

BNFO 135 Programming for Bioinformatics

Course Syllabus for Fall 2025

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Zoom: <https://njit-edu.zoom.us/j/2089308953?pwd=bUXYRgyWAr1OK12YM07Fz4cYVrpzwT.1>

Office Hours: Tue & Thu 2:30 PM – 4:00 PM,
And by appointment.

Grader: TBD

Class Meeting Days/Times: Mon & Wed 11:30 AM – 12:50 PM

Class Meeting Location: KUPF 107

Course Description

An introduction to programming and problem solving skills using Python, a very high level language. Topics include:

- programming environments and tools, including editor and debugger
- basic strategies for problem solving
- integer, floating point, string and logical data types
- lists, sets and dictionaries
- files
- conditional, repetition, function and other constructs that control the flow of execution of a program
- the design of classes
- the use of high level data types such as lists, strings and dictionaries in problem representation.

The course also includes a project in which the student investigates a topic of current interest in computing, writes a report on the topic and presents it.

Computing is a profession that requires lifelong learning, which is pursued through activities and using types of materials that are similar to those employed by students. In this course, the student, in addition to mastering the programming and problem solving materials, is expected to learn to effectively use learning strategies and materials — learning how to learn efficiently in preparation for a knowledge intensive profession. This includes effective use of knowledge resources — reading documentation, asking and answering peer questions, consulting with more experienced persons, and searching on-line for answers. It also includes tools and methodology — testing to verify the correctness of code, use of an integrated development environment (IDE) and debugger, writing specifications and documentation.

Learning this material requires extensive hands-on practice. You should plan to spend twice as much time studying and working problems outside of class (that is, about 6 hours a week) as you do in class.

Course Resources

The textbook is *Think Python* by Allen B. Downey, 2nd edition. This is an open source book. It is available without charge in HTML and PDF formats at <http://greenteapress.com/wp/think-python-2e/>.

A print format is published by O'Reilly (campus bookstore or online). There is also a Kindle edition. The textbook is required. You may use any one (or more) of the formats.

Other course materials:

- Python language can be gotten at python.org/downloads. This includes the IDLE development environment, help files, modules and other parts of the standard distribution. You will need to get Python and install it on your

personal desktop and/or laptop computer. You can download Python for Windows, Mac or Linux environments. There is no charge for Python. **Be aware that Python 3.12 cannot be used on Windows 7 or earlier.**

- PythonTutor, a program for stepping through and visualizing the execution of Python code at pythontutor.com.
- Wingware 101 IDE, which can be downloaded for various platforms at wingware.com/downloads/wingide-101.
- Thonny IDE, downloadable from thonny.org.
- The Community Edition of the PyCharm IDE jetbrains.com/pycharm.
- The Mu development environment, available at codewith.mu and various other online resources.

Class Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. Getting to class late or leaving early counts as half an absence.

Homework

Homework must be submitted through Canvas on or before the due date. **Late submissions will incur a 2% reduction per hour after the due date. After 24 hours past the due date, the assignment will no longer be available on Canvas, and no submissions will be accepted.** Exceptions to this policy may be made under special circumstances, such as a medical issue, but appropriate documentation must be provided to the dean of students for consideration.

A homework assignment will typically require you to write code that produces a specified output. **No credit will be given for code that does not run.** Getting a correct solution will often involve writing, testing, and revising your code multiple times until it meets the required specifications. Be prepared to spend the bulk of your time getting it right. Remember: only correct code will earn credit.

During the write-test-debug cycle you are encouraged to use the debugging tools available in your development environment, ask questions on Canvas, and discuss the problem with others. However, it is imperative that you adhere to the university's academic integrity policies. Cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. **To avoid misconduct student's work:**

- must be original. Students may **not** copy code from external sources without permission of the instructor (e.g. online sources, other students' code, previous semester coursework, etc.).
- may **not** include concepts, methods or code in the homework that have not been introduced or taught in the class up until the submission date.
- may **not** contain code that they cannot understand or explain if asked.

All homework assignments must be completed independently. Violations will result in serious consequences, including a zero on the assignment, and may lead to further disciplinary action by the university. Ensure that all work submitted is genuinely your own, and seek help in a legitimate manner if you encounter difficulties.

Roadmap Project

Each student will work on a Roadmap project, consisting of a written and an oral presentation, either individually or with a partner. Partners are held to a higher standard than individuals.

