COMP 202 - Foundations of Programming

Course Outline

McGill University, Winter 2020

Instructor:

Giulia Alberini
Office: McConnell Engineering (MC) 233
Contact Info: giulia.alberini@mcgill.ca
Office Hours: Tuesday 16:00–18:00 in **McConnell 103** or by appointment

Class Info:

Section 1		**Section 2**	
Lecture room:	MAASS 112	Lecture room:	MAASS 112
Class times:	TR 14:35–15:55	Class times:	TR 13:05–14:25

1 Course Description

Welcome to COMP 202! Please read this document carefully and keep it for reference throughout the term.

This course introduces students to computer programming and is intended for those with little or no background in the subject. No knowledge of computer science in general is necessary or expected. On the other hand, basic computer skills such as browsing the Web, sending e-mail, creating documents with a word processor, and other such fundamental tasks will be necessary in this course.

The course uses the Python programming language. Python is an example of a programming language (as are Java, C++, and many others). A large part of this course will focus on the basic building blocks of programming, which provide the foundations to learning other languages such as Java or C++.

Learning how to program is not easy; it is not a set of facts that one can simply memorize. In principle, a computer program is simply a set of instructions that tells a computer to perform a task. However, finding the right set of instructions can be quite challenging. For that, one has to learn how to structure a larger problem into small subsets, and then find the solution to each particular subset. This course aims to teach students *a way of thinking* that will enable them to build non-trivial programs.

1.1 Primary Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Design and describe precise, unambiguous instructions to solve a problem or perform a task;
- Translate these instructions into a language that a computer can understand (Python);
- Write programs that solve complex problems by decomposing them into simpler subproblems;
- Apply programming-style conventions to make your programs easy to understand, debug and modify;
- Learn independently about new programming-language features and libraries, as you encounter them, by reading documentation and by experimenting.

1.2 What This Course is *Not* About

This course is not about how to use a computer. It will not teach you how to send e-mail, browse the Web, create word processing documents or spreadsheets, set-up and configure a computer, use specific software applications (except those needed to complete coursework), design Web pages, or deal with operating system or hardware problems. However, the course offers introductory tutorials that provide instruction in aspects of computer usage necessary to complete coursework.

1.3 Course Prerequisites

A CEGEP-level mathematics course or equivalent. For students who did not attend CEGEP, any upper-level mathematics course is sufficient. However, attention to detail, rigour, and the ability to think in an abstract manner is much more important than knowledge of calculus, algebra, or trigonometry.

2 Course Materials

2.1 Lecture Recordings

We will record both sections, and make the recordings available to all students on mycourses. Note that the two sections will be merged on mycourses, and they will be treated as one single course (same assignments, same exams).

2.2 Lecture Slides, Tutorial Slides, and Question Set

The slides used in class by instructor and during the tutorials by the TAs will be made available to you on myCourses. TEAM Mentors will also be posting bi-weekly question sets to allow you to practice what you have been learning in class.

2.3 Recommended Textbook:

- *Think Python 2e*, by Allen B. Downey.

  Available at no cost under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License at:

  `https://greenteapress.com/wp/think-python-2e/`

2.4 Other References

- *How to Think Like a Computer Scientist: Interactive Edition*, by Brad Miller and David Ranum. This is an interactive textbook based on the work by Jeffrey Elkner, Allen B. Downey, and Chris Meyers. Available at no cost at:

  `https://runestone.academy/runestone/books/published/thinkcspy/index.html`

- *The Python Tutorial*. You can browse or download this from Python Software Foundation's Web site.
  - `https://docs.python.org/3/tutorial/`
- *The Python 3 Documentation*. You can also browse or download this from Python Software Foundation's Web site.
  - `https://docs.python.org/3/`

2.5 Copyright policy

You are not allowed to post any course materials on github, coursehero, any other websites. This includes PDFs of lecture slides, tutorial slides, question sets, assignment questions or anything else that we provide for you.

Stated more formally: "Instructor/TAs-generated course materials are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor/TAs. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures."

3 Communication Policies

3.1 Office Hours

Teaching Assistants (T.A.s) and TEAM Mentors will be available for office hours, on the third floor of the Trottier building room 3103, to help you with your assignments and answer questions about the course material. A link to a Google calendar with everyone's office hours will be shared with you on myCourses.

3.2 Discussion board

This term we will be using Piazza for class discussion. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates, the TAs/Mentors, and myself. Rather than emailing questions to the teaching staff, **I encourage you to post all your questions related to the course content and the assignments on Piazza**. By doing so, you will be sure to receive an answer faster and everyone in the class will be able to benefit from it. You may freely answer other students' questions as well, with one important exception: you may not provide solution code (although you are permitted to provide one or two lines of code to illustrate a point). If you have any problems or feedback for the developers, email `team@piazza.com`.

