Welcome to CS 135

Instructors: See edX for details

Other course personnel: see edX for details

- ISAs (Instructional Support Assistants)
- IAs (Instructional Apprentices)
- ISC (Instructional Support Coordinator)
- TAs (Teaching Assistants)
Themes of the course

- Design (the art of creation)
- Abstraction (finding commonality, neglecting details)
- Refinement (revisiting and improving initial ideas)
- Syntax (how to say it), expressiveness (how easy it is to say and understand), and semantics (the meaning of what’s being said)
- Communication (in general)

The approach is by learning how to **think** about solving problems using a computer.
Course Structure

- Self-study: Absorb the basic CS135 concepts on your own time.
- Q&A: Meet with an instructor in-person or on-line (depending on your section) to get questions answered.
- Assignments: Individual work to demonstrate what you’ve learned, receiving feedback from course staff.
- Exams: An opportunity for us to assess what you’ve learned.

All of this is supported by office hours in which you can receive more individualized help.

We use a learning management system called "edX". More in a moment.

All times for the course are with respect to Waterloo time.
The content for self-study a collection of "slides" (admittedly still an artifact of the lecture-oriented version of the course) supplemented with commentary. You’re currently reading a "slide".

Self-study modules have "self-check exercises" embedded in the commentary. These provide you with immediate feedback on whether you are understanding the content.
Self-check exercises

- Self-checks give you immediate feedback on your understanding.
- They are worth 10% of your course grade as an incentive to do them.
- To earn marks, must be completed by 11:59pm (Waterloo time!) on Fridays – don’t fall behind!
- The first answer submitted is the one that counts.

Marks:
- Let $n$ be the number of questions.
- Let $x$ be the number that were submitted on time with a correct answer.
- Let $y$ be the number that were submitted on time where the first answer is correct.
- \[
    \text{SelfCheckMark} = 10 \cdot \min(1, \frac{x}{3n} + \frac{4y}{3n})
\]
Q&A is available either in-person or on-line, depending on the section you are enrolled in.

Come and ask your questions about the course!

If you have questions you’d like addressed in Q&A, post them in the appropriate module’s discussion forum. Questions can also be asked directly in the Q&A, of course. But posting ahead of time allows instructors to prepare better examples/answers.

Questions about homework assignments should be held until after general questions about the course material have been handled. We can’t address questions about your code in public.
Details: Assignments

Timing: About 11 assignments, typically due Tuesday at 5:00pm, Waterloo time. Remember that clocks change in Waterloo on Nov. 7. The current Waterloo time is in the upper left corner of the CS135 web site.

Software: DrRacket v8.2(https://racket-lang.org)

Computers: In normal times we have labs available for your use. In these abnormal times, you’ll need to provide your own computer. In the past, almost all students have used their own computers.

A00: Due soon. Must complete before you are allowed to submit any subsequent assignment.

Submission: To the MarkUs system, either via edX or directly. More in A00. Submit early; submit often. No (really) late submissions. No email submissions.

Assignments are individual work
CS135 will have two midterm exams and one final exam:

- Midterm 1 (Oct 8, 2021)
- Midterm 2 (Nov 12, 2021)
- Final (date to be determined by the Registrar)

Do not make holiday travel plans before you know the date of all your final exams AND take into account the snow dates.
10% Self-check exercises
55% Assignments (roughly weekly)
7% Midterm 1 exam
10% Midterm 2 exam
18% Final exam

To pass the course:
⇒ Your weighted assignment average must be 50% or greater.
⇒ Your weighted average of the midterms and final must be 50% or greater.
edX is the learning management system used for CS135. By now you should already have an account on it.

edX:

- contains lots of course-related information.
- has the course calendar with due dates.
- contains the assignment specifications and tools to submit your answers.
- hosts the discussion forums.
- and lots more!
Getting help

- **Group Question & Answer**: Scheduled times on Mondays. In-person for some sections and on-line (using Microsoft Teams) for everyone else.

- **Office hours**: Held on-line using Microsoft Teams. Instructions on edX.
  - 1-to-1 with an undergrad tutor (Instructional Support Assistant) or instructor.
  - many-to-1 group sessions, usually with an instructor.

- **Discussion forums**: On-line discussions in edX where you can ask written questions. Your fellow students and course staff answer them.
  - Use meaningful subject headings (not just “A3 problem”; what’s your specific problem?).
  - Search previous posts before posting; **Don’t duplicate**.
  - Possible to post privately if necessary.

All help is student-driven (including group Q&A). You bring the questions.
Read the CS135 Survival/Thrival Guide as soon as possible.

- Keep up with your assignments. Start them early. **This is key!**
- Go over your assignments and assessments; learn from your mistakes.
- Visit office hours as needed; earlier is better.
- Follow our advice on approaches to writing programs (e.g. design recipe, templates).
- Read your mail sent to your UW email account. We will **only** send to and reply to your UW email account!
- Integrate exam study into your weekly routine.
- Maintain a “big picture” perspective: look beyond the immediate task or topic.
- You must do your own work.
- Policy 71 - Student Discipline: plagiarism, sharing assignments, etc.
- Running out of time? It is better to hand in a partial assignment or nothing than to hand in someone else’s work.
- Do not post code from your assignment to the discussion forums. If you’ve saved it using edX, we can access it.
- Don’t post solutions to homework sites. We monitor them and flag plagiarism there too.
The teaching material used in CS 135 is the property of its authors. This includes:

- These study modules
- Assignment specifications and solutions
- Assessments and solutions

Sharing this material without the owner’s permission is a violation of their intellectual property rights.
Goals of this module

- You should understand how the course is organized.
- You should be familiar with the course resources available to you.
- You should know what you need to do to earn the mark you desire.
- You should know how to avoid plagiarism.