Essentials: Communication, Content, and Structure

1 Communication

Class Meetings:	Monday, Thursday 14:30 - 15:45; North Bldg C107
Office:	HN1090J
Office Hours:	Wednesdays 11:00 - 13:00, in Zoom, using the link https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84693023051 See below for password information.
Email:	stewart.weiss@hunter.cuny.edu
Telephone:	(212) 772-5469

Regarding **email**, please note that I will not read email containing Microsoft Word-encoded documents. If you need to attach a document, it must be either plain text or PDF. Note too that all email must be sent from your "myhunter" account. It is a violation of federal law (FERPA) to have an email conversation about school-related matters using a non-school account because there is no proof that it is not spoofed and it might be insecure[1].

Regarding **office hours**, you can see me during my office hours *without an appointment*. If you need to see me at a different time, you need an appointment. The best way to make an appointment is to send me email with a few suggested times. I am usually unable to schedule meetings in a conversation before or after class because I need to read my calendar to know when I am available. The password will be given out on the first day of class, and also posted in Blackboard.

You can use the QR Code below to follow the meeting link:

2 Resources

Course Website All course materials, including assignments, syllabus, and other resources, including this document, are posted on the course website, at http://www.compsci.hunter.cuny.edu/~sweiss/course_materials/csci493.66/csci493.66_spr24.php

[1] Email sent from the *myhunter* account requires an authenticated login, it satisfies FERPA's written consent requirement. However because security measures for other email systems are not as strict, an email received from Gmail or other mail accounts, for example, would NOT satisfy FERPA requirements.

Required Textbook	***Introduction to System Programming in Linux***, by Stewart Weiss, No Starch Press, Inc, 2025. ISBN-13: 9781718503564. The website for purchasing the Early Access edition of the book is https://nostarch.com/introduction-system-programming-linux You can buy the ***eBook*** through the ***Early Access*** program, which entitles you to the chapters as they complete the editing process. Whenever I taught this course in the past, I made my lecture notes available online. Those notes are still online, but I am not teaching from them because much of their content needs to be updated. They still contain much valuable and useful content. I will be using the new book as the basis for all class lectures and you are required to read this book.
Computer Science Department Linux Network	Registered students are given user accounts on the *Computer Science Department's* network of instructional computers., if they do not already have them. All hosts run *Ubuntu 22.04*. Students must use the secure remote login program, *ssh* , to access these accounts or access them in person. See Section 6 below for more details about how to connect to these hosts. ***Students will be required to use this network for all class activities, including assignments.*** ***Students are expected to have used the Computer Science Department Linux network before taking this class and are presumed to know basic Linux commands in this class. I will not teach basic commands.*** If this is a student's first semester in Hunter, they should see me to discuss this. Those students whose computing device runs Windows 10 or later can install a subsystem on their devices that allows them to run Linux commands. Instructions for doing this are available here: https://okunhardt.github.io/documents/Installing_WSL.pdf
Discussion Board	This class uses *Piazza* as a discussion board. The sign-up link is https://piazza.com/hunter.cuny/spring2024/csci49366/info.The *Piazza* discussion pages are at https://piazza.com/class/lrjn17zvtng1it Please see the section below entitled "Course Materials, the Web, *Piazza*, and Blackboard" for the details.
Supporting Programs	The directory on our server, */data/biocs/b/student.accounts/cs493.66/demos*, is a Git repository of demonstration programs that we'll study in class.
Grading and Exams	All exams will be in person. Grades will be posted in the ***Blackboard Grade Center***.

3 Prerequisites

You must be a proficient C or C++ programmer and have passed a Data Structures class and an Operating Systems class with a grade of C or better. You must be familiar with using the command line in Linux. If you don't meet all of these conditions, I strongly suggest that you withdraw from this class.

4 Departmental Learning Goals

Material in this course supports or partially supports the following departmental learning goals: 1b: (understanding the relationship between computer architectures and software systems) by analyzing the relationship between kernel features and the machine architecture; 2c: (ability to apply principles of design and analysis in creating substantial programs and have experience working in teams on projects of moderately realistic scope); 3a: (ability to communicate ideas effectively) by requiring homework that is graded in part on clarity and proper use of the English language.

