Software Design I (CS120)

Class name Software Design I
Section CS 120-03 (1225)
Regular meeting times M., Tu., W., F., 11-11:55am
Meeting room Centennial 2213
Course website [cs.uwlax.edu/~jmaraist/120-spring-17](cs.uwlax.edu/~jmaraist/120-spring-17)
Prerequisites Math 151 or 175, or by placement test
Catalog description An introduction to the fundamentals of software development; including software classes, objects, inheritance, polymorphism, logic, selection control, repetition control, subprograms, parameter passage, and rudimentary software engineering techniques. Students complete numerous programming projects using a modern programming language.
Instructor's name Dr. John Maraist
Office location 209 Wing Technology Center
Email jmaraist@uwlax.edu
About [cs.uwlax.edu/~jmaraist](cs.uwlax.edu/~jmaraist)
Office hours and appointments My office hours and appointment availability are listed on the course website. To make an appointment, ask by email at least one school day ahead of time.
Textbook *Programming in Java*, zyBooks
Additional reference *Java: A Beginner's Guide*, Herbert Schildt, Oracle Press; see the course website for other resources

**Important dates**

Tuesday, September 5  First class
Monday, September 18  Last day to drop without record
Monday, October 2  (Tentative) Midterm 1
Monday, October 30  Last day to drop with W, (tentative) Midterm 2
Tuesday, November 21  No class meeting (Thursday classes meet)
Wednesday, November 22  Friday classes meet — we meet as usual
Monday, December 4  (Tentative) Midterm 3
Wednesday, December 13  Last day of class
Monday, December 18, 10am-noon  Final exam

Notes:

- The university schedule calls for Thursday classes to meet on Tuesday, November 22, and for Friday classes to meet on Wednesday, November 23. So we will *not* meet that Tuesday, and we *will* meet that Wednesday.
- I will confirm the actual midterm exam dates at least two weeks before each exam.
- The final exam date and time is *set by the university*. Do not plan to leave for holiday travel until after the final.
The objectives and outlook of this class

This class offers the opportunity to master the fundamentals of software development. We will use the Java programming language, but the skills we will convey are applicable to most programming and scripting languages in use today. Over the course of the semester, we will examine topics related to software development including problem solving techniques, fundamental programming constructs, and their application to algorithm design and to the Java programming language.

Specifically we study the design of simple algorithms and their implementation as Java programs executed as a single, sequential thread.

- We will begin with core elements of imperative programming: variable assignment, use and update; expressions, boolean logic, selection and iteration, subroutine use, arrays; and the language issues of syntax, declarations, scope, and subroutine creation and invocation.
- We will then introduce notions of object-oriented programming: classes and objects, constructors and methods, inheritance.
- Through the semester we will learn to debug (fix) programs, including for problems such as non-terminating loops and various exceptions.
- Modern programming system make heavy use of standard pre-programmed libraries, so we will become familiar with libraries, including for user I/O, mathematical computation, string manipulation, constructing and using graphic user interface (GUI) component, and handling user events. Some of the specific libraries which we will use are Scanner, Math and JTextField.
- Communication is as essential in computer science as in any other field. Although we will not have larger-scale writing exercises,
  - We do require and I will assess program comments, and
  - Examinations will include short-answer questions.
- Any local culture of programmers (such as a workplace or a community project) will adopt or be assigned stylistic conventions for programs and for comments. We will enumerate and follow a number of these guidelines, as well as general professional habits.

This class is focused on a specific set of knowledge and skills. Mastering any new mental or physical skill requires practice and discipline. You should plan to spend about twelve hours a week, not counting our class meetings, preparing for class, working assignments, and otherwise studying or practicing class material. As with any sport or musical instrument, you will not develop programming skills without committing serious and regular effort to actual programming.

The focus on skills, and the elementary nature of the material we cover, means that this class is highly cumulative. Topics from later in the class rely very heavily on earlier topics. Even where assignments and exam focus on later topics, it is unavoidable that earlier topics will be essential components of later work.

