CS 306/491-1 – Linux Programming – Fall 2016
MWF 3:00–3:50 p.m., Engineering A Wing 0207

See the course web page for more information and resources: http://www.cs.siu.edu/~cs306

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  - **Office hours**: MTF 1:00–3:00pm Engr A0409

- **Required Text**: (choose either of the following)

For C programming, I would be using the following book:

1. *The C Programming Language* (2nd ed.) by Brian W. Kernighan and Dennis M. Ritchie

- **Grading** (subject to change): Your final grade will be a weighted average of labs and homework assignments, quizzes, mid-sem and final exam.

  1. **Grade A**: $\geq 90\%$
  2. **Grade B**: $\geq 80\%$ and $< 90\%$
  3. **Grade C**: $\geq 70\%$ and $< 80\%$
  4. **Grade D**: $\geq 60\%$ and $< 70\%$

1 Goals of the Course

- Become comfortable using basic Linux/UNIX commands and utilities.
- Introduce the C language and get experience programming in C.
- Learn how to develop software on and for Linux/UNIX systems.
- Become familiar with important Linux/UNIX library functions and system calls.
- Introduce asynchronous and concurrent (multi-process/multithreaded) programs.
- Introduce network programming.
• Lay a foundation for an operating systems course.

Basic Overview of Course Topics*

• Introduction to operating systems and Linux/UNIX
• Effective Bash shell (CLI) usage
• Introduction to the C language
• Linux/UNIX programming and development tools
• Introduction to Systems programming
• Introduction to Concurrent programming
• Introduction to Network programming

*See the course web page for a more detailed outline of topics to be covered, along with the relevant textbook sections, slides, and handouts.

2 Key Points about Course Policy

• This course is being offered in what is termed a flipped classroom format. Students are to watch online video lectures on their own, with class time then spent on the homeworks and labs.

• To encourage students to watch the lectures on time, there will be regular quizzes on the scheduled material. The quizzes will be designed to test your familiarity with the topics taught in the class. You will be expected to practice and implement on your own the code snippets and problems discussed in class.

• Completing the lab (programming) assignments is absolutely critical to learn what you must from this course, as well as for doing well on the exams.

• It is essential that you start on the labs early enough so that you can complete the lab before the due date; due dates will be firm deadlines. Late submissions policy: the maximum attainable score (out of 100) will reduce by 20% for each day of late submission following the deadline.

• Turning in any code not written by you or your teammates will be considered cheating; both the parties involved will get a zero for the assignment and thus on the relevant exam!

• All development is to be done on a Linux platform; any Linux distribution should work fine (Windows will not).

• Linux can be run on top of Windows using Virtual Machine software; VirtualBox images of select distros will be made available via the course website.
3 Flipped Classroom

- This course is being offered in what is termed a “flipped classroom” format. The basic idea behind this approach is that lectures on course material are provided by having students watch online video lectures on their own, with class time then spent primarily on improving student skills needed for the homeworks and labs.

- The most significant problems students have been having in this course involve weak problem solving and programming skills. Using a flipped classroom approach addresses this by vastly increasing the amount of interaction on these issues.

- This approach does require that students keep up with the video lectures (and textbook chapters). Students who have failed to study the appropriate material will generally have a difficult time understanding in-class discussions, since these will involve using functions and techniques they are unfamiliar with.

- A student is supposed to attend 3 hours of lectures and do a minimum of 6 hours of outside of class study each week.

- To encourage students to keep up with the online lectures, there will be regular quizzes! The quizzes represent a significant portion of your overall score; failing to keep up with lectures could potentially cause a drop of one letter grade.

- The lectures (and associated slides) are available through the course website. Most lectures have been broken down into approximately 20 minute segments, making it easier to fit watching them into one’s schedule, and easier to review particular elements. The slides for each lecture topic can also be used for review or as reference material.

- Note also that while we will be working on the lab/homework topics in class, students will still have to complete the assignments outside of class.

4 Prerequisites, Attendance, and Textbooks

- The CS Dept prerequisite will be enforced: CS 220 w/C or better, or equivalent. ECE/CEGR students are to have taken ECE 222 and ECE 321.

- You are not required to be familiar with the C language or with the Linux OS.

