weights, or the adjusted weights in the event of remote instruction. We will neither have a straight scale nor a straight curve. It is guaranteed that 90% of the available points in the class will constitute at least an A-, although the cut-line for an A- may be lower than that. Similarly, collecting at least 80% of the available points will be at least a B-, and 70% will be sufficient for at least a C-. I will not know the cut-offs until after all artifacts have been graded. Students asking if the class is curved, or what the curve will be, or asking for the instructor to curve the class, will be ineligible for any adjustments to the cut-point that may otherwise benefit their classmates. If you do not know what a curve is, or why you probably don't want to ask for one in most classes, I encourage you to read up on how a curve is different from an adjustment to grade cut points. The only factor in your grade is demonstrated knowledge in the class, and the only reconsideration requests granted are based on marking error. Requests for a grade bump based on other reasoning, such as scholarship requirements, academic eligibility, or transfer needs, will not be considered. If you need a particular grade in CompSci 161, the time to consider that is early in the quarter. There is plenty of opportunity for help, practice, and credit during the quarter. On a related note, there are no opportunities for extra credit.

¹ The syllabus acknowledgement and agreement is available at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScdfQupBjb3ZITFNo6wKbtlsxZU64q3oEwx5FyNE5SDCa4Y9Q/viewform>

For information about artifact submissions and grading policies, including grade reconsideration requests, please see the document “Artifact Submission and Grading Policies.” That document is incorporated into this syllabus by reference.

Getting help in this class.

The instructor and the TAs will also regularly hold live help sessions. *These are a great time to ask questions about lecture material, the associated reading, problem sets, and the like.*

Students who wish to contact course staff asynchronously should do so in a manner best suited to their question. Unless otherwise announced, the EdDiscussion forum should be preferred.

You may post anonymously on EdStem if you wish. You are anonymous only to your classmates; instructional staff may still see who you are.

If your question is of general interest, or might be answerable by anyone in the class, post the question on EdStem with a privacy setting that allows your classmates to answer. For example, if you are not sure when an artifact is due, or you have a question about a topic that came up in lecture, then that question fits into this category. Do not post your solution, in part or in whole, to something you need to submit for credit in any manner that classmates may see. Course Staff are instructed not to answer questions in this category unless the privacy setting is correct. For example, if you make a private post asking when problem set 2 is due, it may be ignored.

If your question can be answered by any member of course staff, but is not for viewing by your fellow students, post it on EdStem with a privacy setting to instructors only. For example, if you have a bug in your code that you cannot resolve, and you are having trouble finding the time to get to office hours, this would be a great option. Be sure to include relevant details, such as the block of code that is not working, the error message, and what you have tried to do to fix it. (We don't have programming assignments this quarter of CompSci 161, but that fits the general idea) If you aren't sure, feel free to make the post private, although we may request you to make it public after it has been answered.

If you need to reach your instructor specifically, use email. Your instructor is Michael Shindler, reachable by email at **mikes at ics dot uci dot edu**. Emails sent for course related purposes must be sent *to this address*, must come from your UCI (or ICS) email address, include your full name and ID number in the *body* of the email, and have a *meaningful subject line* that begins with the substring “CompSci 161” -- **due to your instructor's large volume of emails, any that do not conform to this will probably not be read and do not count as having been sent for purposes of the course**. Emails that should have been a wider-reaching EdStem post will get, at most, a reply indicating such. *If your instructor ever tells you to email him, be sure to follow this requirement.* Please remember that email is an asynchronous method of communication, and response times will likely reflect this.

Why? I get **a lot** of emails. I have an email filter that catches emails sent to that address, from a UCI/ICS email address, and with that subject line prefix. By asking students to do this, I can sit down periodically, find emails about the class(es) I'm teaching, and respond to them.

Do not email course staff other than the professor about the class without prior arrangement.

As a four-unit class, CompSci 161 is expected to take 12 hours of student time in a typical week. A typical week will consist of three hours of lecture, two hours of discussion, an hour or two of reading and preparing for lectures, and some time spent on problem sets or reviewing material for exams. While most students will probably spend more time during exam weeks, I recommend that you study on a regular basis. The material in this class is better learned that way; students often have difficulty “cramming” for exams in this course.

Exam Rules: Exams will be held synchronously in class hours. The actual time allowed for non-final exams will be 45 minutes of test-taking. For detailed information about the exam rules, refer to the “In-Person Exam Logistics and Rules” document, which is incorporated into this syllabus by reference. You will be expected to abide by these policies during your exams.

Missed Exam Policy: If you need to miss an exam for any reason, and this is for reasons the instructor accepts, then we may reconsider how to calculate your grade. For reasons the student could have known about in advance, it is expected that the student contacts the instructor as soon as possible after the conflict is known. If the conflict could have been known before the exam, the instructor will not provide any relief if informed after the exam unless it would have been unreasonable to do so prior to the exam. If you need to miss an exam, or if you do miss an exam, you must email the instructor as soon as possible upon knowing this. *This is especially important for students who might be exposed to illness, especially Covid. If you are sick, especially if you might be contagious, please let your instructor know. Please do not risk your health or that of your classmates to take an exam. Documented sickness will always constitute an excused missed exam.*

Exam Seating For students who have a preference for exam seating, such as if you need a desk intended for left- or right-handed students, or if you tend to ask questions during the exam, please fill out the following form no later than Friday, January 20:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf9B_aQVpFOPdJUebgscTRR5XimYqY0jTt4MVmiHCJ0HKfFCw/viewform

Academic Honesty Policy: see the common policy document “Academic Honesty Guide” for information about academic honesty in this course. A copy of that document is available on the course webpage. That document is incorporated into this syllabus by reference.

About this Document: This document is made primarily to communicate to students the plans for the quarter. If any policies in this become untenable, they may be changed. Students should assume all policies are in effect unless told otherwise by the professor. It is the instructor's intent to provide maximum flexibility while maintaining the educational environment. I believe the flexibility I provide will be sufficient for most students; if your situation is such that more flexibility is necessary, please get in touch with the instructor as soon as you can. Information for how to contact appears later in this document.

Professor David Kay has the following language in his syllabus and I am using it here, too: *We're required to say that in unusual circumstances, these criteria could change. We won't make changes arbitrarily, but the world has had a lot of special circumstances lately and we'd like everyone to try to be flexible, rolling as best we can with the punches that come our way.*