

Boston University, CAS CS 330 Spring 2025

Introduction to Analysis of Algorithms

Course Description

Examines the basic principles of algorithm design and analysis; asymptotic analysis; graph algorithms; greedy algorithms; dynamic programming; network flows; polynomial-time reductions; NP-hard and NP-complete problems; This course fulfills a single unit in each of the following BU Hub areas: Quantitative Reasoning II and Critical Thinking ([HUB details](#)).

Prerequisites

Students **must** complete **CS 112 and CS 131** (or MA 293) prior to taking CS330. In addition CS majors need to complete **at least one** of their Group B coursework (any of CS 132/MA242, CS235/MA294 and CS237/MA581), other majors have to have completed at least one of these courses or their equivalents. If you don't have the prerequisites, you **must** talk to an instructor before continuing with this class.

Resources (sign up ASAP):

- **Piazza** (Q&A, discussion, course materials): <https://piazza.com/bu/spring2025/cascs330>
- **Gradescope**: <https://www.gradescope.com/courses/957575> entry code: **VD36EK**
- **TopHat**: A platform for in-class interaction and questions. You have to purchase a membership. There are semester and year-long options. If you use TopHat in multiple courses, you only have to pay the fee once. *If you do not have an account and the fee presents a financial hardship, please let the instructor know via a private Piazza post.*
<https://app.tophat.com/> course code: **622155**
- **Lecture recordings**:
 - A1: link TBA
 - B1: link TBA

Instructors and Teaching Fellows (reachable on Piazza) Office hour info is posted on Piazza

Name	Email @ bu.edu (piazza preferred)	Office
Prof. Dora Erdos	edori	CDS 910
Prof. Andrea Lincoln	andrea2	CDS 1023
TF Themis Nikas	tnikas	
TA Ross Mikulskis	rkulskis	
TA Anming Gu	agu2002	
TA Michelle Feng	myfeng	

TA Nathaniel Quisel	njqisel	
---------------------	---------	--

Textbook

Algorithm Design, by Kleinberg and Tardos. ISBN 0-321-29535-8.

Useful additional resources:

- Cormen, Leiserson, Rivest, and Stein. *Introduction to Algorithms*, 3rd ed. MIT Press.
- J. Erickson. *Algorithms*, 2019. Available from <http://algorithms.wtf/>
See also the extensive exercises on the website.
- [Mathematics for Computer Science](#) by Eric Lehman, Tom Leighton, and Albert Meyer.
(Useful background on discrete mathematics.)

Structure

The class consists of two 75 minute lectures (Tues, Thur) and one 50 minute discussion (Fri) each week. Attendance in lectures is mandatory and will be tracked through TopHat participation (see later section for details). The two sections of the course, A1 and B1, will be treated as one class. The content of the two lectures is identical¹: assignments, course staff and all resources will be shared, students can mix-and-match A and B lecture and discussion sections.

A1 section : Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00am - 12:15pm LAW AUD

B1 section : Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30pm - 1:45pm SCI 113

The TFs and TAs will lead the discussion sessions. The objective is to reinforce the concepts covered in the lectures through problem-solving, and to provide clarification and guidance on the homework assignments.

We will hold multiple office hours throughout the week. The purpose of these is to answer specific questions about the material and help with assignments. Students are welcome to attend office hours with any of the instructors. The exact schedule will be posted on Piazza.

Communication: We will be using **Piazza for all discussion** pertaining to the class. You should post your questions about the material, lectures, homework or course logistics here. Piazza is highly preferred over sending the course staff emails. Most often your question and the answer will be just as useful to your fellow students as yourself. We encourage you to respond to questions. The course staff will be monitoring Piazza and chime in as needed. You are encouraged to ask questions about the homework assignments, e.g. clarifications, related material, but **do not post solutions** to the problems. If you think your question is too specific or

¹ If on a given day you can't attend your own lecture section then—as long as there are seats available—you are welcome to attend the other lecture. No need to inform the instructor.

would reveal too much, then please ask in a private post. See the pinned “Ethics and Etiquette” post on Piazza for further guidance.