Find our class page at: `https://piazza.com/mcgill.ca/winter2020/comp202/home`

Discussion Board Guidelines

Please help out by answering each other's questions. The instructor and TAs will try to moderate the Discussion Board, but the Discussion Board works best when students help each other out. When posting to the Discussion Board, please obey the following. *Posting that do not conform may be deleted.*

- Choose the appropriate folder (matching the topic).
- Use the search feature to see if your question has been asked before.
- Choose a suitable subject line, so that readers know what the posting is about.
- If you have multiple questions that are unrelated, then use multiple postings so people can more easily follow the thread.
- Proofread before posting. Take an extra minute to ensure that what you write makes sense.
- If you would like your posting to be deleted, just add a request within the thread.

3.3 Contacting Instructor and Teaching Assistants

For private matters only, you can send e-mail to a teaching assistant or instructor directly with "COMP 202" in the subject header. Be sure to send your email from your mcgill address and include your student ID. When emailing instructors or T.A.'s, please follow the guidelines on etiquette described in the video here and on this website.

3.4 Course Announcements

Important information about the course will be announced in class and/or on myCourses and Piazza. Please subscribe now to myCourses Announcements, if you haven't done so already.

Students are expected to monitor both their McGill e-mail account, myCourses, and Piazza for course-related news and information.

4 Grading Scheme and Deadline Policy

Your final grade in the course is calculated by taking the *maximum* of the following two options:

- **Assignments:** 35%
- **Midterm Examination:** 20%
- **Final Examination:** 45%

OR

- **Assignments:** 35%
- **Final Examination:** 65%

This means that students who perform better on the final than on the midterm exam will have the (automatic) option to make their grading scheme 35% assignments, and 65% final. However, the assignments are a key part of learning the material, and as such there is no 100 % final option.

When we calculate your final course grade, we will use a formula that rounds off to the nearest integer. If your grade is 84.4 then it rounds to 84 and you get an A-, whereas if it is 84.6 then it rounds to 85 and you get an A. If your grade is 84.5, our formula will round it up to 85. The same round off procedure holds for low grades. If your calculated final course grade is 49.4 then it rounds to 49 which is an F. We draw a very a hard line on this, so if you don't want to fail then you should stay far away from that line.

Official language policy for graded work: In accordance with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

4.1 Midterm Examination

The midterm examination will take place in the evening at the following date and time:

- Monday, March 9th, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

The room assignments will be announced in class and posted on myCourses when it is closer to the date.

4.2 Assignments

There will be **four** assignments consisting of writing Python programs. It is *very important* that you complete all assignments, as this is the best way to learn the material. By working hard on the assignments, you will gain essential experience needed to solve problems on the midterm and final examinations. Each assignment is worth as follows:

- Assignment 1: 8%, to be posted around January 23

- Assignment 2: 9%, to be posted around February 11
- Assignment 3: 9%, to be posted around February 27
- Assignment 4: 9%, to be posted around March 26

You will be given approximately two weeks to complete each assignment. The deadline will be specified on the assignment PDF.

To receive full grades, assignments (as well as all other course work) **MUST** represent your own personal efforts (see the section on Plagiarism Policy and Assignments below).

If you do not do an assignment, then you will receive a grade of 0 for it. No exceptions.

Assignment Submissions

Assignment submission will always take place through codePost. **You will be added as COMP 202 students on codePost by Jan 20th.** The instructor and the TAs will discuss how to use it during the lectures and tutorials, but every student is responsible for verifying that their submissions are successful. If you believe the content of your submission is different from what you have submitted, you must e-mail your instructor within **4 days** of the assignment deadline in question to provide evidence of your correct submission.

You will be able to see your assignment marks both on codePost and on myCourses. It is your responsibility to check that the marks are correct and to notify your instructor of any errors or missing marks. If you believe that your assignment was graded incorrectly, you should submit a question on your graded submission through codePost and request a regrade. Only well argumented requests will be entertained. **Note that you can do so only within 7 days from when your grade has been published.** Requests after the deadline will not be accepted.

Late Policy

Unforeseen events may arise that prevent you from submitting an assignment on time. For example, you might be sick for several days in the week before the assignment is due. Our standard late policy is that you may submit up to two days after the deadline, but with a small penalty; Late assignments will be deducted 10% each day or fraction thereof for which they are late, including weekend days and holidays; that is, assignments that are between 0 and 24 hours late will be deducted 10 points, assignments that are between 24 and 48 hours late will be deducted 20 points. We are willing to waive this penalty in cases of illness or other unforeseen personal circumstances. However, you must make a formal request. See email policy.

Examples of invalid requests are:

- Your laptop broke or was stolen. This is not a valid excuse. You should be using an automatic backup system e.g. Dropbox, google drive, etc.
- You have midterm exams, a job interview, a family wedding, etc. These are invalid because we give you two weeks. You need to plan accordingly.

