Welcome to CS 135 (Fall 2020)

**Instructors:** Byron Weber Becker, Charlie Clarke, Rob Hackman, Daniel Holtby, Edward Lank, Cameron Morland, Paul Nijjar, Stacey Watson

**Other course personnel:** see website for details

- ISAs (Instructional Support Assistants)
- IAs (Instructional Apprentices)
- ISC (Instructional Support Coordinator)
- TAs (Teaching Assistants)

**Web page** (main information source):
https://www.student.cs.uwaterloo.ca/~cs135/
Themes of the course

- Design (the art of creation)
- Abstraction (finding commonality, neglecting details)
- Refinement (revisiting and improving initial ideas)
- Syntax (how to say it), expressiveness (how easy it is to say and understand), and semantics (the meaning of what’s being said)
- Communication (in general)

The approach is by learning how to think about solving problems using a computer.
“Lectures” in COVID-times

CS135 is normally taught with in-person lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays, supported by a well-developed set of slides.

During these unprecedented times, the slides are available with “commentary” on the web site. “Commentary” includes text, video, and some interactive tools embedded in the web page.

You’ll need to work through the slides and commentary on your own with lots of support via office hours, a question/answer forum named Piazza, and self-check exercises.

The course owes a lot to the original textbook, “How to Design Programs (First Edition)” (HtDP) by Felleisen, Flatt, Findler, Krishnamurthi. It’s freely available via a link on the web site.
The lecture commentary has “self-check” exercises embedded in it.

- They give you immediate feedback on your understanding.
- Worth 10% of your course grade as an incentive to do them.
- To earn marks, they must be completed by 11:59pm of the date given on the course calendar (don’t fall behind!).
- The first answer submitted is the one that counts.
- If $x$ is the proportion of the questions that you submit and $y$ is the proportion that are correct, your participation mark will be $10 \times \min(1, x \times \frac{1}{3} + y \times \frac{4}{3})$. 
Assignments

**Timing:** About 10 assignments, typically due Tuesday at noon, Waterloo time. Remember that clocks change in Waterloo on Nov. 1.

**Software:** DrRacket v7.8([http://racket-lang.org](http://racket-lang.org))

**Computers:** In normal times we have labs available for your use. In these abnormal times, you’ll need to provide your own computer. In the past, almost all students have used their own computers.

**A00:** Due soon. Must complete before you are allowed to submit any subsequent assignment.

**Submission:** Using MarkUs. More in A00. Submit early and often. No late submissions. No email submissions.
CS135 normally has two midterm exams and one final exam. Exams are written on paper in-person and supervised ("proctored") by course staff. Normally they count for the majority of your CS135 grade.

In COVID-times we can’t offer proctored exams and for on-line courses the accumulated wisdom is to have more “assessments” that are individually and collectively worth fewer marks.

We’ve tried to use the term “assessment” to mark this change, but you’ll likely see references to “exam” in places we’ve missed.
Exams Assessments

You’ll have two midterm assessments (see the course calendar) and one final assessment (not yet scheduled) in addition to the self-check exercises.

In general, you’ll be given a 48 hour window of time to complete the assessment to account for differing timezones. We design midterms to be completed in 1.5-2 hours and final assessments to be completed in 2.5-3 hours.

Instead of writing your exam on paper, you’ll be able use DrRacket and other tools.
Marking scheme

- 10% Self-check exercises
- 60% Assignments (roughly weekly)
- 7% Midterm 1 assessment
- 7% Midterm 2 assessment
- 16% Final assessment

To pass the course:

⇒ Your weighted assignment average must be 50% or greater.
⇒ Your weighted average of the midterms and final must be 50% or greater.
Getting help

- **Office hours**: Held on-line using Microsoft Teams. Instructions on the website.
  - 1-to-1 with an undergrad tutor (Instructional Support Assistant) or instructor.
  - many-to-1 group sessions, usually with an instructor.
  - All of these sessions are student driven. You bring the questions.

- **Piazza**: An on-line forum where you can ask questions. Your fellow students and course staff answer them.
  - Regularly check the official assignment pinned posts.
  - Use meaningful subject headings (not just “A3 problem”; what’s your specific problem?).
  - Search previous posts before posting; **Don’t duplicate!**
  - Possible to post privately if necessary.
Suggestions for success

Read the CS135 Thrival Guide as soon as possible. Find it on the course web site under “Help”.

- Keep up with your assignments. Start them early. **This is key!**
- Go over your assignments and assessments; learn from your mistakes.
- Visit office hours as needed; earlier is better.
- Follow our advice on approaches to writing programs (e.g. design recipe, templates).
- Read your mail sent to your UW email account. We will only send to and reply to your UW email account!
- Integrate exam study into your weekly routine.
- Maintain a “big picture” perspective: look beyond the immediate task or topic.
Academic integrity

- You must do your own work.
- Policy 71 - Student Discipline: plagiarism, sharing assignments, etc.
- Running out of time? It is better to hand in a partial assignment or nothing than to hand in someone else’s work.
- Be careful about posting code to Piazza. If it looks like it could have come from your assignment, don’t post it (publicly).
- Don’t post solutions to homework sites. We monitor them and flag plagiarism there too.
The teaching material used in CS 135 is the property of its authors. This includes:

- Lecture slides and instructor written notes
- Assignment specifications and solutions
- Assessments and solutions

Sharing this material without the IP owner’s permission is a violation of their IP rights.
Goals of this module

- You should understand how the course is organized.
- You should be familiar with the course resources available to you.
- You should know what you need to do to earn the mark you desire.
- You should know how to avoid plagiarism.