Discussion Labs: Labs will be an invaluable part of the course involving interactive problem-solving sessions, tips on homework questions, and supplemental material not covered in lecture. We will post lab notes on Piazza in advance -- please read before coming to lab. Solutions will be posted after all labs conclude.

Topics

We will mostly follow the order and content in the textbook. Topics are subject to change.

- Asymptotics, data structures, how to describe an algorithm (pseudocode)
- Graphs – data structures, graph traversals, connectivity, DAGs
- Greedy algorithms – scheduling, shortest paths, minimum spanning trees
- Divide-and-conquer – variations on sorting and searching, integer multiplication
- Dynamic programming – interval scheduling, subsetSum, knapsack, sequence alignment, Bellman-Ford
- Network flow – Ford-Fulkerson, MFMC theorem, applications
- Polynomial time reductions, NP, NP-Completeness

Course atmosphere and inclusion: We intend to provide a positive and inclusive atmosphere in class and on the associated virtual platforms. Students from a wide range of backgrounds and with a diverse set of perspectives are welcome. We ask that students treat each other with thoughtfulness and respect, and do their part to make all their peers feel welcome. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let us know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

Grading

The course grade will break down as follows:

5% class participation (based on TopHat)

20% weekly homework assignments (due Wednesdays by midnight, first hw due **Wed 1/29**).

20% Midterm exam 1 (Tuesday, **February 25**, 2025, in class).

25% Midterm exam 2 (Thursday, **April 3**, 2025, in class).

30% Comprehensive final exam (during finals week).

To pass the course students must earn at least 50% on two of the three exams, and get at least 50% average on the three exams.

Last day to **drop without a “W”**: **February 25, 2025** . **With a “W”**: **April 4, 2025**. Incompletes for this class will be granted based on [CAS Policy](#) as well as [CS departmental policy](#) (mostly only for last minute emergencies).

Exams: The two midterm exams will be during lecture time and take 75 minutes. The final is during the University-assigned final exam slot and is 120 minutes. The content of each exam is cumulative.

No collaboration whatsoever is permitted on exams, any violations will be reported to the College.

Accommodations: All are welcome in the course. If you require particular accommodations for exams or coursework, please contact the instructor (and forward any relevant documentation from Disability and Access Services) in a timely manner. If you are facing unusual circumstances during the semester, please reach out to us early on so that we can find a good arrangement.

Attendance and participation: Your participation grade depends on answering TopHat questions, which requires your presence in class. While our textbook will be very helpful, it is an imperfect substitute for in-class learning, which is the fastest (and easiest) way to learn the material. Some material covered in lecture and lab may not be in our textbooks. You are in all cases responsible to be up to date on the material. Class participation and questions are very much encouraged. *Please ask as many questions in class, labs and on Piazza as you need.* Chances are that your question and answer will be as helpful to your classmates as to you.

TopHat is a web-based platform for interactive questions during class. Our goal in using it is to make lectures more interactive, get you thinking actively about the material, and get some feedback on what you are learning. TopHat questions are generally multiple choice. Most of the points (80%) are for participation. The remaining 20% is for correctness. You will get the **full 5%** of the course grade if you get **at least 80%** of the possible TopHat points for the semester.

Homework

Homework problems: There will be weekly homework assignments, 10 total for the semester. Problems will be posted **Thursdays** and due the following **Wednesday by 11:59PM**, electronically via Gradescope. Solutions to written problems should be *typeset*. Hand-written solutions will not be accepted. We'll provide you with resources on how to get started if you're not familiar yet with typesetting mathematical-algorithmic text.

The two lowest grades on your homework assignments will be **dropped**.