The skills you will gain in this class will generally fall into one of these four categories:

1. Designing an algorithm
2. Writing programs or parts of programs
3. *Constructing and debugging correct executable programs*
4. *Analyzing programs and code* to accurately predict how it will behave

It is important to master all of these skills over the course of the semester, but we recognize that some people take longer to master some aspects of algorithmic thinking and programming. So when computing final grades, I will replace earlier grades from a particular skill category with the weighted average of later grades from the same category. The *Assessment* section of this document details exactly how this calculation will work. (Miscellaneous and administrative assignments will have separate categories for grading purposes.)
Assessment

We divide the assignments and examinations into the following six phases: preparatory assignments (which will include any quizzes), supplementary assignments, early projects, later projects, mid-term exams and final exam (in that order). Moreover each marked item will be attributed to one category including: homework (which includes book work, projects and most other independent work, and quizzes), algorithm design, describing how code will executes, conveying understanding of concepts. The latter three categories are for exams; the first category is for out-of-class homework and projects. The points of items for a particular category in each phase of the class will be adjusted to be no less than the weighted average of items of the same category in the next later phase of the class. So for example, your percentage score on a midterm exam asking you to predict the effect of some piece of code will not be less than the weighted average of your scores on the final exam questions asking you to predict the effect of code. This adjustment will be transitive from the final exam backwards.

Your grade for each class assignment and phase will be calculated as a weighted average. In turn your final grade will be the weighted average of the assessment of your work, adjusted as described above, and weighted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparatory assignments</th>
<th>10%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm examinations</td>
<td>10% each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; professionamalism</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will convert a weighted average percentage $g$ to a letter grade no more strictly than as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$95.0 \leq g$</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$92.0 \leq g &lt; 95.0$</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$86.0 \leq g &lt; 92.0$</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$82.0 \leq g &lt; 86.0$</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$73.0 \leq g &lt; 82.0$</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60.0 \leq g &lt; 73.0$</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades below 60% are non-passing grades. In addition, to get a final grade above C, you must pass the final exam. The university uses annotated F grades for cases of failure due to cessation of class activity and attendance; where such grades are appropriate I will draw them from both the assignment results and attendance records.

Preparatory and supplementary assignments due before the last two weeks of class, as well as the first two midterm exams, are all considered formative assessments, whose purpose includes giving feedback to you and shaping your learning. You will receive feedback on all formative assessments, and are expected to use that feedback to improve your future performance.

Preparatory assignments due the days of the last two classes, supplementary assignments due the days of the last six classes, and the final exam are all considered summative assessments, which are not intended for feedback or as learning tools, but only as measurements of skill. You will not receive detailed feedback on summative assessments. (The third midterm will treated as formative if time allows, but may be deemed summative.)
Procedures and policies

Textbook

Our textbook is the online Programming in Java text from zyBooks, which is customized for this class section. You should subscribe to this book, which will give you electronic access into January, and the ability to make a print copy as well if you like. You should consider this textbook to be required for this class. Much of your assessed work will be done through the book’s interface. To subscribe to this textbook:

1. Sign up at [zyBooks.com](http://zyBooks.com)
2. Enter zyBook code UWLAXCS120MaraistFall2017
3. Click Subscribe

The course information above lists an additional reference which you might find useful as a source of alternate explanations and additional exercises. A third book which I’ve found useful for ideas for exercises is Introduction to Programming with Java: A Problem Solving Approach, John Dean and Raymond Dean, McGraw Hill, second edition.

Email and web page

Electronic mail is the primary means of personal communication in this class except for submitting assignments, and you should check your email regularly. In particular, all feedback on your work will be delivered by email. By default I will use your school email address which I receive as part of the information about you that the university gives me, but I am happy to also use a different email address if you email it to me from your school email address. It is your responsibility to make sure that I have an email address which you can and will access regularly, and which you check at least once per business day.

For assistance with email or other matters relating to university computer and network services, contact ITS by phone at 608/785-8774, in person on the first floor of Wing Technology Center, or by email to helpdesk@uwlax.edu.

In general, during the semester I will respond to emails within one business day. When you use email, make sure that you:

- **Include your full name.** There’s a small army of you, and one of me. Make sure it’s easy for me to know who you are.
- **Mention this class by name or number.** All of your instructors are almost certainly teaching more than one section.
- **Write professionally.** Observe the forms of casual business writing, write in complete sentences, and use your spell-checker. Keep in mind that email to an instructor about a class is a different medium, and requires a different voice, than texts to a friend.