Course Objectives and Content

The primary objectives of this course are to teach you

- how to write system programs primarily for Unix systems, with emphasis on Linux,
- how Unix systems are designed and sructured, and
- to a lesser extent, how to work efficiently within the Unix/Linux environment.

To varying degrees, it presents three different perspectives of the UNIX operating system:

- for the developer, it examines important parts of the Unix operating system's application programming interface (API);
- for the ordinary user, it examines the command level view of Unix; and
- for the computer scientist, it explores the internal structure of the Unix operating system.

The course is primarily about system programming. In particular, it explores the following parts of the kernel API: general I/O structure, terminal control, the file system interface, processes and threads, signals and inter-process communication, and the Ncurses library.

This course covers to a lesser extent the use of the `bash` shell and various Unix tools. The title of the course is a misnomer[2]. Over the years, many of the students who have taken this course and graduated have contacted me afterwards to tell me that it was this course that landed them their first jobs.

About C and C++ in This Course

All of the source code is written in C. C is the native programming language of Linux and all programming examples in the man pages are in C. Linux itself is written in C. Some students who have been programming in C++ have a knee-jerk reaction when they hear this, thinking, "but I don't know C." This is not exactly true. The C++ language is mostly a superset of the C language. If you know C++, you know a great deal of C. There are minor differences that arise in the syntax of declarations (such as struct and function declarations), but the real problem is that most students never learn how to use the extensive C library functions, and in particular, the C Standard I/O Library. Most students learn C++ stream I/O and do not take the time to learn what they perceive to be archaic functions of the C standard I/O library. These functions are at times much more useful than any found in C++. In general, whether or not you take this class, you ought to know some C, if you want to call yourself a programmer. In this class, you will be required to write in C. This means you cannot use any C++ classes or stream I/O and so on.

[2] The title of the course was supposed to be changed back in 2010, but this task seems to have escaped attention

Assignments, Exams, and Grading

This is an honors seminar, not an ordinary lecture-style class. For this reason, students are expected to be self-motivated and self-disciplined, and are expected to do all assigned readings. The final grade is based upon a weighted average of the assignment grades (80%) and the final exam (20%).

Assignments

There will be at least five assignments, of varying sizes and weights. In all cases, the work is to be yours alone; working in groups is not allowed, unless the assignment states otherwise. I will not accept any program that is not written entirely by you or has been written in any part by a software program. Assignments must be submitted on time. *Assignments that are not submitted on time will not be accepted unless you have a legitimate excuse.* Programs must also comply with the rules specified in the document http://www.compsci.hunter.cuny.edu/~sweiss/course_materials/csci493.66/programming_rules.pdf. Please read it carefully.

Final Exam

The final exam will be an in-class exam based on the class lectures and the book.

Exam	Exam Date
Final	May 20, 2024 1:45 - 3:45 pm

4.1 Incomplete Grades

Assignments that are graded must be submitted by their due dates. **Late assignments will not be accepted and will be given a grade of zero**. Failure to take an exam counts as a zero grade on that exam. The only exceptions to these two rules are in the case that you have a legitimate, documented medical or personal emergency that prevents your timely completion of homework or sitting for an exam and have notified me in a timely manner about this emergency. "Timely" is defined as any time before the missed exam or at most 24 hours after it. I will schedule a make-up exam or grant a homework deadline extension only in that case. I do not give incomplete (IN) grades except to those students who were making progress through most of the semester and submitting assignments on time and who were unable to complete some work because of legitimate, documented medical or personal problems, and this is entirely at my discretion.

5 Class Calendar and Important Dates

There are no classes on February 12, February 19, April 22, April 25, and April 29. Classes follow a Monday schedule on Wednesday February 28. *The last day to drop without a W is February 14, the last day of class is May 13, and the last to withdraw is* May 15.

6 System Access

All students enrolled in the class are given accounts on the Computer Science Department's network. This entitles you to physical access to the 1001B lab, which is equipped with Linux workstations. This lab is normally open from early morning through late evening. You may also use the 1001B Linux/Windows Lab if there is no class using it. The account also enables you to work from home or another remote computer by connecting to any of the lab machines remotely. The details are described below.

The advantage of working in the lab, as opposed to working remotely, is that you will be sitting at the console of a Linux host and will not be subject to potential disconnections that can take place when working

remotely. You will also be much less affected by network problems than if you connect remotely from outside of Hunter. The disadvantage is that you have to be in school to do this.