Assignments submitted more than 2 days after the deadline will not be accepted, nor graded, and will therefore receive a grade of 0.

The instructors reserve the right to modify the lateness policy for a particular assignment; any such modifications will be clearly indicated at the beginning of the relevant assignment specifications. **Plan appropriately and do NOT submit to codePost only minutes before the assignment deadline**. **Requests for waiving the late penalty because the system was busy or your machine too slow will not be accepted.** Take care, programming assignments are notoriously time-consuming and individual exceptions to the lateness policy will not be granted without appropriate justification submitted in writing and supported by documentary evidence.

4.3 Final Exam

The Final Exam will be held during Final Examination Period. The exact format of the final exam will be announced in class and on myCourses/Piazza.

4.4 Supplemental/Deferred Exam

In exceptional situations, students may write a supplemental examination. However, ability to do so is not automatic, and depends on your exact situation; contact your Student Affairs Office for further information.

The Supplemental/Deferred exam will cover the same material as the Final Exam and it will replace the Final Exam grade, with the same grading policy as stated at the beginning of this section. For information on Supplemental Exams, see `https://www.mcgill.ca/science/student/general/exams/supplemental`.

4.5 Additional Work

Students who receive unsatisfactory final grades will **NOT** have the option to submit additional work in order to improve their grades.

4.6 Extraordinary Circumstances beyond the University's Control

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the evaluation scheme in a Course is subject to change, provided that there be timely communications to the students regarding the change.

5 Policies on Academic Integrity

Official policy: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see `www.mcgill.ca/integrity/` for more information).

5.1 Plagiarism Policy and Assignments

You must include your name and McGill ID number at the top of each source code file that you implement and submit. By doing so, you are certifying that the program or module is entirely your own, and represents only the result of your own efforts.

Work submitted for this course must represent your own efforts. Assignments **must** be done **individually**; you **must not** work in groups. Do not rely on friends or tutors to do your work for you. You **must not** copy any other person's work in any manner (electronically or otherwise), even if this work is in the public domain or you have permission from its author to use it and/or modify it in your own work (obviously, this prohibition does not apply to source code supplied by instructors explicitly for this purpose). Furthermore, you **must not** give a copy of your work to any other person.

The plagiarism policy is not meant to discourage interaction or discussion among students. You are encouraged to discuss assignment questions with instructors, TAs/Mentors, and your fellow students. There is no better way to learn than through discussion with your peers. You are also encouraged to help each other out with debugging problems, especially with the basic mechanics of debugging such as how to make the best use of an IDE. Finally, you are highly encouraged you to pose questions on Piazza and to answer each other's questions there too. However, there is a difference between discussing ideas and working in groups or copying someone else's solution. Your discussion should never go so far that you are revealing the solutions to each other. *Sharing code is absolutely forbidden.* The solution code that you submit must be your work. A good rule of thumb is that when you discuss assignments with your fellow students, you should not leave the discussion with written notes. Also, when you write your solution to an assignment, you should do it on your own.

5.2 Gilligan's Island Rule

You are free to meet with fellow students(s) and discuss an assignment with them. Writing on a board or shared piece of paper during the meeting is acceptable; however, you should not take any written (electronic or otherwise) record away from the meeting. Everything that you derive from the collaboration should be in your head.

After the meeting, you must engage in at least a half-hour of mind-numbing activity (like watching an episode of the television show *Gilligan's Island*), before starting to work on the assignment. This will assure that you are able to reconstruct what you learned from the meeting by yourself.

5.3 Getting Help and Partial Credit

Students who require assistance with their assignments should see a TA/Mentor or instructor during their office hours or make use of the discussion board on Piazza. If you have only partially finished an assignment, **document the parts that do not work**, and submit what you managed to complete for partial credit.

5.4 Plagiarism Detection

We will be using automated software similarity detection tools to compare your assignment submissions to that of all other students registered in the course, and these tools are very effective at what they have been designed for. However, note that the main use of these tools is to determine which submissions should be manually checked for similarity by an instructor or TA; we will not accuse anyone of copying or working in groups based solely on the output of these tools.

You may also be asked to present and explain your assignment submissions to an instructor at any time.

When the instructor suspects that plagiarism has occurred, the instructor will report the case to the Disciplinary Officer in the student's Faculty (Science, Arts, Engineering, etc). For more details on the process, see Section III Articles A.37 (p. 10) and A.48 (p. 13) of the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures:

`https://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/code_of_student_conduct_and_disciplinary_procedures.pdf`

5.5 Posting assignment solutions on a website

We encourage you to use tools like github for version control systems. However, you must not share your assignment solutions by posting them on a public space such as your github account.