I have posted links to a number of guides to effective emailing on a web page of resources, accessible from my University home page given above. We will not use other online communication tools or social network applications besides email.
The main web page for this class is listed at the beginning of this document. All class announcements will be posted to this page, and you are responsible for checking it regularly. That page also includes an RSS feed for updates. There are several services which will provide email updates from RSS feeds which you can find by a web search; if you choose to use one, pay attention to how often they check the feed and send email.

We will make only limited use of D2L in this class, in particular for some assignment submission and online quizzes. Details will be provided with the assignments where relevant.

**Attendance**

I expect you to attend class. Our class meetings will be the only source for some class material and are the venue for lab exercises and mid-term exams. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate. We will not use class time, nor prioritize office hours and appointment times, to review things missed due to nonattendance. There are no "makeups" for unexcused absences.

Attendance carries the obligation of being a constructive presence, or at least, a non-disruptive presence. In particular:

- Cell phones and other electronics must be silenced for the duration of class. Consider using an app like Shush! or Silent Time (for Android), or AutoSilent (for iPhone) to manage silencing your devices automatically.
- If you need to arrive to class late or leave early, be mindful of creating a minimum of disruption: sit near the exit and on the end of the aisle, pack lightly, and avoid using materials in class which are noisy on packing/unpacking.
- Research has shown that screen use in class is distracting not only to the student using a device, but also to that student's neighbors. So if you plan to use a screened device in class, I'll expect you to sit in the back row so that your screen distracts the fewest people. Likewise, if you plan not to use a screened device, you should sit away from the rearmost rows.

In cases of egregious, repeated or persistent disruptive conduct, of mindful discourtesy or of any intimidation of anyone in class, or of isolating or shaming conduct based on gender, race or other identity issues, I may require you to leave class immediately, possibly on an ongoing basis.

Admission of latecomers to an examination may be refused after any student completes the exam and leaves the exam room.

**Submission and return of assignments**

All assignments will be submitted electronically unless specifically directed otherwise. We will not be using email for assignment submission; assignments emailed to me will not be considered validly or on-time submitted unless either the particular assignment specifically calls for email submission, or I have specifically instructed you to email me an assignment. Submissions for programming assignments should consist of fully-functional code which behaves as required by the assignment. Unless an assignment specifically says otherwise, it is due by 8:30am on the day indicated.
My assessment of your coursework will be returned in compliance with FERPA regulations, either directly to you or via email. As described under Email above, I will email you either at your official university email (which only you are authorized to access), or to an alternate email address which you designate. In this way only you will have access to your grades unless you take specific action otherwise.

After you have completed the course, copies or records of your graded material that I retain will be accessible up to 7 weeks into the next academic term (either Spring after Fall or J-term; or Fall after Spring or Summer).

I plan to provide feedback on formative assessments submitted on-time within 21 days of the final deadline for that assessment, and to notify you when circumstances require delay.

**Assignments submitted late**

No credit will be awarded for homework from the textbook completed late. Credit for late submissions may be awarded only for late projects:

- If submitted within 24 hours after the time at which it was due, a reduction of 10% of the awarded percentage score will be assessed.
- If submitted over 24 hours but within 48 hours of the due time, the reduction will be 25%.
- If submitted over 48 hours but within 72 hours, the reduction will be 50%.
- No credit is given for assignments submitted after that point.

See the **Accommodations for individual circumstances** section below for extenuating circumstances that impact your ability to meet deadlines or participate in class activities.

**Equity of course execution**

This course will be delivered and assessed fairly, in the specific sense that all students in this section will have the same opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of the subject, and will be assessed according to the same criteria. The only assessed work and the only criteria for assessing that work, and thus for the grades derived from it, will be as set forth in this syllabus.

Mindfully attempting to be assessed by more lenient criteria than one’s colleagues, or by criteria other than the work for and conduct in this class as described in this syllabus, is unprofessional and will be considered a form of academic misconduct.

**Errors and regrading**

If you find an error in the evaluation of your work, you have the right to ask for it to be regraded.

- All requests for regrading must be by email.
- All requests for regrading must detail specifically where the suspected error was made, and what the error is.
- All requests for regrading should be made no sooner than 24 hours, but within one week, of the evaluation of the work being returned to you. If the assessment of some piece of work is returned in stages, the deadline for requesting
a regrade will be within a week of when the report containing the suspected error is returned to you.

