

CS108: Intro to Computer Programming- Part A

Spring 2025

All course materials will be in CANVAS for CS108 at

<https://canvas.gmu.edu/login/canvas>

Course Basics

Instructors

Professor	Email	Office	Section(s)
Dr. S. Gopalkrishna	slgopal@gmu.edu	Buchanan D217E	01 & 02
Dr. B. Yin	byin2@gmu.edu	Buchanan D215J	03 & 04

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to solve basic problems using procedural programming techniques.
2. Students will be able to exhibit technological literacy by accessing appropriate digital resources, assessing their appropriateness and trustworthiness, and using the information to inform decisions.
3. Students will be able to exhibit understanding of privacy, security, and ethical concerns related to the field of Computer Science.

Mason Core IT Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand the principles of information storage, exchange, security, and privacy and be aware of related ethical issues.
- Students will become critical consumers of digital information; they will be capable of selecting and evaluating appropriate, relevant, and trustworthy sources of information.
- Students can use appropriate information and computing technologies to organize and analyze information and use it to guide decision-making.
- Students will be able to choose and apply appropriate algorithmic methods to solve a problem.

Prerequisite

None (But MATH105 is a re-requisite for CS109)

1 Course Technology and Components

1.1 Textbook

The textbook for this course ([Foundations of Programming - Functions First \(runestone\)](#)) is **online only** and **free**. You are expected to do the readings each week before class, so that class materials is enforcement, review, and another explanation of the day's material.

1.2 Piazza

- Announcements, Discussion, GTA/UTA contacts and office hours will be on Piazza.
- All correspondence will go through Piazza. You can send private messages to the instructors (visible to all professors, GTAs, and UTAs) as well as post public questions visible to all students, collaborate on responses, and tag everything by topic.
- Unless you have a confidential matter to discuss directly with an individual professor/TA, please do not email us directly -- use a private piazza post. *Programming Assignment help questions sent via email are of extremely low priority, as they were sent to the wrong place and will most likely be responded to with "please post on Piazza".*
- **The discussion board on Piazza is required reading for all programming assignments.** You MUST read the discussion board daily for clarifications and potential updates.

1.3 Canvas

- Course schedule, course syllabus, description of assignments, and lecture will be posted on Canvas.
- All assignments will be submitted (per published deadlines) via Canvas or GradeScope.
- All grades will be posted to Canvas.

2 Grading

Category	Percent	Notes
Weekly Assignments	20	Lowest grade (1) will be dropped
Quizzes	20	Lowest score (1) will be dropped
Exam 1	15	
Exam 2	20	
Final Exam	25	Must pass final exam (60%) to pass the class.

- A: 89.0 and above
- B: 79.0 and above
- C: 69.0 and above
- D: 60.0 to and above
- F (< 60.0%)

There will be no make-up or extra-credit assignments at the end of the semester; your grade should be a measure of your semester-long progress.

2.1 Assignments

Assignments are one of the most important part of your learning process. You should not expect to be able to finish them in one sitting. A programming assignment might take multiple sessions of coding, with questions asked along the way. This is the practice you need to learn, master, and internalize various concepts of the course. Don't be surprised if you're spending 5-10 hours on each one.

ATTENTION: We take the University and CS department Honor Code processes very seriously! Please be sure that you are familiar with the policy and its details outline below. In short, the following are prohibited –

- 1) Accessing an AI, such as ChatGPT to read or copy a solution or algorithm to any task or question given in this course.
- 2) Giving or receiving solutions to programming assignment tasks or other assessments.

- **Submissions**

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Canvas learning system, available at <https://canvas.gmu.edu>. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system and a stable broadband Internet connection.