Class Participation

Asking and answering questions, solving/submitting classwork problems is a regular part of class meetings. Classwork assignments will be given during class, in which will count toward class participation grade. You will work in groups of two people; only one person must submit the work through canvas and make sure to include both of your names on the submitted assignment to get credit. **No late submission will be accepted, and all classwork assignments must be done in class** except for special circumstances, such as jury duty or medical issue, for which you must provide documentation.

The same misconduct policy that applies to homework assignments also applies to classwork assignments, except that for classwork, you will be working in groups.

Make sure to bring your own device, laptop, to class to be able to complete given classwork.

Cell phones must be turned off during class. During class time you may not play games, text, email, browse the web or engage in other activities that are not part of the class.

Course Communication

Canvas (canvas.njit.edu) will be used to post lecture notes, to submit homework and for course discussion. You may also email instructors and classroom assistants.

Collaboration and Individual Responsibility

You are encouraged to study and to work on assignments together with others; collaboration is a basic learning technique. You may not take credit for the work of others. You must understand and be able to explain all work that you submit.

What You Will Learn

By the end of this course, you will be expected to know and be able to use these pieces of the computing toolkit to compute the solution of a specified problem:

- Devise a problem representation (model) and a sequence of steps (algorithm) that correctly solve the problem posed
- Write a program that implements the algorithm, using
 - A core set of Python language elements (keywords, syntax, variables, modules)
 - Basic data types (integers, floats, strings, booleans, lists, tuples, dictionaries) and operations on them
 - Statements that perform console/file input and output
 - Statements that control the sequence of execution (if/else, for, while)
 - Statements that are structured into function calls

Each homework assignment gives you practice on these concepts and skills, and provides feedback on your progress. You are expected to submit working solutions to every homework assignment. Each element of this course builds on previous material, and any gaps in your understanding will compromise your ability to successfully complete the course. You understand material when you are able to use it to solve problems and to explain your solutions. Each of the two midterm exams and the final exam test your mastery of the material.

Topics to Be Covered

The list of topics to be covered includes the following:

- Getting Started with Python
- Expressions, Variables, and Assignments
- Built-in Data Types
- Sequence Data Types (Strings, Tuples, and Lists)
- Python Standard Library
- Formatted Output and User Input
- Conditional Execution and Boolean Logic
- Iteration
- Functions
- Argument-Passing and Return Values
- Data files
- Dictionaries
- Designing and Using Classes
- Scope and Namespaces
- Exceptions
- Debugging and Testing

Overall Course Score Formula

Attendance	5%
Roadmap Project	5%
Classwork/participation	10%
Homework	10%
Midterm 1	20%
Midterm 2	20%
Final Exam	30%

The letter grade is based on the overall course score.

Grade Formula						
Grade	A	B+	B	C+	C	D
Overall Course Score Cutoff	90	85	80	75	70	60

Exams

There are two midterms and final exam. First midterm exam is on Monday, October 13th. Second midterm exam is on Monday, Nov 17th. The final exams period is Dec 14th – 22nd. The BNFO 135 final exam will be during this period, but the date has not yet been set. ***Be sure to be present for all exams.***

You must bring ID to all exams. Students with special needs are advised to make arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services, Kupfrian Hall 201.

There are no makeup exams. If you miss a midterm exam due to a documented special circumstance you may receive an imputed grade based on the other midterm and the final exam. The final decision will be determined by the instructor.

Grade Appeals

If you believe that you deserve more credit than you have been awarded on a particular exam problem, you may request, **at the time the exam is returned**, that it be regraded. Your entire exam will be regraded, which may result in points being added or subtracted.

If you believe that you deserve more credit than you have been awarded on a particular homework problem, you may request, **within 48 hours of the grade being posted**, that it be regraded. Your entire homework will be regraded, which may result in points being added or subtracted. Reach out to the grader first regarding the homework problem, if you still have doubt then feel free to reach out to the course instructor.

Peer Tutoring

YWCC maintains an active program of peer tutors. The tutors for any course have received a grade of A for that course. Most of the undergraduate tutors offer assistance with BNFO 135 (or CS100 which covers the same materials). You can find a complete list of tutors and their availability at [Undergraduate Tutoring](#).

University Code on Academic Integrity

“Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:

njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing, using concepts that were not covered in class, or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu”

Accommodations

If you are in need of accommodations due to a disability please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (OARS), Kupfrian Hall 201, to discuss your specific needs. A Letter of Accommodation Eligibility from the OARS authorizing your accommodations will be required.

You will be informed of any modifications of this syllabus during the semester.