- You are expected to be familiar with programming in at least one C-family language (Java, C, C++), through the level of a standard CS II course (i.e., data structures).

- Attendance at the scheduled class sessions is a very important part of this course for almost all students! While students are to watch the lectures on their own, the class sessions will focus on improving students abilities to program in C on Linux systems. For many students, successful completion of the lab assignments will be possible only with the assistance provided via the class sessions.
Having access to one of the textbooks is considered a **requirement** of this course, and you are **expected to read the assigned sections in one of the course textbooks**. You may be tested on assigned material in the texts, even if it has not been presented in lectures.

### 5 Lab (Programming) Assignments/Homeworks

- **The labs play a critical role in acquiring the skills that are to be learned from the course.** *It is simply impossible to learn to program well without spending significant time programming!* Virtually no students do C or better work on the exams unless they have invested enough time on the programming assignments.

- **Programs that do not compile or do not run through at least some required functionality, will not be graded, and will receive an automatic zero score!** We are not going to spend vast amounts of time trying to figure out how much of an assignment you completed by examining source code, when you were not willing to spend enough time to complete the assignment.

- One of the most difficult aspects of software development is estimating how long it will take to complete a program (including debugging). Even professionals routinely **underestimate** the time that will be required. Do not simply guess that a lab will take you around four hours, then wait to start until 8pm the night before the lab is due. Not only can such a decision lead to you failing this class, the instructors have read enough emails sent by students at 4am the day a lab is due to know just how distressing it is to be discovering the “joys” of pointers and the like under deadline conditions.

- Getting your program to **compile** should not be viewed as a significant accomplishment. Compilation errors indicate that you do not even understand the most basic aspect of the programming language: its syntax. Being able to compile your code gives not the slightest indication of whether the program’s logic is correct. Almost the only reason an experienced program has compilation errors is because of typos!

- When working in an unfamiliar language or on unfamiliar problems, it is important to try to minimize the number of errors in your code at any one time. The best way to do this is to work **incrementally** (i.e., in stages): start with some basic functionality, get that working, then add more of the required functionality, get that working, and so forth. Resist as much as possible any urge you have to type your entire program in and then start trying to debug it. Such an approach makes failure much more likely!

- **Lab (programming) assignments will be provided in relatively detailed program specification documents.** You should treat these document as if they are being provided by your “boss” and your job depends on how well your programs adhere to the specs. Programming provides many avenues for creativity, but not when it comes to a program spec; you are free to meet the spec any way you want, but you must provide a program that is consistent with the spec. Far too many students lose points on their assignments because they fail to fully read the specification or because they fail to take it seriously. For example, if you are told to use a
certain prompt or format output in a certain way, then if you choose to use a different prompt
or format the output differently, your program is incorrect and points will be lost.

- It is perfectly OK to struggle with an assignment, coming to understand it fully only
before the exam.

6 Platforms and Facilities

- Programming for the course will be done in C (not C++).
- The official OS platform for the course is Linux and the official C compiler is GCC.
- Students are neither required nor expected to have a personal Linux machine available.
- Students will be provided account so they can use the CS Department’s Linux workstations,
which are located in the CS Dept. Linux Lab
- Be aware that the CS Dept. Linux Lab is not open evening and weekends! If you need to do
your work on the CS Dept. workstations, be sure to plan your time accordingly.
- Two CS Dept. Linux workstations are remotely accessible via SSH: pc00.cs.siu.edu
and pc01.cs.siu.edu. While this may allow you to work on assignments even when
the Linux Lab is closed, be aware that you are responsible for figuring out how to remotely
access these machines and transfer files, and you will not be excused from getting assign-
ments in on time if you encounter access problems (unless the machines cannot be accessed
due to SIUC or CS Dept. problems).
- For students who do want to run Linux on a personal machine, we make virtual machine
images for select Linux distributions available for you to run with the free VirtualBox virtu-
alization software. Instructions for downloading and setting up these images is available on
the course website.
- Note that this course does not cover Linux installation/configuration (see CS 406). Support
cannot be provided for for students attempting anything but the VirtualBox image setups.
- While the CS Dept workstations currently run Ubuntu Linux, virtually all Linux distributions
should be compatible and will have GCC and other development tools available (though
these tools may not be installed by default). Other UNIX-like OS’s (e.g., Mac OS X, a BSD,
or Solaris) should also be usable, but are not officially supported. If you choose to use one
of them instead of Linux, it is up to you to make certain your programs compile and run
properly on the CS Dept. Linux workstations before you submit them.
- Windows OS’s are definitely not compatible and should not be used for development in this
course. Most of the course will involve Linux/UNIX system programming, so it will be
impossible for you to compile or run your programs under any version of Windows OS.
- You are strongly encouraged to do all your work for the course on Linux machines (either the CS Dept workstations or a personal Linux machine). This will help you become familiar with the Linux commands that you will have to know for the exams, and will avoid compilation and other problems. Students that regularly use Linux systems for their coursework always perform better on the exams than those who choose to work via Windows machines.