- All assignments are to be submitted to Gradescope/Canvas. You can submit your work an unlimited number of times to Gradescope/Canvas prior to the assignment deadline. By default only the last version will be graded.
- Turning in the wrong files will likely result in a zero. You can and should download your submitted attempts to verify that you turned in a working copy.
- Canvas being unavailable is not an excuse for turning in a late assignment; in the rare situation that the website is somehow unavailable or giving the student an error, the student MUST email their submission to their GTA before the deadline, otherwise it will be considered late.
- Catastrophic computer failure will not be cause for an extension. Use a backup service such as DropBox (or any cloud service), emailing yourself, storing to a USB drive, whatever it takes. Every semester multiple student's computers die, are stolen, or otherwise 'lose' their files. Don't be the student who forgot to (frequently) back up your work!

All course materials posted to Canvas or other course sites are private to this class; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

- **Deadlines and Emergency-Days**

- Each assignment has a posted deadline.
- The latest you can turn in a programming assignment is 24 hours after the posted deadline with a 10-percent penalty, no exceptions.
- Turning in 1 minute late and turning in 23 hours and 59 minutes late are treated the same (and therefore there are no "half emergency-days" and no "partial late penalties").

- **Honor Code: Special Notes for Assignments**

- **You may not use any Internet resources to create code or algorithms, besides the textbooks, the slides, and Piazza**, unless otherwise specified. The assignments can be solved using material discussed in class, and no outside material is needed unless otherwise noted. Using (which includes reading, referencing, talking about, or copying) artificial intelligence tools (CoPilot, ChatGPT, among others) is in violation of the Honor Code.

- **Assignments are considered individual efforts.** You may discuss approaches to solutions with your classmates, TAs, and the instructor. HOWEVER, students' code should be distinct. If two or more students turn in programming assignments that are the same, an honor code violation will be submitted to the university's Office of Academic Standards.
- **It is your responsibility** to protect your work. Do not post your code to websites that are publicly accessible. Do not email your work to anyone. Guard your USB drives and computers and do not upload your files to someone else's computer, etc. *You are liable for any access gained to your code.*
- See [Honor code](#) section below for more details.
- **Suspicion of cheating is caught through automated analyses or by gTAs. All potential cases are examined by your professor and taken seriously. If your professor suspects that you have used illegitimate sources in assignments, you may be asked to explain your work to establish that you have generated it by yourself.**

2.3 Exams

- Exams are cumulative.
- You may bring one **handwritten** 8 ½ x 11 page of notes to each exam. You may not copy and paste programs or classnotes as your note sheet. The page may be collected along with the exam.
- If you know in advance that you are unable to take an exam by the deadline posted for a valid and unavoidable reason (such as a scheduled surgery, etc.), you must notify the professor at least one week before the scheduled exam date to make arrangements for a make-up.
- If you miss an exam deadline due to a university-accepted excused absence (such as an illness or car accident the day and time of the exam), you must notify your professor within 24 hours of your absence to make arrangements for a makeup. Failure to follow either of these policies will result in a zero on the exam.
- Per departmental policy, you must pass a significant exam threshold to receive a passing grade in this class, regardless of your performance on other assignments. Failing the final exam (<60.0%), will result in a failing grade (F) for the entire course.

2.4 Contested Grades

- Please reach out if you have questions. Contesting of grades on any/all submissions must be requested within one week of receiving the grade (on Canvas or Gradescope). No grade changes will be considered after that deadline.
 - For programming assignments (Pas), contact your graduate TA (gTA).
 - For exams, contact your professor.

3 Communication, Office Hours, and Other Sources of Support

There is support available to you outside of lecture time in the form of office hours and the online discussion board (Piazza). If you are having difficulty on an assignment, we encourage you to reach out **as early as possible**. That said, to ensure fairness and facilitate learning, we have some basic rules for seeking help outlined below. Please note that Piazza is a discussion forum for you, the students, to discuss the course and the course material. There will be UTAs assigned to check on this forum regularly and try to moderate the discussion, but this is NOT a replacement for office hours, lecture with your professor, or labs.