- To ensure that a uniform standard is applied across the class, all regrading will use the same criteria and rubric applied to everyone else.
- In general, an entire assignment or exam may be regraded in response to a regrading request, even if your request addressed only a proper subset of the original. So make sure that errors to your detriment outweigh errors in your favor.

You will always be notified of errors I find in the evaluation of your work after it is returned to you, as well as any resulting change to your grade, even if you did not request a regrade.

**Collaboration**

I encourage you to work together to understand course material. Learning together is a great way to learn and share ideas, and is a useful professional skill. However, in order to actually learn something, it is important that you complete the real work of programming on your own. It is acceptable to:

- Discuss the general approach to an assessed problem with each other.
- Discuss and solve other, unassessed problems together.
- Work together to install software we'll use, or get it to work properly on individual computers.
- Help each other figure out syntax errors when code isn't compiling.
- Help each other isolate and debug problem spots when code isn't running correctly.

However:

- It is **not OK** to write code together, or to copy code from anyone inside or outside of the class.
- It is **not OK** to simply copy code, whether from online, a book or printed article, other people, or any other source. You can use online references to get additional explanations of how Java works, or to learn programming techniques. But the only way to actually gain the skill of programming is to write code yourself.

Any improper behavior with respect to these guidelines will be dealt with as academic misconduct according to University policy.

**Academic integrity**

Academic misconduct is a violation of the UW-L Student Honor Code and is unacceptable. I expect you to submit your own original work and participate in the course with integrity and high standards of academic honesty. When appropriate, cite original sources. Plagiarism or cheating in any form may result in a diminished grade or failure of the assignment or of the entire course, and may include harsher sanctions. As necessary I will use resources provided by the university or other services to verify the originality of submitted work. Refer to the [Student Handbook](#) for a detailed definition of academic misconduct.

In general,

- You can share ideas, but you may never share code.
• You must independently write all of the code you submit and never copy code from anyone inside or outside of the course to complete an assignment.
• You are expected to be able to fully explain every line of Java code that you write, and may be asked to do so for any given assignment.

The article 'Avoiding Plagiarism' on the Murphy Library website offers helpful information on avoiding plagiarism. You may also visit the Office of Student Life if you have questions about plagiarism or cheating incidents. Failure to understand what constitutes plagiarism or cheating is not a valid excuse for engaging in academic misconduct. Acadia University offers a light-hearted ten-minute interactive tutorial on avoiding plagiarism at library.acadiau.ca/sites/default/files/library/ tutorials/plagiarism/

Eagle alert system

This class participates in the "Eagle Alert" system through WINGS. This early alert system is designed to promote student success. If I notice that you are experiencing difficulties early in the semester (such as low scores on assignments or poor attendance), I may enter feedback into the program and you will receive an email indicating that feedback has been left for you. You will be able to access the feedback through your student center in WINGS. I encourage you to meet with me and/or refer to the helpful campus resources listed on UW-L's Student Success page.

Concerns or complaints

If you have a concern or a complaint about the course, or me, I encourage you to bring that to my attention. My hope would be that by communicating your concern we would be able to come to a resolution. If you are uncomfortable speaking with me, or if you feel your concern has not been resolved after bringing it to my attention, you can contact my department chair or the Office of Student Life.

The Student Academic Non-Grade Appeals process can be found in the Student Handbook. Information about appeals and petitions for academic matters is in the UWL Catalog.

I normally give anonymized examinations: you will sit at a desk tagged with your name; rather than writing your name on the exam, you will write the number on that tag. The anonymity allows us all to be more confident in the accuracy of the assessment of your work. However, that anonymity extends only through the completion of assessing the individual exam questions. After marking I will de-anonymize the exam papers to understand both individual and group trends and weaknesses, and to address them through subsequent improvements to the class. So exam papers should not be considered an anonymous forum for suggestions or complaints.

