

# CS 3823 - Theory of Computation: Syllabus

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The University of Oklahoma, School of Computer Science

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## Time and Location

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:00pm-1:15pm, Nielsen Hall 0170.

**Website:** <https://www.diochnos.com/teaching/CS3823/2023F/index.php>

**Canvas:** Canvas will be used in order to distribute homework assignments and potentially other reading materials.

## Instructor

Dimitris Diochnos, 230 Devon Energy Hall (DEH), [diochnos@ou.edu](mailto:diochnos@ou.edu).

## Teaching Assistants

Our teaching assistant for this course will be **Naeem Shahabi Sani** (`shahabi`). Inside the parentheses you can see the username of the student such that if you append `@ou.edu` you can send an email to them directly.

## Office Hours

Office hours will be held on:

- **Mondays** between **10:30am-12:00pm** (Naeem Shahabi Sani),
- **Tuesdays** between **3:00pm-4:00pm** (Dimitris Diochnos),
- **Wednesdays** between **10:30am-12:00pm** (Naeem Shahabi Sani),
- **Thursdays** between **2:00pm-3:00pm** (Dimitris Diochnos),
- **Fridays** between **10:45am-11:45am** (Dimitris Diochnos), or
- **by appointment.**

As I am teaching two courses this semester, please note that while anyone is welcome during my office hours (Dimitris Diochnos), students from CS 5713 will have precedence on Fridays, while students from CS 3823 will have precedence on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The TA will be holding their office hours for this class via **Zoom**. For the **Zoom link** that you can use in order to meet with the TA, please consult **Canvas**.

## Prerequisite Background

The prerequisites for the course are CS 2413 and CS 2813 or MATH 2513 or CS 5005 or DSA 5005.

## Topics and Course Description

(As listed in the undergraduate catalog:) Introduction to abstract machine theory and formal language theory. Topics include Turing machines, finite/pushdown automata, deterministic versus nondeterministic computations, context-free grammars, and mathematical properties of these systems.

## Schedule of Classes

The syllabus is continuously updated and subject to change. We will cover the material at a pace that is comfortable. Our **first meeting** is on **Tuesday, August 22, 2023** and our **last meeting** is on **Thursday, December 7, 2023**.

We will cover most of the Chapters 1-10 of the textbook well as some topics not covered in the book.

The **final exam** is **in-class** (Nielsen Hall 0170) on **Wednesday, December 13, 2023** between **1:30pm and 3:30pm**. **I will not accommodate rescheduling of the exam because you have a conflict with another course. Be wise and enroll in this class only if you can have the final exam at the above date and time.**

This course is a theory course and our primary focus is on abstract, theoretical ideas, though we may touch on relevant applications at various points (and especially in the topics discussed in the end)

## Textbook, Notes and Related Reading Materials

**Textbook.** The textbook for the course is *An Introduction to Formal Languages and Automata (6th Edition)*, by Peter Linz [6].

### Other Books of Interest.

- *Introduction to the Theory of Computation (3rd Edition)*, by Michael Sipser [9].
- *Computability and Unsolvability*, by Martin Davis [1].
- *Computational Complexity*, by Christos Papadimitriou [7].
- *Computers and Intractability: A Guide to the Theory of NP-Completeness*, by Michael Garey and David Johnson [4].

Another book of interest, which can be inspiring providing patterns for problem-solving strategies, is the one by George Pólya,

- *How to Solve It: A New Aspect of Mathematical Method* [8].

Another interesting book that can give you a good flavor of the other course that I am teaching in computational learning theory, is one by Leslie Valiant that is listed below. With this book you can explore connections between the theory of machine learning and artificial intelligence on one hand, and the theory of computation on the other hand. This book is

- *Probably Approximately Correct: Nature's Algorithms for Learning and Prospering in a Complex World* [10].