3.1 Email

- Students must use their Mason email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class.
- We will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address.
- Please indicate your **name, course, and section** in your email.
- Please give 48 hours (usually 24 hours or less) for faculty to respond to email on weekdays. Emails sent on the weekend will be responded to on the following Monday.

3.2 Office Hours – Primary Resource for Help with Assignments

- For students seeking help with assignments during office hours, students must identify where they believe an error to be before seeing the TA or instructor.
- Under no circumstances will the professor or GTA reveal code at a time during office hours. Students must make significant individual effort on all programming assignments before coming to see a GTA/professor. **Waiting until the last minute, in the expectations that the entire programming assignment will be explained in one office hours session, is not feasible.**
- Office hours are often crowded - do not rely on them for last-minute help, as we cannot guarantee that we will be able to spend significant time with every student.
- If you have any questions about what you are/aren't permitted to do on a programming assignment, and you and the TA cannot find the answer written somewhere, you should ask your professor. **"So-and-so said" will not be an accepted as a reason for grade re-evaluations** (unless "so-and-so" is your professor).

3.3 Rules for the Discussion Board (Piazza)

- Students are encouraged to use the discussion board, Piazza, to ask and answer questions class policies, deadlines, and receive *some* help with assignments.
- **Do not ask uTAs to fix your code!**
- No sharing answers or code solutions to assignments on the discussion board.
- Students can post questions and code privately, although the instructor reserves the right to make any post public, so that other students can see the responses.
- UTAs (undergraduate TAs/your peers) moderate the student discussion, answer private questions, and address questions which have not received a student answer. Responses to questions can be expected within 24 hours, but not guaranteed.
- Statements made on the discussion boards, even by TAs and especially by other students, should NOT be considered the definitive word on the subject unless it is verified by your professor (in the assignment description, in class, posted on Piazza, etc.). The UTAs can flag professors if/when clarifications are needed.
- If you have any questions about what you are/aren't permitted to do on a programming assignment or exam, and you/others cannot find the answer written somewhere, you should ask your professor. **"So-and-so said" will not be an accepted as a reason for grade re-evaluations** (unless "so-and-so" is your professor).

4 CS Honor Code Policy (Academic Standards)

- The honor code at George Mason is an important part of our academic culture. A degree from this institution should be a direct measure of your own progress and abilities, and as such, at all times we must ensure that all work that should be your own is your own. Additionally, cheating by one student diminishes the value of the diploma for all other students.
- All students are expected to abide by the [GMU's academic standards](#). This policy is rigorously enforced.
- The computer science department has an [CS Honor Code Policies](#) to understand better what constitutes cheating in the CS setting. **We take the honor code seriously**. Violations of the honor code will not be tolerated. All cases of cheating are reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.
- **AI Tools Statement.** You are forbidden from asking an AI to solve any of the problems or write any code for this class. This includes designing data structures or algorithms, implementing the algorithms, translating from one language to another, or finding bugs in your code. You are forbidden to upload or paste any assignment materials into an AI. You may only ask an AI the same sort of general questions you would ask a peer. For the purposes of the GMU CS Honor Code <<https://cs.gmu.edu/resources/honor-code/>>, an AI is considered "someone else" who is not an instructor or teaching assistant.

5 University Policies

5.1 Academic Standards

Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, coauthored pieces, and project reports.
- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's academic

standards procedures. Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.

5.2 Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit the [Disability Services website](#) for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: <mailto:ods@gmu.edu>. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor in advance of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

5.3 FERPA and Use of GMU Email Addresses for Course Communication

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) governs the disclosure of [education records for eligible students](#) and is an essential aspect of any course. **Students must use their GMU email account** to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

5.4 Title IX Resources and Required Reporting

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the

Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the “Complainant”) will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see [University Policy 1202](#): Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence. Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

Student opportunity: If you prefer to speak to someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential employees in [Student Support and Advocacy](#) (SSAC), [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS), [Student Health Services](#) (SHS), and/or the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).