CS 24: Introduction to Computing Systems — Fall 2026

Course Policies

In-Person Assessments

In this course, there will be both *formative* (i.e., primarily intended to help you learn something new) and *summative* assessments (i.e., primarily intended to see what you have learned).

Formative Assessments

This course has two types of formative assessments: in-class exercises (lecture worksheets) and oral share-outs with members of course staff (called "DUEs").

Lecture Worksheets

During lectures, we give in-class exercises (ranging from multiple choice to fill-in-the-blank to write an explanation).

- We will collect, scan, and return lecture worksheets via Gradescope to track lecture attendance. However, lecture attendance **is not** counted as part of your course grade.
- All devices (phones, iPads, laptops, meta glasses) must be put away during working time.
  - Exception: using e.g. a tablet to work on a digital copy of the worksheet.
  - Continued use of such devices will result in being asked to leave the lecture.
- These worksheets are not intended to replace lecture notes. Rather, they are intended as formative check-ins to help you learn the lecture material.

DUEs

A DUE (**D**emo, **U**nderstand, **E**xperiment) session is a series of short low-pressure collaborations with several members of course staff.

Demo, Understand, Experiment

Each segment of the DUE is intended to exercise a different part of your "computational brain:"

- The **D**emo component will allow you to show off the final product that you worked on to an audience.
- The **U**nderstand component will stretch you to explain the higher-level ideas in your code, rather than the individual lines. This is a super important part of collaboration when working on code with a team.
- The **E**xperiment component will ask you to re-imagine what might happen if your code were somehow slightly different. To engage your computational thinking skills, we will ask you to make a guess before looking at the actual result, and we'll work through any differences. This form of experimentation has been shown in various educational research to significantly improve learners' conceptual understanding of higher-order concepts.

DUE Expectations and Grading

One of the goals of DUEs is for you to communicate what you did during the project to another human, which definitely necessitates that you **understand** what you did during the project.

Since this demonstration of understanding is core to the course learning objectives, you will not pass the project if you are unable to demonstrate this understanding during the DUE session. Rather than receive a 0, you will be asked to do a "re-DUE" with different questions and potentially to do the project a second time to demonstrate the required understanding. **It is an honor code violation to discuss the contents of a DUE with other students.**

If you cannot make a DUE, you must contact course leadership at `cs024@caltech.edu`.

Summative Assessments

There will be three written, paper, summative, assessments: two midterms and a final. The midterms will each be held during a normal lecture period, and the final will be held during the final exam week. Each of them will be made up of two types of questions: (1) variants of worksheet questions (slightly modified worksheet questions from lectures), and (2) "novel" questions (questions that test your ability to adapt your skills to a new problem). Please see the following table for details on the various summative assessments in this course:

What?	When?	Novel %	Grade Weight
Midterm 1	$\approx$ Week 3 (~10/19)	$\leq 40\%$	25%
Midterm 2	$\approx$ Week 7 (~11/16)	$\leq 50\%$	35%
Final	Finals Week	$\leq 100\%$	Replacement

The final exam may be used to **fully replace** none, either, or both of your midterm scores, whatever helps your grade the most. This final exam will be cumulative, with an equal emphasis on all the material in the course.

Regrade Requests

Since we read and grade your summative assessments manually, we might make a mistake in applying the rubric. If you find an error in grading, contact course leadership at `cs024@caltech.edu` briefly explaining which rubric items should or should not have been applied, and why.

Regrade requests made in-person will be redirected to email, and not otherwise considered.

Course Grades

Please note that there is no way to receive a D in this course. Any score below 68% is considered an F. Any score at least 68% will receive at least a D+; above 70% at least a C-; above 80% at least a B-; above 90% at least an A-. See the syllabus for a grade weight breakdown.

A+ and "Distinction"

In this course, to be eligible for an A+ grade, you must **both** earn an A and go beyond the required material in a recognizable way.