Content: Homework problem sets will consist typically of one written problem and one short programming assignment. They will allow you to practice (a) solving problems using the ideas from class, often in a new way, (b) to assess and analyze the correctness of your solution and (c) communicate your ideas using technical language (precise descriptions, pseudocode, formal claims, proofs).

The homework is designed to aid you in understanding of the material. Lab assignments will often be helpful to solving these problems. Solving problems is probably the most useful learning tool in this course—take it seriously, allow yourself time to do it, and have fun! Alumni often describe this course’s homework as critical to their success in job interviews.

Limited collaboration on homework is permitted; see below.

Late Policy: Late assignments will **not** be accepted as we intend to post solutions the next morning. You can use your dropped grades to cover for up to two late assignments. Also, be mindful that sometimes it’s ok to submit partial results if you weren’t able to fully finish your assignment. Don’t miss the deadline because of last minute work.

Regrade Policy: If, after reviewing the solutions and your answer, you still believe a portion of your homework was graded in error, you may request a regrade, **via Gradescope** (not email or piazza). One of the staff will consider your request and adjust your grade if appropriate. Note that when we regrade a problem, your score may go up or down. Regrade requests can be submitted up to one week (7 days) after grades for that assignment have been posted.

Workload: CS 330 is a substantial amount of work. There is a problem set every week as well as three exams to study for. As you likely already know, assignments requiring substantial creativity can take more time than you expect, so plan to finish a day early.

Personal difficulties: Unfortunately, it may happen that you find yourself under circumstances that are affecting your ability to perform well in this class. We are here to support you and find the best way to help you in this course. Please reach out, so that we can help.

Collaboration, Citation, and Academic Honesty

Citation policy: You can reference anything from the textbook, lecture and discussion notes, information given by the course staff without having to cite it. However, if you make use of any other information, you have to include **proper citation**. If you omit to do this you are committing plagiarism.

Collaboration Policy: Collaboration on homework is permitted and even encouraged. If you choose to collaborate on some problems, you are allowed to discuss each problem with **at most 3** other students currently enrolled in the class. Before working with others on a problem, you should think about it by yourself for at least 45 minutes.

You must write up each problem solution by yourself (using your own words) without assistance, even if you collaborate with others to solve the problem. Identical worded answers, including identical pseudocode, will receive no grade. You must also identify your collaborators clearly on the first page of your assignment. If you did not work with anyone, you should write

“Collaborators: none.” It is a violation of this policy to submit a problem solution that you cannot orally explain to the instructors. You may get help on Piazza or in office hours from the instructors for the class for specific problems. You don’t need to list them as collaborators .

No collaboration whatsoever is permitted on exams!

Use of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools: Generative AI tools have become very advanced and widely available, many people use it for various purposes. We will not prohibit you from using them on your assignments. If you decide to use AI tools, you have to acknowledge this the same way that you would cite any other resource.

While we are not putting limits on how you use generative AI on your homework assignments, we want to caution you from relying on it too much for solving your homework. The problems we assign are carefully selected to aid you in understanding the underlying concepts in the material. Using AI will detract from how much you can gain by solving the problems on your own.

Collaboration strategies: If you do collaborate, use it as an opportunity to practice group work skills: give everyone a chance to speak, listen carefully, acknowledge good suggestions. If you have a tendency to be shy, speak up! If you have the tendency to dominate conversations, make sure to give others the floor. We strongly encourage you to find a small group of classmates that you regularly discuss and review material with. Feel free to post on Piazza to find a study mate.

Academic Conduct:

Academic standards and the code of academic conduct are taken very seriously by the University, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Computer Science. Course participants must adhere to the [CAS Academic Conduct Code](#). Please take the time to review this document if you are unfamiliar with its contents.

Any case of academic misconduct, including but not limited to plagiarism and submission of work that was not solved by you – be that a tutor, friend, web resource, AI, etc., will be reported to the College and will also carry a grading penalty.