Sexual harassment

As an employee of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, I am a mandated reporter of sexual harassment and sexual violence (which include sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking) that either takes place on campus or otherwise
affects the campus community.
So if I receive detailed or specific information about an incident such as the date, time, location, or identity of the people involved, I am obligated to share this with UWL’s [Title IX Coordinator] in order to enable the university to take appropriate action to ensure the safety and rights of all involved. It does not matter whether the incident took place on- or off-campus; it matters only that a person who is a member of this campus was involved in the incident.
It is possible that course assignments may lend themselves to disclosure, but you should not share any details of an incident with me until you have discussed your options under the new Title IX guidelines. There are confidential reporters available to students at UW-L where you can have this discussion.
For students not wishing to make an official report, there are confidential resources available to provide support and discuss the available options. The contact in Student Life is Ingrid Peterson, Violence Prevention Specialist, 608/785-8062, ipeterson@uw lax.edu. For more resources or to file a report, please see www.uwlax.edu/violence-prevention
I am also happy to help direct you to counseling and support services. Simply ask me to assist you in locating a confidential reporter and I will help you to do so.

**Class interruptions and cancellations**

In the event of a campus incident that impacts the availability of teaching spaces, any changes or cancellations will be communicated to you via your university email account. Depending on the incident, some or all of the information might be posted on the UW-L home page.

In the event of inclement weather, we will follow the [University’s closure policy]. If classes are not canceled, I will make every effort to be in class on time, and so should you. Please do not send me email asking whether class is going to meet; instead, check the university website. The university’s emergency readiness plan is available [online]; that page also describes sign-ups for individual emergency alerts.
Accommodations for individual circumstances

It is my goal that all students have equivalent opportunities to succeed in this class. This section discusses the general procedures for alternative assessment accommodations in this class, as well as a number of specific situations for which there are standard mechanisms and policies in place to achieve the goal via accommodations for individual circumstances.

**General procedures and constraints.** Students may propose alternative assessments for individual assignments and exams for matters outside of a student’s control such as documented non-chronic illness, bereavement, unplanned university equipment unavailability, or university program travel or activities.

- Proposals for alternative assessment must be made at least ten calendar days before any relevant deadline or exam. If a proposal cannot be made in time due to medical or other emergency, the proposal should be made at the earliest possible point.
- Any accommodation must ensure that the required objectives for this course are assessed as thoroughly as under standard procedures. Although I am certainly willing to support the process, it is ultimately your responsibility to propose assessment alternatives which are necessary to accommodate your circumstances (and endorsed by the ACCESS Center or other campus authority as such), and which give an equivalent measure of your achievement.
- All requests for accommodation should be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation. In most cases this documentation will be reviewed by a separate group on campus such as the ACCESS Center or Veterans Services Office, and I will not see specific details. Where no such campus group applies, the specific form of accommodation will be at my discretion.
- Alternative assessment plans should address relevant big-picture issues in addition to immediate course matters.
- Alternative assessment proposals must be explicit, and may be sent only by email or in writing.
- Students proposing alternative assessment accommodations should never simply assume that the request will be granted verbatim.
- Extracurricular and student groups/activities, planned personal trips, and similar elective activities are not considered to be outside of a student’s control, and do not qualify for alternative assessment.
- Accommodations are generally not available for the on-campus activities of other classes. Do not schedule activities for other classes during the lecture/lab times of this class; you are not “free” at those times.
- I will avoid recording incomplete grades as part of an alternative assessment plan for any situation which has previously been addressed by accommodation, whether at UW-L or other institution, whether via the ACCESS Center or not. Incomplete grades will also not be used where an advisor’s or other credible recommendation for a reduced load, for a particular semester or on an ongoing basis, was disregarded; or where such advise to reduce a course load was avoided.

**Disabilities and medical conditions.** Accommodations for a documented disability or medical condition are made via the ACCESS Center. Students must
contact The ACCESS Center and meet with an advisor to register, and to de-
velop and propose their alternatives.

• Examples of the disabilities and conditions for which this procedure applies in-
clude, but are not limited to: ADHD; autism spectrum disorder; acquired brain
injury; PTSD; and physical, sensory, psychological, or learning disabilities.
• The ACCESS Center is located at 165 Murphy Library, and is reachable by
phone at 608/785-6900 and by email at ACCESSCenter@uwlax.edu.

In addition to registering with The ACCESS Center, it is the student’s responsi-
bility to discuss their academic needs with instructors.

