

About CS0931

Jan 25, 2012

Thanks for your interest in our course!

This document covers three topics: the waitlist, background, and workload. It addresses most of the questions you are likely to have, so please read it carefully.

First and foremost: if at any point you decide you are no longer interested in the course, **let the staff know** so I can remove you from the waitlist! You may be blocking another interested student.

Waitlist

Right now, everybody is on the waitlist. Banner overrides are painful work, so I'd like to do it only after students are done shopping.

To be admitted to the course, you have to attend every class, and do the first homework.

Initially, attendance is huge – people sitting on the floor, etc. Don't worry: it's just shopping at work. Instead of fretting over your waitlist number, just show up and do the work. No promises, but we'll do our best to make it work out.

We can usually squeeze in a small number of extra students if a few students use their own laptops and don't need one of our desktop machines. You may also find it more pleasant to work on your own laptop. But remember, you'll have to bring it to every class.

Finally, if you have special circumstances (eg, you enrolled last semester but talked to us about taking it this semester instead), we'll take that into account. Remind us if it looks like we've forgotten. For now, don't sweat it.

Background

If you can use Excel to add a column of numbers, you have all the background we expect. If you don't know how to do that but can figure out how to do so, you should be fine.

If you have done any prior programming, this is probably *not* the class for you. See <http://www.cs.brown.edu/ugrad/whatcourse.html>.

Workload

You've probably heard legends about computer science workloads. Some of it is true, and some is not. Either way, 0931 is not your typical computer science course. We work you much less.

On the other hand, we know that in many of your other courses, a normal workload is 3-6 hours/week. In this course, we expect you to put in about 10 hours/week. You will get lots of help from us, but there is no easy path to knowledge. You've read articles about how computer science students get plum jobs with high pay in fun locations and environments; that's the payoff for the time they've invested.

But think about it more broadly, too. You stand at the cusp of a revolution. In the past fifty years, computing irrevocably changed subjects like engineering, physics, and biology (think about the Human Genome Project, for instance). It is now starting to do the same for the social sciences and humanities. 0931 is a relatively unique opportunity: few universities have such a course (and even fewer did when we created it). We offer a gentle and caring environment that, combined with your hard work, will put you at the front of this wave, instead of having to catch up with it in future years.