When you are in the lab there are a few important rules that must be followed:

- Never power down a machine for any reason.
- Never leave a machine without logging out.
- Never use lockscreen to lock the screen in your login.

There are several other rules regarding lab use, which are posted in the lab. Also, please read the documentation at

http://www.compsci.hunter.cuny.edu/~csdir/

for more information. Please take the time to read this page and the others referenced on it.

The Computer Science Department has a ***gateway*** machine named

`eniac.cs.hunter.cuny.edu`,

available to students who have accounts on the network. `eniac` is a gateway computer - you will be able to login to this host from any computer that has *ssh* client software on the Internet. Once you login to `eniac`, you must login from `eniac` to one of the computers in the network that are named `cslab1`, `cslab2`, `cslab3`, ... `cslab26`. If you enter the command '`ypcat hosts| grep cslab`', you'll see the list.

You cannot *ssh* directly to those machines from outside of Hunter College for security reasons. For example, you can first login to `eniac`, and then when it gives you a prompt such as "`$`", you would type

```
ssh cslab5
```

and reenter your network password at the prompt from `cslab5`.

Many computers come with a version of *ssh* already installed. If yours does not, you can get one for free. There are several free versions of *ssh*. *OpenSSH* is an open source version developed for the *OpenBSD* project. If you use a Microsoft operating system, search their resources for *ssh* clients if one is not already on your computer. Macintosh computers come with a command-line *ssh* client.

7 Course Materials, the Web, Piazza, and Blackboard

All demo programs will be posted in the directory

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/data/biocs/b/student.accounts/cs49366/demos/
```

All students registered in the class will have permission to access these directories, which are accessible from any computer on the department side of the firewall, such as the all of the `cslab` computers. All assignments must be submitted to the appropriate subdirectory of

```
/data/biocs/b/student.accounts/cs49366/hwks.
```

All class materials will be posted on the course's home webpage (whose URL is above), which does not require special privileges to access. The only thing for which I use Blackboard is for posting of grades, which will be posted in the grade center there. This term we will be using Piazza for class discussion. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates and me. Rather than emailing questions to me, you are to post your questions on Piazza. If you have any problems or need feedback for the developers, email *team@piazza.com*. The discussion board is at

https://piazza.com/class/lrjn17zvtng1it.

An invitation to join the Piazza discussion board will be sent to your Hunter College email address close to the start of the semester. You should accept this invitation. Your Hunter email address can be used for reading and sending messages to the group, or you can change the email address or add another on the settings page by visiting the above page and making a request to join the group with any email address you choose. The class page is at this URL:

https://piazza.com/hunter.cuny/spring2024/csci49366/info

I require that you use the following protocol if you have a question:

1. Check whether the question you want to ask has been posted and answered on Piazza.
2. If it has been answered, you are finished. If not, post the question on Piazza.
3. Anyone in the class can answer the question. If no one else answers the question in a timely manner, I will post an answer to it.

I will ignore any non-personal questions sent to my Hunter email address. Personal questions (such as a questions about a grade or a missed class or alternative times to meet with me) should be sent via private email to my Hunter email address, not to Piazza.

8 Academic Honesty

The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that "plagiarism is the act or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft." If you pass someone else's work as your own you have committed ***plagiarism***, which is an act of academic dishonesty. Unless I state otherwise, all assignments and projects are to be your work alone. ***If someone else does part of this for you, whether it is an actual person or a piece of software such as generative AI, it is considered to be academic dishonesty.*** Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents, as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The college is committed to enforcing the ***CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity*** and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the ***Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures***. In this class, I will enforce the ***University's Policy on Academic Integrity*** and bring any violations that I discover to the attention of the Dean of Students Office.

9 ADA Compliance

In compliance with the ***American Disability Act of 1990*** (ADA) and with *Section 504* of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (emotional, medical, physical and/or learning) consult the ***Office of Access-ABILITY*** located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, the student can call (212-772-4857)/TTY (212-650- 3230).

10 Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct

In compliance with the *CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct*, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the *Bill of Rights for Hunter College*.

- Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

- All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.
- CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link: http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf

11 Changes to This Syllabus

Except for changes that substantially affect the implementation of the grading statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice. Any changes will be posted to the course website and to the Piazza group for the course.