CS 5040: Teaching Introductory Computer Science

Administrative Details and Syllabus

Fall 2019

Course Information

Course catalog description. Issues confronted by undergraduate teaching assistants (TAs) in introductory computer science courses, including leading lab sections, conducting office hours, grading assignments, communicating with students.

Who can take CS 5040. All undergraduates newly hired as TAs this semester are required to enroll in CS 5040. Undergraduates who have served as TAs prior to this semester should contact the instructor before enrolling.

Purpose of CS 5040. The discussions, reading materials, and assignments of CS 5040 are designed to train undergraduate TAs to be effective and efficient in their positions, while remaining successful in their own academic coursework. CS 5040 also facilitates the formation of a supportive cohort of undergraduate TAs in the School of Computing (SoC), members of which can be called on to answer questions and share experiences.

Combined credit. CS 5040 is 1 credit and may be combined with other courses (such as CS 3011 and 3020) to form a 3-credit elective for the CS degree.

Instructor. D. Erin Parker. Email: parker@cs.utah.edu. Office: 3144 MEB

Course Schedule

Meeting times. All SoC TAs must arrive on campus at least one week before the start of classes. CS 5040 will meet August 13, 15, and 16 1-4p in MEB to cover the majority of the course material. CS 5040 will also meet for two follow-ups in late September and early November (exact dates and locations TBA).

Presentation of topics. CS 5040 material will be presented according to the following schedule.

MEETING 1 — August 13
Nuts and bolts of being a TA, Classroom demeanor, Overcoming barriers to communication

MEETING 2 — August 15
Encouraging interaction, Conducting consulting hours, Effective grading

MEETING 3 — August 16
Answering student questions outside of class, Being the TA of near peers, Presentation skills

MEETING 4 — First follow-up
Lessons learned from reviewing other TAs and being reviewed

MEETING 5 — Second follow-up
Reflecting on the TA experience and staying motivated
Course Materials

Textbook. *The Torch or The Firehose: A Guide to Section Teaching* by Arthur Mattuck is a free, online textbook available at [http://tinyurl.com/jw2gwh4](http://tinyurl.com/jw2gwh4). Please note that this guide was written for TAs at MIT who lead recitation sections. While the job of being a TA for introductory courses at the UofU is somewhat different, much of the information and advice is still applicable. Reading from *The Torch or The Firehose* will be assigned for each discussion in CS 5040; however, students are encouraged to read the entire guide (about two hours of reading) as soon as possible.

Course website. The class website is a Canvas course available through CIS. It contains the schedule of class meetings, discussion topics and reading assignments for each meeting, as well as assignment specifications.

Student Evaluation

Assignments. A number of assignments will be given throughout the semester. The specifications of each assignment and its due date will be posted on the class schedule. There are no tests or exams in CS 5040.

Evaluation. Each CS 5040 assignment will be evaluated by the instructor using the UofU criteria for letter grades:

- **A, A-** excellent performance, superior achievement
- **B+, B, B-** good performance, substantial achievement
- **C+, C, C-** standard performance and achievement
- **D+, D, D-** substandard performance, marginal achievement
- **E** unsatisfactory performance and achievement

Numerical grades will not be used. *Students who wish to appeal a grade on an assignment must do so within one week of receiving the grade.* At the end of the semester, a student’s course grade is determined by the performance on all assignments, as well as the contribution to classroom discussions.

Course Guidelines

Working together. Students are encouraged to discuss assignments with fellow classmates, but each student is responsible for writing his/her own answer. *Cheating is:* sharing written or electronic work either by copying, retyping, looking at, or supplying a copy. *Cheating is not:* discussing concepts, answering questions about concepts or clarifying ambiguities, or helping someone understand how to use the class tools and software.

UofU Student code. All students are expected to maintain professional behavior, according to the University of Utah Student Code at [www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/guides/students/studentRights.html](http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/guides/students/studentRights.html). Students should read the Code carefully and know that they are
responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsi-

bility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing
to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the
Student Behavior Committee.

Other policies and guidelines. CS 5040 students are also bound by the following policies and
guidelines:

- The School of Computing Policies and Guidelines (www.cs.utah.edu/socguidelines)
- The College of Engineering Guidelines (www.coe.utah.edu/students/academic-affairs/academics/semester-guidelines)

Students should thoroughly read and understand each of these documents, asking questions as
needed.