Finally, due to the close interaction of modern mathematics and complexity theory, other fun books that revolve around mathematics, or the history of mathematics, also come to mind and one can enjoy in their free time.

- *Logicomix: An epic search for truth*, by Apostolos Doxiadis and Christos Papadimitriou [3].
- *The Parrot's Theorem: A Novel*, by Denis Guedj [5].
- *Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture: A Novel of Mathematical Obsession*, by Apostolos Doxiadis [2].

## Grading

Grading will be based on the following:

- **45% homework assignments**,
- **30% midterm exams (15% each midterm)**,
- **25% final exam**.

Grades may also be adjusted slightly upward or downward depending on class participation. I expect grading to be along the lines shown in the table below:

percentage	grade
$\geq 90\%$	A
$\geq 80\%$	B
$\geq 70\%$	C
$\geq 60\%$	D
otherwise	F

## Examinations

- We will have **two midterm exams**, both are going to be in-class.
- The **final exam** is **in-class** on **Wednesday, December 13, 2023** between **1:30pm and 3:30pm**.
- Exams will be closed-book written exams.

**Important: You will not be able to take the exam another day because you have a conflict with another course. Make sure you understand this now and choose wisely the courses in which you enroll.**

## Homework Assignments

There will be 5-6 homework assignments.

The assignments will be weighted roughly evenly. In other words the contribution for the 50% of your grade based on homework assignments will be computed by adding up all the grades that you receive from the individual assignments and then dividing by the maximum amount of grades that you could gather from all these assignments.

## Collaboration Policy

Students **must** form **groups of 4 to 5 people** and work together on the homework assignments. You cannot work alone. You cannot work in a group of less than 4 people.

- Collaborators must be named (together with their university IDs) at the top of every assignment.
- The study groups are intended to foster collaborations, encourage brainstorming, create excitement, and make the learning process more fun. Each study group should meet regularly (say once or twice per week throughout the semester). Everyone in the study group should contribute fairly to the overall group effort. Ideally, equal group effort should be put by everyone in the group in each assignment. Please form your study groups early in the semester (by the second week) and meet regularly.
- Students are allowed to leave their group once and move to a different group, as long as the group that they are leaving does not end up with less than 4 members. Therefore, from the point in time where one leaves from the initial group they were members of, then they cannot move to another group. Of course the consistency of one's group may change because other members may flow in/out of the group – this does not count as a group change for the person who has not requested a group change as they remain in the group with the same groupID throughout the entire time.

An exception to this rule is if you are asked by a TA or an instructor to change to a different group; but most likely this will not happen to any one of you during the course.

- Form groups before you submit the first homework assignment.

**General Remarks.** Please note the following two.

- **If you are unsure if something is permitted, consult with me before doing it.**
- **For exams** (whether midterms or final), **students are required to work alone** and follow the stated rules exactly.

## Late Work Policy

You can postpone once your homework submission by 24 hours without any penalty. After the first time that you have a late submission, a 10% (of the maximum possible grade) penalty will be applied for every day that is late – the maximum delay can be 3 days (including the first time that you have a late submission). This penalty is applied of course to every member of the group where you belong to.

We will be using an electronic system (Canvas) for the students' submissions and therefore it is your responsibility to turn in your homework (or an exam, should this be the case) on time. **Please coordinate within your group and make one submission per group.** Apart from electronic submissions (Canvas), you can turn-in homework sets also in-class, by the end of the class on the day they are due.

## Chegg and Other Online Tutoring Sources

There are a wide variety of tutoring resources available through paid websites. Many of these sites have students upload assignments and solutions and surreptitiously provide these documents to other students. What appears to be a session with a tutor may be, behind the scenes, the tutor doing a search of their company database of solutions to share. By using these sites you risk being charged with academic misconduct, either by supplying other students with answers they did not author or

by receiving someone else's answer that you did not author. Since these companies are not open with students about their practices, you cannot know whether a tutor is providing meaningful support (for example, identifying misunderstandings of content and explaining them) or simply feeding you someone else's solution a bit at a time. The tutor's actions can result in different students submitting answers that are identical, which may be flagged as academic misconduct during grading.

