

PSY P357: Thinking Like Machines

Spring 2025 Syllabus

CLASS TIME AND PLACE

Section [#9013](#)

In-Person Discussions, Monday and Wednesday, 9:10 AM – 10:25 AM in PY 230

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Rick Hullinger

Office: PY A300B

Office Hours will be held via [Zoom](#):

Monday 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Tuesday 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Or in person or via Zoom by appointment

Office Telephone: 812-856-6854

Email Address: rahullin@iu.edu

COURSE GOALS

This course is designed to help you think the way a software developer does: to break a big problem down into smaller parts and then use logic and a systematic approach to achieve solutions. It will provide skills that will help you in your future classes and help you think more clearly about our increasingly technologically saturated world. You'll be empowered to explore and learn about a range of technologies that will benefit you in in school, research, and your future career. These same skills will also make it easier to understand how computers work and by the end of the course you will be comfortable writing your own small computer programs. It is intended for first- and second-year undergraduate students with no prior programming experience. This is not a course focused on teaching you how to program in a specific language. Instead, it will teach you how think about programming so that you can pick up whatever programming language you need much more quickly in the future.

This course will be challenging. However, the tests and assignments are designed so that any student who is willing to put in the time to digest the course content, work hard outside of class, develop and use good study strategies, and contact the me when they are struggling, can develop a thorough understanding of the material and ultimately succeed in the course.

In this course, successful students will be able to:

- Use both local and online resources to solve problems, learn new skills, and answer questions
- Differentiate between various computational environments (local, remote, cloud) and select an appropriate environment for specific tasks
- Demonstrate the tenants of algorithmic thinking: decomposition, pattern recognition, abstraction, and algorithm creation with both human-centered and computational tasks.
- Write clear pseudocode for solving a variety of problems
- Use the fundamental structures of programming languages to write, document, and debug simple python programs
- Confidently approach new technologies, software, and programming languages with the skills and knowledge necessary to learn them quickly.

STUDENT SUCCESS

I care about the success of *every* student in this class. When you have questions about the course material, questions about the subject more broadly, concerns to discuss, accommodations you need, or thoughts you want to share, please reach out to me. I am here to help you succeed.

Many students face obstacles to their education because of work or family obligations or unforeseen personal difficulties. If you are experiencing challenges throughout the term that are impacting your ability to succeed in this course, or in your undergraduate career more broadly, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to form a plan for your academic success.

TEXTBOOK & COURSE MATERIALS

We will not be using a textbook for this course. All the readings and notes that you need will be presented in class and/or provided for you on [Canvas](#).

LECTURE PARTICIPATION

Most class sessions will be held in person, in PY 230, from 9:10 AM – 10:25 AM, ET (Indiana time). Class periods will be a mix of lecture, discussion, demonstrations, and collaboration. Attendance and active participation – including in class practice exercises -- in these sessions will be tracked and will make up your class participation score.

Each student will have their three lowest lecture participation scores dropped. Because each student gets three dropped scores, I do not make a distinction between excused and unexcused absences. If you miss a class due to illness, oversleeping, travel, or emergency, participation for that session will be recorded as a zero.

HOMEWORK

Most weeks of the semester will have a new homework assignment posted on Wednesday after class. The assignment will focus on the concepts, skills, and technologies we have studied that week. All assignments will be due at least one week after they were assigned (typically at 11:59 PM the following Wednesday). Each student will have their lowest homework assignment dropped. Late homework will not be accepted.

EXAMS

There will be two cumulative, in-class exams this semester (see the course schedule for details). These exams will cover the same material as the homework assignments, but you will not be required to use any software (or produce working code) for the exams.

FINAL PROJECT

Each student will complete a final project which may be either:

- A pre-defined python coding project that will make use of the skills you've learned over the semester or
- A single, choose-your-own-adventure (student-defined) coding project exploring some new aspect of algorithmic thinking and programming.

I will provide more details on the final project nearer the end of the semester and will give considerable guidance throughout the process.

If you are ill or have a scheduling conflict that will interfere with turning in a homework assignment or taking an exam at the scheduled time, you must let me know as soon as possible. With the exception of extreme and unforeseen circumstances, contacting me the day of (or even worse, after) an assignment or exam is due will be considered an unexcused absence and will result in a zero on the late work.