This rule extends beyond the duration of the course. The reason for the rule is that instructors occasionally recycle assignments from previous years, and if the old versions are easily accessible (github has a search feature) then this leads to plagiarism by others.

6 Land Acknowledgment

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

7 Accommodations

7.1 Office for Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability and require accommodations, the Office for Students With Disabilities (`https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/`) is here to help you sort those out. OSD liaises with us (the instructors) on your

behalf to ensure that your accommodations are met.

7.2 Pregnancy and Caregiving

Students who are pregnant and/or caring for a dependent also often may find it helpful to receive academic accommodations. McGill's guidelines for accommodations for students who are pregnant and/or caring for a dependent may be found at `https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2018-2019/university_regulations_and_resources/graduate/gi_accommodation_pregnancy_caring_dependants`

8 Campus Computer Laboratories

Using the SOCS computer laboratory facilities: All students registered in COMP 202 may use the SOCS computer laboratory facilities to do their work regardless of the program in which they are registered. These facilities are located on the third floor of the Trottier building.

Refer to `https://www.cs.mcgill.ca/about/facilities/` for more information on the SOCS computer laboratory facilities.

Other computer laboratory facilities: You may also use other computer laboratory facilities on campus to do your work. Most facilities are available to all McGill students, but there are facilities which grant usage privileges only to students registered in a course or program offered by the faculty or department which manages the facility.

Students should contact the work area of their choice to inquire about access requirements, opening hours, or any further information such as software availability.

9 Required Software

Typically when programmers write code they used what is called an integrated development environment (IDE) to write programs. IDEs provide an editor that allows you to type your program, commands to compile and run it, and many other useful tools, all in one application.

This term, we recommend using a simple Python IDE called Thonny. Thonny comes with Python 3.7 built in. This means you only have one thing to install and you are ready to learn how to program! :)

You can install Thonny through going to `https://thonny.org/` and following the instructions to download and install the software. Thonny supports Windows, Mac and Linux.

There are many other editors out there, so if you prefer another IDE (such as Spyder or PyCharm) or using a text editor (such as Atom or Gedit) you are welcome to do so. Note that if you use a different editor, the teaching staff may not be familiar with your choice of editor.

10 Course Content

Note that minor changes in content, reading material, and times for tutorials and assignments may occur. It is your responsibility to attend class and be aware of what content is being covered.

10.1 Tutorials

Throughout the term, there will be several (optional) tutorials. These will be designed to help you with the material and assignments, and to give you a chance to ask questions in a smaller environment than lectures. It is not necessary to register for tutorials.

The tutorials will review and practice material presented in class. For example, a tutorial in the sixth week might cover the `while` and `for` statements to ensure that everyone is caught up. As well, three special tutorials will be provided:

Tutorial	Title	Contents
T0	Basics of Course Software Tools	Thonny: download, install the appropriate software, learn how to use the console, and how to run your first program. Piazza: get familiar with Piazza as a tool for class discussion.
TM	Midterm Review	Review of all material for the midterm.
TF	Final Exam Review	Review of all material for the final.

The schedule of the tutorials will be shared with you on myCourses and Piazza. The Google calendar containing all the information on the course office hours will also contain all the tutorials.

10.2 Approximate Schedule of Topics

The references to chapters in the table below are from the recommended textbook (`https://greenteapress.com/wp/think-python-2e`). Although our lectures will not follow the textbook exactly reading the textbook is highly recommended. **The following schedule is only approximate and may/will change depending on how the semester unfolds.**

	Week	Topics	Reference	Events
Intro	1–Jan 6	What is programming? What is computer science? How does a computer work? Binary numbers	Chapter 1	
Fundamentals	2–Jan 13	Basic Python programs Variables and types Expressions and mathematical operators	Chapter 2	
	3–Jan 20	Relational and logical operators Conditional statements Input arguments Random numbers	Chapters 5	
	4–Jan 27	Functions Scope of variables Modules Docstrings	Chapters 3, 4, and 6	
	5–Feb 3	While loops For loops Nested loops	Chapter 7	A1 due
	6–Feb 10	Strings and loops Debugging Intro to lists	Chapters 8-10 Appendix A	
	7–Feb 17	Objects and Objects identity Mutable vs Immutable Nested lists	Chapter 10	
	8–Feb 24	Function objects Midterm review		A2 due
	9–Mar 9	Dictionaries Tuples	Chapters 11-12	Midterm (Mar 9)
	10–Mer 16	Exception handling File IO	Chapter 14	A3 due
OOP	11–Mar 23	MatPlotLib Intro to Objects and classes	Chapter 15	
	12–Mar 30	Functions and Methods Case study	Chapters 16-17	
Special Topics	13– Apr 6	Inheritance Review	Chapter 18	
	14–Apr 13			A4 due