## General Policies by the University of Oklahoma

OU is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me.

**Food and Drink Policy.** Food is not allowed classrooms. Consuming food in learning spaces is a significant concern for transmission of illness and therefore is prohibited. Students that may need to eat for health reasons, such as blood sugar regulation, should step outside the classroom to a social distanced location. If you are in a course that extends more than an hour, please be aware that some students may need to need to eat for health and may need to step out of classes briefly.

Drinking in classes is generally discouraged. It is acceptable, specifically in longer course formats, for students to take a sip from a water bottle or cup with a lid. Faculty may also need to take sips of water while they are teaching.

**Academic Misconduct.** Academic misconduct hurts everyone but particularly the student who does not learn the material. All work submitted for an individual grade should be the work of that single individual and not his/her friends. It is fine to ask a fellow student for help as long as that help does not consist of copying any computer code, or solutions to other assignments. Students working on joint projects may certainly help one another and are expected to share code within the project group. However, they may not share beyond the group.

1. Collaboration is encouraged for homework and projects. For the projects, you will work within your groups. For the homework, you may form study groups so long as each homework is in your own words. Write your study partners' names on your homework when you turn it in. **Return only one writeup for each group of people.**
2. Do not show another student (or group) a copy of your projects or homework before the submission deadline. The penalties for permitting your work to be copied are the same as the penalties for copying someone else's work.
3. Make sure that your computer account is properly protected. Use a good password, and do not give your friends access to your account or your computer system. Do not leave printouts or thumb drives around a laboratory where others might access them.

Upon the first documented occurrence of academic misconduct, I will report it to the Campus Judicial Coordinator. The procedure to be followed is documented in the University of Oklahoma Academic Misconduct Code<sup>1</sup>. In the unlikely event that I elect to admonish the student, the appeals process is described in <http://www.ou.edu/integrity>.

**Project code.** Your project code and writeups must be written exclusively by you or your group. **Use of any downloaded code or code taken from a book (whether documented or undocumented) is considered academic misconduct and will be treated as such.** Exceptions from this policy (such as a

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.ou.edu/studentcode>

project that builds on an existing open-source project) may be granted but you MUST speak with me first.

**Classroom Conduct.** Disruptions of class will not be permitted. Examples of disruptive behavior include:

- Allowing a cell phone or pager to repeatedly beep audibly.
- Playing music or computer games during class in such a way that they are visible or audible to other class members.
- Exhibiting erratic or irrational behavior.
- Behavior that distracts the class from the subject matter or discussion.
- Making physical or verbal threats to a faculty member, teaching assistant, or class member.
- Refusal to comply with faculty direction.

In the case of disruptive behavior, I may ask that you leave the classroom and may charge you with a violation of the Student Code of Responsibilities and Conduct.

**Class Web Page.** The main web page for the class is

<https://www.diochnos.com/teaching/CS3823/2023F/index.php>

Login to the Canvas website using your 4+4 (first four letters of your last name followed by the last four digits of your student number), using your standard OU password. If you have difficulty logging in, call 325-HELP. This software provides a number of useful features, including a list of assignments and announcements, an electronic mailing list, newsgroups, and grade book. All handouts are available from Canvas. You should check the site daily. When I update the site, I will post an announcement telling you what has been added and where it is located. You are responsible for things posted on the site with a 24 hour delay.