- You will be instructed how to electronically submit your labs/programs for grading. Failure to follow the instructions may result in a score of zero for labs.

7 Cheating versus Acceptable Collaboration

- Cheating on programming assignments is a significant problem throughout CS courses. The CS Dept has a webpage on Academic Dishonesty on its website, and this defines cheating in some detail. You should familiarize yourself with it.

- If you cheat on an assignment in this class, you will receive a zero for the assignment. This will in turn cause you to fail to meet the requirements for admission to one exam, which will severely impact your course grade. A second violation will result in an immediate ‘F’ for the course.

- While collaborating on assignments with classmates is considered cheating in many CS classes, the grading structure for this course allows for limited collaboration on the programming assignments.

- You will be allowed to work on lab (programming) assignments for CS 306 in teams of no more than three students. If you choose to work in a team, every team member must confirm the team by:

  1. sending the instructor an email listing his fellow teammates prior to submission;
  2. including a comment at the top of submitted source file(s) listing all teammates.

- While some collaboration on lab assignments is being allowed, this does not necessarily mean that collaboration is the best way for you to work. If you are capable of completing the assignments by yourself, you will probably learn more and be better prepared for the exams than if you work in a team. On the other hand, developing code in conjunction with other students has been shown to be helpful for some students (if done properly). The danger is that some of the team members will do most of the work, resulting in the weaker member(s) failing to learn what they must. If you work collaboratively, make certain that you understand every single line of the code that your team submits, or you are likely to fare poorly on the exams.

- Every line of code that you submit must have been written by you or your teammates (or have been provided by the instructor with the understanding that you could copy his code).

- If this is not the case, then you have cheated on the assignment!
Incorporating code that somebody else wrote into your own solution is not allowed, whether that code came from a classmate (other than a teammate), a friend, the instructor (without permission), the TA, or the Internet. Starting with somebody else’s code is still cheating even if you slightly modify that code—such as by changing variable names, swapping the orders of a few statements, etc.

If you don’t understand why submitting somebody else’s modified code is cheating, consider that this would be comparable to taking a book somebody else had written, changing the names of the characters, and then claiming the “new” book as your own. Very few people would consider that to be true.

In fact, because computer software is inherently copywritten in the US and most of the rest of the world, copying somebody else’s code without their permission is not just cheating, it is a violation of law.

This is even the case for most “free and open source software,” since virtually all such software requires that anyone using the code in any way must retain existing authorship and copyright notices in any derived code (which would obviously alert the instructor that you had cheated).

Studies of cheating in CS classes have found that students drastically underestimate the ease with which instructors can identify copied code. No two independently developed programs of any length should look terribly similar since there will be a vast number of alternative ways to meet the program specifications. Students also seem to forget that the instructor/TAs can perform the very same Internet searches that they can, and so can find the same publicly available code.

The proper way to use the Internet to assist with programming is to use it to get ideas about how to implement certain functionality that you do not understand. You are free to use these ideas in your implementation. If you find yourself cutting and pasting somebody else’s code into your program, you are almost certainly cheating (even if you then modify it slightly afterwards).

Note: It is a violation of course policy and the instructor’s copyright to post solutions to homeworks and labs on public websites without permission!

8 Emergency Procedures

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on BERT’s website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Safety’s website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down) and in Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.
Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.