

CPSC 203: Introduction To Computers (Independent Study)

James Tam

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Administrative (James Tam)

- Contact Information

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- Office hours

- Office hours: MW 16:00 – 17:00
- Email: (any time): tamj@cpsc.ucalgary.ca
- Appointment: email, phone or call
- Drop by for urgent requests (but no guarantee that I will be in!)



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Administrative: Tutorials

- Time/Location
 - Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:00 – 7:50 PM in ES 656
- Purpose of the tutorials
 - Unless you are otherwise told, the job of the Tutorial instructor is to act as another source of help for assignments.
 - First exception: I may use the scheduled tutorial time today for extra lecture time today (if necessary).
 - Second exception: next week the tutorial instructor will show you how to use an important software package (TAIT).
- Getting help from your TA outside of tutorial time
 - You can send your TA questions (*48 hour response time*).
 - TA contact information:
 - Chengyao Deng
 - cdeng@cpsc.ualgary.ca

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Is This The Course/Lecture Section For You?

- Introductory Computer Science courses for non-Computer Science majors (*do not want to get a Computer Science degree*)
 - CPSC 203 (Independent study: this lecture)
 - CPSC 203 (The 'regular' version of the course: all other lecture sections)
 - CPSC 215
- The introductory Computer Science course for Computer Science majors (*do wish to get a Computer Science degree*)
 - CPSC 231

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CPSC 203

- The focus is on how to *use* computer programs.
- One important objective is to learn how computers and technology works *from the user's perspective*
 - Issues related to how computers work are largely introduced in the context of using applications.
 - E.g., Why is my computer so slow when I'm editing my movies?
 - E.g., Why did that computer game look and sound so much better on the store computer than on my machine at home?
- Assignments involve *using* popular software:
 - Productivity (business) software: MS-Office
 - Fun software: building a web site, making a computerized video etc.

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CPSC 215

- An introduction to *writing* computer programs.
- This course is designed for students whose major is not Computer Science
 - This person will not get a degree in Computer Science
 - This person will not develop/write software for a living (become a programmer)
 - This person may work with complex specialized software (e.g., running a biological simulation) which may require customization
- One important objective is to learn how computers and technology works *from the programmer's perspective*
 - Issues related to how computers work are largely introduced in the context of creating applications.
 - E.g., If I write my program one way it will run faster than if I write it another way.
- Assignments involve *writing* simple programs:
 - Possible examples:
 - Displaying text onscreen
 - Saving and reading from a file

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CPSC 231

- An introduction to *writing* computer programs.
- The course is designed specifically for Computer Science majors
 - This person will get a degree in Computer Science
 - This person will likely develop/write software for a living (become a programmer)
- Typically the course is more in-depth and cover more topics than CPSC 215
- One important objective is to learn how computers and technology works *from the programmer's perspective*
 - Issues related to how computers work are largely introduced in the context of creating applications.
 - E.g., What kind of game can I write given the strengths and weaknesses of the PS3 vs. the Xbox 360 vs. the Wii?
- This may result in having more challenging assignments than the ones in CPSC 215

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Relating The Three Courses

CPSC 203:

For non-majors who want to learn how to use programs

↓
This course is not a pre-requisite for any other Computer Science courses

CPSC 215:

For non-majors who want to learn how to write programs

↓
This course will become a pre-requisite for a future Computer Science course

CPSC 231:

For CPSC-majors who want to learn how to write programs

↓
This course is one of the most important foundational courses for a B.Sc. in Computer Science

Bottom line: 203 vs. 215, 231. 203 is not a direct preparation course for these courses.

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CPSC 203: Comparing This Lecture To The Others

CPSC 203: L06 – L09

- Has formal lectures each week.
- The course instructors teach you the important concepts.
- Everyone in the lecture works on the same assignments.
- Examinations are used to test the students' comprehension of the theoretical concepts.
- Rose Joshua and Frank Deur are the instructors for these lectures.

CPSC 203: L91

- Unless you are told otherwise there will be no lectures during the term.
- You have the ability to learn the concepts on your own (i.e., you have greater flexibility in adapting the course to your schedule).
- However: you can still ask me or the TA for help.
- Also the course resources are similar (e.g., text book)
- You can *choose your own custom assignments* (with my guidance and approval).
- This class also has exams
- I am the instructor this lecture – of course!

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The Bottom Line View



Why enroll in one of the other 203 lectures

- You don't have minimal computer experience (e.g., you know how to turn it on and know the mechanics of using a mouse and a keyboard but not much else).
- You want the “*security*” of knowing that someone will be lecturing about each of the important concepts each week.
 - “On no the material on Internet security looks really hard but at least the Prof will be talking about it next week.”
- You have no idea of the type of assignment that you would like to work on.

Why enroll in this 203 lecture

- You have some experience with using common software (e.g., using a word processor, playing media files, email, browsing the web etc.)
- You can the “*freedom*” to learn the concepts on your own.
- You want the freedom to customize the assignments (under my approval and guidance) to learn about features of the programs that interest you the most:
 - You need to learn certain features of Access for your downtown job.
 - You want to make a simple web page for your club.
 - You want to be a YouTube © video star!

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How You Will Be Evaluated

- Assignments (*Total value 40%*)
- Exams (*Total value 60%*)
 - First midterm exam (25%): In class during normal lecture time
 - Second midterm exam (25%): In class during normal lecture time
 - Final exam (10%): Held during the last week of class

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Course Resources

- Required course textbook:
 - Technology in Action with TAIT (Package Set) Alan Evans, Kendall Martin and Mary Anne Poatsy (*Prentice Hall*).
 - You must buy the textbook for this course.
 - TAIT: comes with the textbook, the tutorials are necessary to learn the features of the software that you will be using for the course.
- Course website: <http://pages.cpsc.ucalgary.ca/~tamj/203>
 - Outlines the structure for the course
 - Lists the assignments
 - Sample exam questions will be provided periodically
 - Some extra notes may be provided

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