Interactions with the ACCESS Center and with instructors should be initiated
promptly. For issues and conditions identified prior to the semester, you should
contact the ACCESS Center prior to the semester in order to propose and con-
firm an accommodation plan before assignments are due. For issues arising
during the semester, you should contact the ACCESS center to initiate their ac-
commodations process within three business days of a diagnosis. Accommo-
dations will not be applied retroactively in the case of a delay in initiating the
ACCESS Center process. Once some alternative assessment accommodation
is arranged for you via the ACCESS Center in this class, any other accommo-
dations for you as well as any changes or extensions to your accommodations,
including those arising from changes in your underlying condition or disability,
must also be arranged via ACCESS Center procedures (see Changes to accom-
modations below).

You can find out more about services available to students with disabilities at The
ACCESS Center website, http://www.uwlax.edu/access-center.

Veterans and active military personnel. Veterans and active military person-
nel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements,
disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to discuss these issues with me as far
in advance as possible.

For additional information and assistance, contact the Veterans Services Office,
www.uwlax.edu/veteran-services. Students who need to withdraw from class
or from the university due to military orders should familiarize themselves with
the university’s current military duty withdrawal policy, catalog.uwlax.edu/under-
graduate/academicpolicies/withdrawal.

Religious accommodations. Per the UWL Undergraduate and Graduate Cat-
alogs, “any student with a conflict between an academic requirement and any
religious observance must be given an alternative means of meeting the aca-
demic requirement. The student must notify the instructor within the first three
weeks of class of specific days/dates for which the student will request an ac-
commodation. Instructors may schedule a make-up examination or other aca-
demic requirement before or after the regularly scheduled examination or other
academic requirement.”

University athletics. Student athletes are expected to submit the semester’s
full schedule, including expected travel times and possible championship tourna-
ments, by the end of the first week of class. I realize that your coaches’ official
letter may not be ready by that time: that letter can come later. But you are able
and expected to collect and convey the information yourself, and later follow up with the official documentation.

**Changes to accommodations.** Accommodations can change by mutual consent to reflect changed circumstances. Changes should follow the same review and implementation mechanism as the original accommodation; in particular where the ACCESS Center reviewed and recommended original accommodations, I will expect changes or parallel accommodations to be reviewed and recommended through the ACCESS Center.
How to do well in the course

You want to do well in this course; I want you to do well in this course. Some simple ways to help make that happen are:

**Time management.** I cannot stress enough that programming courses are notoriously more time consuming than most other courses. You should expect the supplementary assignments and projects to take a significant amount of time to complete. Start assignments early to allow enough time to reflect on and wrestle with problems you encounter. Make sure you are allocating a sufficient amount of time each week outside of lecture to work on assignments and reviewing concepts.

**Do the reading before you come to class.** Aside from the fact that reading and preparatory exercises feed a substantial portion of your final grade, they are essential to getting the most out of class. Arriving prepared allows you bring your own learning goals to class, gives you early warning of how difficult you will find the day’s material, and makes your class time more productive. If you wait until it is time to do a programming assignment to look at the material, it may be too late to help you.

**Stay current with the material.** All of the concepts in this course build on one another. Falling behind early in the course will cause problems understanding and succeeding with the material throughout the remainder of the course. Attending lecture, reviewing course materials each week, and staying current with the assignments will help you stay on track. If you are having trouble with a particular concept then you need to ask questions immediately.

**Ask and answer questions in class.** It’s easy to listen to others talk about a subject — so easy that you can convince yourself that you are more fluent in the subject than you really are. Participation is how you find out the limits of your understanding, and helps you build your plan for succeeding with the subject.

**Get help in person.** Get in touch with me when you have questions. Email is a perfectly reasonable way to contact me, but often a topic or question is better answered in person, especially when a longer exchange of several emails seems to drag on. Don’t hesitate to come to office hours or to ask for an appointment when this is the case - it’s best to clear up points of confusion quickly, before misunderstanding builds up.

There are other places on campus besides me where you can seek help: UWL offers **academic skill building** assistance at no additional cost to students (your fees and tuition have already paid for all of these services).

**Study with others.** Our class policies are clear that the work you submit must ultimately be your own. But you have leeway on collaborating on **general class work** for understanding the material and the assignment statements, for debugging programs which you’ve written, and for working other, unassessed practice problems. Take advantage of the opportunity to learn with your colleagues. Study groups will become ever more important as you move through your degree, and the ability to learn together will serve you well throughout your career.