GRADING

Your final grade is computed using the following formula:

Lecture Participation:	20%
Homework Assignments:	25%
Exam 1:	20%
Exam 2:	20%
Final Project:	15%
	100%

GRADING SCALE

A+: 97.0%-100%;	A: 93.0%-96.99%;	A-: 90.0%-92.99%
B+: 87.0%-89.99%;	B: 83.0%-86.99%;	B-: 80.0%-82.99%
C+: 77.0%-79.99%;	C: 73.0%-76.99%;	C-: 70.0%-72.99%
D+: 67.0%-69.99%;	D: 63.0%-66.99%;	D-: 60.0%-62.99%
F: Below 60%		

RELIGIOUS AND CIVIC OBSERVANCES

Students missing class (lecture or exam) or needing an extension for a religious observance can find the officially approved accommodation form by going to the [Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs webpage for religious accommodations](#). The form must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the anticipated absence.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

Grades and feedback on student work are an integral part of the learning process. The primary goal of feedback is to guide you and help you continue learning, not to rank or evaluate you. As such, I expect you to look over your scores and the feedback we provide whenever such feedback is released, and to incorporate that feedback into your future work in the course. It is your responsibility to double-check your assignment and exam grades – both that the work itself was correctly graded and that the scores posted on Canvas match your actual grades. You have two weeks from the time an assignment or exam is returned to the class to address any grading issues. After that, the grades posted on Canvas will be considered final.

EXTRA CREDIT?

Extra credit points will occasionally be offered as a bonus for solving additional homework problems. Outside of those extra challenges, no extra credit will be available.

EMAIL

I expect you to be checking your IU email account (not just Canvas messages) no less than once a day. I will send frequent messages to the class with announcements, clarifications, instructions, and/or updates. You are responsible for the content of these messages exactly as if the material had been presented in class. Saying that you have not checked your email for a few days will not be considered a valid excuse for missing information. All class-wide messages will be sent using the Canvas Announcement tool, so archived messages can always be found on the Canvas site.

FEEDBACK

Do not wait until the end of the semester course evaluations to let me know that I could be doing something better. Tell me as soon as possible so that I can make the class valuable and relevant as we go along. If you have any feedback, good or bad, about the course or how it's being taught, please feel free to send it to me *anonymously* using [this link](#).

CLASS RECORDINGS

I will record each class session and upload the recording to our Canvas site after class. You may watch any of the recordings online or download them for off-line viewing on your computer, smartphone, or media player. These recordings are copyrighted by me and provided by me and the University for your personal use. You may not share them, in whole or in part, without my prior written permission. Please see the copyright statement below for the full terms of use.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

This course is conducted under the University's Ethics Code. Specifically, it is considered cheating if you obtain any kind of information about answers and solutions to the assignments in this course – exams and homework – from any non-intended source or conversely transfer such information to others.

You are welcome to use outside sources (the internet, friends, etc.) for help solving programming problems. Everyone who writes software does this. What you cannot do is use logic, code, or solutions to problems without fully understanding how they work. This is a class about thinking and understanding, not about copying working solutions. Submitting any code or homework solution that you do not understand or cannot explain will be considered academic misconduct.

It is also considered academic misconduct if you lie to me about an absence or extension relating to a homework assignment or an exam. The punishment for academic misconduct will be no less than a zero on the assignment or exam and will likely be failure of the course. As per university policy, *all* incidents of academic misconduct must be reported to the Dean of Students office.

GROUPME AND OTHER EXTERNAL MESSAGING PLATFORMS

Please note that you may receive emails from other students about joining GroupMe, Discord, or similar external group messaging platforms for individual classes via Canvas. Even though invitations to join the group may be issued through Canvas, they do not imply the endorsement of the course instructor. While platforms like GroupMe, Discord, etc. can be an effective way of contacting classmates and clarifying information related to the course, they can also be source of unauthorized information sharing or collaboration among students. Collaborative effort on assignments, quizzes, and exams, including sharing or discussing answers when the instructor has not expressly authorized collaboration, is considered cheating. If academic dishonesty occurs via GroupMe or a similar messaging platform, everyone involved in the thread may be found responsible for academic misconduct since membership

in the group suggests that that they have been able to view the information shared.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION

Every attempt will be made to provide accessibility measures (accommodations) to students with qualifying medical conditions (e.g. mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision, neurological, etc.), under the Americans with Disabilities Act. You must have established your eligibility for support services through [Accessible Educational Services](#) for qualifying medical conditions. Note that services are confidential, may take time to put in place, and are forward moving. Captions and alternate media for print materials may take three or more weeks to get produced. Please contact [Accessible Educational Services \(AES\)](#) at 812-855-7578 as soon as possible if accessibility measures are needed. The office is located on the basement floor of Eigenmann Hall, #001.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Stressing out over your studies? Just need someone to talk to? IU has trained, professional staff to provide [confidential](#) support. [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) and [Sexual Assault Crisis Services](#) are provided at no charge to all IU students who have paid the student health fee. If you're a first-time client, you can schedule your first, 30-minute CAPS assessment [online](#). All other appointments can be made by calling 812-855-5711. In an emergency you can contact CAPS 24/7 to speak to a crisis counselor. Call 812-855-5711, option 1 or contact your local hospital emergency department. You may also call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND TITLE IX POLICY

IU policy prohibits sexual misconduct in any form, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, sexual exploitation, and dating and domestic violence. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help. If you are seeking help and would like to speak to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with the [IU Sexual Assault Crisis Services](#) at (812) 855-8900, or contact a Confidential Victim Advocate at (812) 856-2469 or cva@indiana.edu.

University policy requires me to share certain information brought to my attention about potential sexual misconduct with the campus Deputy Sexual Misconduct & Title IX Coordinator or the University Sexual Misconduct & Title IX Coordinator. In that event, those individuals will work to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available. Protecting student privacy is of utmost concern, and information will only be shared with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist. I encourage you to visit <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/index.html> to learn more.

BIAS-BASED INCIDENT REPORTING

Bias-based incident reports can be made by students, faculty, and staff. Any act of discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability can be reported through either of these options:

- 1) fill out an online report at <https://reportincident.iu.edu/>;
- 2) call the Dean of Students Office at (812) 855-8187

Reports can be made anonymously at <https://reportincident.iu.edu>.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ROSTER AND EARLY WARNING ALERTS

Part of my job as the instructor of this course is to make sure you are connected to the resources that will help you succeed. If you receive a message through the Student Engagement Roster that asks you to consult with your advisor, please know that the message is sent to both you and your academic advisor, who will follow up and view the feedback from this course.

COPYRIGHT

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DISCLAIMER

This syllabus is an outline of the course and its policies, which may be changed for reasonable purposes during the semester at the instructor's discretion. You will be notified in class and / or via email if any changes are made to this syllabus, and an updated syllabus will be provided on Canvas.

Thinking Like Machines Spring 2025 – Schedule

Week		Date	Description	Assignment Due
1	Mon	Jan 13	Introductions & Overview	
	Wed	Jan 15	Digital Literacy, Part I	Getting to Know You
2	Mon	Jan 20	MLK Jr Day - No Classes	
	Wed	Jan 22	Digital Literacy, Part II	
3	Mon	Jan 27	Digital Empowerment	
	Wed	Jan 29	Decomposition & Pattern Recognition	
4	Mon	Feb 03	Algorithms and Pseudocode	
	Wed	Feb 05	Pseudocode and Logical Flow, Part 2	Using Online Knowledge
5	Mon	Feb 10	Programming Languages	
	Wed	Feb 12	Digital Empowerment Presentations	Decomposition and Algorithms
6	Mon	Feb 17	Variables and Operators	Install Python and Wing IDE Personal
	Wed	Feb 19	Built-In Functions	Pseudocode
7	Mon	Feb 24	Practice and Exam 1 Review	
	Wed	Feb 26	Exam 1	
8	Mon	Mar 03	Strings and Lists	
	Wed	Mar 05	Lists, Part II	Python Project 1: Variables
9	Mon	Mar 10	If Statements, Part 1	
	Wed	Mar 12	If Statements, Part 2	Python Project 2: Strings and Lists
10	Mon	Mar 17	Spring Break - No Classes	
	Wed	Mar 19		
11	Mon	Mar 24	If Statements, Part 3	
	Wed	Mar 26	While and For Loops	
12	Mon	Mar 31	For Loops, Part 2	
	Wed	Apr 02	Loop Practice	Python Project 3: If Statements
13	Mon	Apr 07	Working With Files, Part 1	
	Wed	Apr 09	Working With Files, Part 2	Python Project 4: Loops
14	Mon	Apr 14	Final Projects and Python Libraries	
	Wed	Apr 16	Catch-Up / Review / Misc Topics	Python Project 5: Files
15	Mon	Apr 21	Exam 2 Review	
	Wed	Apr 23	Exam 2	
16	Mon	Apr 28	Writing Functions, Part 1	
	Wed	Apr 30	Writing Functions, Part 2	Final Project Progress Check
17	Mon	May 05		
	Wed	May 07		Final Project (5 PM)