Overview

This class has several objectives. We want you to

1. be familiar with the most common data structures and algorithms and recognize when to use them.
2. be able to implement non-trivial algorithms and data structures in C,
3. be able to analyze time and space complexity of algorithms,
4. recognize intractable problems and prove they are NP-complete,
5. be able to prove simple correctness properties, and
6. be able to complete nontrivial programming tasks under a deadline.

To accomplish these goals, we’ll cover the ‘greatest hits’ of computer science: a selection of the most important fundamental concepts in the design and analysis of algorithms and data structures, including correctness, complexity analysis, and NP-completeness. In addition to implementing some of the classics, you will design some algorithms yourself. Note that, although this class involves writing some proofs, it also involves significant programming. You should already be a fluent programmer in a C-like language, be able to generate standalone command-line programs under Linux, understand some basic data structures (linked lists, binary trees, and hash tables), and have some basic experience writing proofs. By the end of the class, you will be conversant with the standard toolbox of algorithms, be able to implement them efficiently, and be able to adapt them to other problems that you encounter in your work. You will also be able to do basic proofs of correctness and complexity.

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Please come to our office hours! We’re always interested in talking with students. If you’d like to talk to us but can’t attend office hours, it’s easy to set up a time — just email us or catch us after class. However, if you have a specific question about an assignment, please do not talk with us or email us — please instead post on the course forum at piazza.com! This ensures that you get the fastest possible response and that everyone in the class stays on the same page.

Required Texts


I think that these are both important books worth owning if you are serious about computer science. They should be available at the UNH Bookstore, the Durham Book Exchange, and on-line (I’m a fan of used.addall.com). If you buy used books, please be sure to select the correct editions. Note that ‘exercises’
in CLRS appear at the end of each section (e.g., exercise 7.2-1 is the first one at the end of section 2 in chapter 7) and ‘problems’ appear at the end of each chapter (e.g., problem 7-2).

I also recommend Kleinberg and Tardos, Algorithm Design (2005). It is not as complete as CLRS but it has great motivation, discussion, and examples. Bentley’s Programming Pearls (Second Edition, 2000) has case studies of real applications. Garey and Johnson’s Computers and Intractability (1979) is a readable introduction to NP-completeness. Books like Aziz et al’s Elements of Programming Interviews (2012) have helpful practice problems.

Evaluation

Tentative weighting:

- 80% 14 weekly assignments. Some will have more programming, some will have more written work.
- 9% midterm exam
- 11% final exam

Each assignment will have extra challenges for those students taking the graduate version of the course.

Attending lectures and recitations is recommended but not required. If you attend, please participate and don’t sleep, text, or work on something else. I’ll ask everyone to show their Wildcat Pass at the start of every class, so please check that it’s valid before you come to campus.

Depending on the number of students in the class, we reserve the right to grade only a selected subset of each assignment, which will be chosen just before grading begins and will be the same for all students. Clarity will be considered when grading your work—if it’s hard for us to understand, it will be hard for us to give you credit.

Assignment deadlines are not flexible and there will be no credit for late work. This means that you can ask about solutions to homework problems immediately after the deadline. The schedule indicates when assignments are due so that you can plan your work in advance. When work is handed back, please look it over promptly. You may ask for something to be re-graded within 7 days of when it was handed back. Note that the new grade will take effect whether it is higher or lower.

I use a mapping from scores to letter grades developed over the previous years that this class has been offered. You will receive occasional email with your current tentative final grade. However, the course changes every year and I reserve the right to change the mapping at any time.

General policies:

Any work you turn in must be yours. The purpose of the assignments is for you to think about the material yourself. Sometimes this will require a lot of hard thinking, even for a single problem. You may need to come back to a problem several times before inspiration strikes. Any collaboration must be cleared with me in advance and you must cite all sources you use in preparing your work, other than the printed textbook, my lectures, and the recitations. The course material is very popular and there are almost certainly solutions available on the open Internet, including on the textbook website linked from the course homepage. Please don’t look at them. If you do, not only are you wasting your tuition money and cheating your future, but UNH policy provides for penalties starting with failing the course and including dismissal from the University. I reserve the right to hold unannounced quizzes or increase the weight of the written exams at any time.

If a religious commitment will interfere with your completing assignments on time, please let me know at the start of the semester so that I can provide proper accommodations. If you have a disability that requires accommodations, please have Student Accessibility Services (SAS) contact me right away so that I can provide proper accommodation. If you find emotional or mental health issues interfering with your performance, contact Psychological and Counseling Services (www.unh.edu/pacs). For help with time management and study skills, contact the Center for Academic Resources (www.unh.edu/cfar). If you need to isolate or quarantine due to illness, please let me know as soon as possible.
Programming assignments:

All programming assignments will be in C and we will provide some scaffolding code and sample inputs to get you started. Just as in the real world, some of this pre-existing code is not great and might require some time to understand. You are not required to use it, but it is probably worth the trouble. Your code must compile and run on agate.cs.unh.edu. It should compile without errors or warnings with the -ansi, -pedantic, -Wall, and -Werror flags to gcc (unless you are using a more modern dialect like C99 in which case substitute something like -std=c99 for -ansi). You should learn how to use tools like valgrind to catch bugs.

Written exams:

No notes or books will be allowed. The final exam will be cumulative, but with emphasis on the second half of the course. Please be sure to attend the exams, as they are only given once.