**Class Evaluations.** The College of Engineering utilizes student ratings as one of the bases for evaluating the teaching effectiveness of each of its faculty members. The results of these forms are important data used in the process of awarding tenure, making promotions, and giving salary increases. In addition, the faculty uses these forms to improve their own teaching effectiveness. The original request for the use of these forms came from students, and it is students who eventually benefit most from their use. Please take this task seriously and respond as honestly and precisely as possible, both to the machine-scored items and to the open-ended questions

**Class Email Alias.** Urgent announcements will be sent through email. It is your responsibility to:

- Have your university supplied email account properly forwarded to the location where you read email.
- Make sure that your email address in Canvas is correct, and forwards email to the place where you read it. I'll send out a test message during the first week of class. If you do not receive this message, it is your responsibility to get the problem resolved immediately.
- Have your email program set up properly so that replying to your email will work correctly the first time. You can send email to yourself and reply to yourself to test this.

If you need assistance in accomplishing any of these tasks, contact 325-HELP.

**Newsgroups and Email.** The newsgroup on Canvas should be the primary method of communication, outside of class. This allows everyone in the class to benefit from the answer to your question. If you email me a question of general interest, I may post your question and my answer to the newsgroup. Matters of personal interest should be directed to email instead of to the newsgroup, e.g. informing me of an extended personal illness. Posting guidelines for the newsgroup are available on Canvas.

**Religious Holidays.** It is the policy of the University to excuse the absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays.

**Incompletes.** The grade of I is intended for the rare circumstance when a student who has been successful in a class has an unexpected event occur shortly before the end of the class. I will not consider giving a student a grade of I unless the following three conditions have been met.

1. It is within two weeks of the end of the semester.
2. The student has a grade of C or better in the class.
3. The reason that the student cannot complete the class is properly documented and compelling.

**Accommodation of Disabilities.** The University of Oklahoma is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who require accommodations in this course are requested to speak with the professor as early in the semester as possible. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations in this course. The Office of Disability Services is located in 730 College Ave, phone 405/325-3852 or TDD only 405/325-4173.

**Adjustments for Pregnancy/Childbirth Related Issues.** Should you need modifications or adjustments to your course requirements because of documented pregnancy-related or childbirth-related issues, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss. Generally, modifications will be made where medically necessary and similar in scope to accommodations based on temporary disability. For commonly asked questions, please see <https://www.ou.edu/eoo/faqs/pregnancy-faqs.htm>

**Title IX Resources.** For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates on-call 24.7, counseling services, mutual no contact orders, scheduling adjustments and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Institutional Equity Office 405-325-3546 (8-5, M-F) or OU Advocates 405-615-0013 (24.7) to learn more or to report an incident.

**Add/Drop/Withdrawal Deadlines.** Please consult the OU academic calendar (as well as the policies of the School of Engineering) for the following deadlines:

- **Add a course**
- **Drop a course without penalty (course removed from transcript)**
- **Drop a course with a W on transcript**

## References

- [1] Martin D. Davis. *Computability and Unsolvability*. Dover, 1982.
- [2] Apostolos Doxiadis. *Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture: A Novel of Mathematical Obsession*. Bloomsbury USA, 2001.
- [3] Apostolos Doxiadis and Christos Papadimitriou. *Logicomix: An epic search for truth*. Bloomsbury USA, 2009.
- [4] Michael R. Garey and David S. Johnson. *Computers and Intractability: A Guide to the Theory of NP-Completeness*. W. H. Freeman & Co., New York, NY, USA, 1979.
- [5] Denis Guedj. *The Parrot's Theorem: A Novel*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2002.
- [6] Peter Linz. *An Introduction to Formal Languages and Automata*. Jones & Bartlett Learning, sixth edition, 2017.
- [7] Christos H. Papadimitriou. *Computational Complexity*. Addison-Wesley, 1994.
- [8] George Pólya. *How to Solve It: A New Aspect of Mathematical Method*. Princeton University Press, 1971.
- [9] Michael Sipser. *Introduction to the Theory of Computation*. Cengage Learning, third edition, 2012.
- [10] Leslie Valiant. *Probably Approximately Correct: Nature's Algorithms for Learning and Prospering in a Complex World*. Basic Books (AZ), 2013.