

Syllabus

COMP 141

Introduction to Computing

Fall 2026

1 Logistics

- **Where:** Center for Science and Business 309
- **When:**
 - Class: MWF 9–9:50am
 - Lab: M 2–3:50pm
- **Instructor:** Logan Mayfield
 - *Office:* Center for Science and Business (CSB), Room 344
 - *Phone:* 309-457-2200
 - *Website:* <http://jlmayfield.github.io/>
 - *Email:* lmayfield at monmouthcollege dot edu
 - *Office Hours:* M: 1:30-2pm, Tu: 10-11am, W: 1:30-2pm, Th: 10-11am, F: 10-11am, 1:30-2:30pm. By appointment. Whenever my door is open!
 - **Website:** <http://jlmayfield.github.io/teaching/COMP141/>
 - **Credits:** 1 course credit

Note: This Syllabus is subject to change based on specific class needs. Significant deviations from the syllabus will be discussed in class.

2 Description, Content, and Learning Goals

Introduction to Computing gives students a hands-on introduction to the systems and ideas that make computing technology an integral part of so many fields. If you've wanted to go from being a consumer of computing to a computing super user, then this class is for you. If you're curious about the hardware and software that drives computing, then this class is for you. While designed with STEM practitioners in mind, this course is really for anyone that is curious about the inner-workings of technology and wants to be a more capable and informed user of computing technology.

Introduction to Computing is not a programming class. While code-like topics are covered, and text-based interfaces to computers are widely used. The true aim of this class is to equip students with the skills and background needed to be highly effective and informed users of computing technology.

Students will learning computing primary through the Linux Command-Line interface with some time taken to show how linux skills translate to Windows and Apple-based systems. Students will carry-out tasks from system and network administration, access and utilize services and infrastructure in the cloud, and engage in simple cyber-security, capture-the-flag games. Topics covered include but are not limited to:

- Standard Computer Hardware and Software Systems
- Basic System Administration
- Basic Network Administration
- File Systems
- User Management
- System Security
- Command-line interfaces
- Networking and the Internet
- Cloud Computing
- Data Encoding
- Cybersecurity and Cryptography

2.1 Textbook

This course requires the following text. *Additional instructor's notes and online resources will provided as well.* Shotts, William. *The Linux Command Line*. 3rd Edition. No Starch Press. 2026. ISBN-13: 9781718504523 <https://linuxcommand.org/tlcl.php>

3 Workload

Time spent on work for this course will likely vary by student and will, in general, vary week to week. On average, this course should require about 9 hours of work per week per student. The following table provides a rough estimate of the distribution of this time over different course components.

Assignment Type	Time/week
Class Time & Labs	5 hours/week
Self-Study & Reading	2-3 hours/week
Homework Problems	1-2 hours/week
8-10 hours/week	

The course uses fairly standard types of assignments: labs, homework problems, quizzes, and exams. The number of such assignments you can expect to complete is given below along with individual assignment type descriptions.

Category	Number of Assignments
Quizzes	6-7
Exams	2
Labs	9-10
Homework	5-6
Portfolio Review & Self Evaluation Meetings	3-4

Labs

Where other assignments are more about reinforcement and assessment of things previously learned, lab time is your time to dive into new things, explore, and learn. *The goal of a lab is to explore, to play, to break things then fix them, to ask questions, and to otherwise uncover everything you can about a new corner of programming.*

Expect to do labs on a weekly basis. They will typically take not more than the two hour lab period. They will sometimes be starter assignments with follow up work to be done outside of lab, as homework. We'll typically go over lab problems in detail during the class period immediately following the lab.

Homework

Homework is practice. It's drills. It's activities designed largely to reinforce and strengthen your understanding of material learned through reading, through class time, and through lab. Homework lets you gut check what you think you know and how well you know it. They afford to you the time to do the work and then check that work using other references, including classmates. They are meant to be low stakes assignments. Just don't confuse low stakes with low importance. Practice, repetition, and reinforcement through homework is important for learning. It is what gets you ready for the big show: quizzes and exams.

Homework assignments will typically involve completing problems drawn from recent reading and class discussion. The class will work-on and discuss problems of interest between the assignment and due date of the problem set. A review of homework problems will typically proceed exams.

Quizzes

Quizzes are given at the end of an organized topic; they cover the material explored in lab and in homework. They are pen and paper and done in class. They are, in effect, lower stakes exams that test your knowledge and ability without the safety net of notes and partners. They are meant to access your understanding of the most recent material and tell you what needs review before the exam.

Most quizzes will take a whole class period, be collected, evaluated, and returned like an exam. One or two will be given during a lab period and reviewed on the spot. These in-lab quizzes are a less weighty than the other quizzes but still let you gut check new material before exam-time comes.

Exams

Exams are meant to be the true test your understanding of and ability to apply ideas covered in the course. There will be an exam at midterm that covers all the material from the first half of the course and a final, cumulative exam. Like quizzes, they are done with pencil and paper and no notes.

Portfolio Review & Self-Evaluation

Self-reflection and self-evaluation is a critical component of learning and vital to a growth mindset. We will keep a portfolio of the work you do throughout the semester. At regular intervals throughout the semester you will meet, one-on-one, with me to *present your portfolio*, review items from your portfolio that best gauge how well you're doing at meeting the course goals and expectations, and discuss how that success maps to a letter grade. For more details about the process visit <https://jlmayfield.github.io/teaching/ungrading/howto-portfolio>.

4 Ungrading & Final Grades

This class is largely ungraded. That means your assignments will not be graded for points and your final grade is not determined by a point-based, numerical grading system. You will get feedback on your work but you will see points on nothing. You don't earn points for doing work or getting something correct nor do you lose points for getting something wrong. We're here to learn. Doing the work is how we do that and getting things wrong some or most of the time is part of learning. For more details visit <https://jlmayfield.github.io/teaching/ungrading/howto-portfolio>.

4.1 Self-Evaluation & Final Course Grades

Throughout the semester you'll be asked to engage in regular self-evaluation. Part of the process includes you self-assigning a course grade based on your self-evaluation. Your self-evaluation and self-assigned grade are then discussed with the instructor in a one-on-one meeting during which we'll agree upon your current grade. The key here is that *your self-evaluation and self-assigned grade begins the conversation, not my assigned points*.

Below are some general rules of thumb we'll try to stick to when talking about grades. They relate grades to course competency expectations and Monmouth College policy.

- **A** - Exceeding course expectations.
- **B** - Meeting and occasionally exceeding course expectations.
- **C** - Meeting course expectations. *This is the minimum grade required to continue on in the CS major. So, a C means you can be successful in a class that builds upon the things learned in this class.*
- **C-** - Mostly meeting course expectations. *This is the minimum grade that counts towards a major.*
- **D** - Occasionally meeting course expectations, but mostly not. *Grades in the D range earn credit towards graduation but fall below GPA requirements.*
- **F** - Did not meet course expectations.

My hope is that the self-evaluation and self-directed grading process provides a lot of flexibility in terms of how you can achieve success in this course and meet your grade goals. If you ever have questions or concerns about self-evaluations and grades, then I'm more more than willing to discuss them with you at any time.

4.1.1 Participation, Attendance, & Timely Work

I do not have strict attendance and deadline policies, per se, but I do have clear expectations. These expectations are baked into the dispositional attribute of the course competencies. This attribute includes things like being *professional, responsible, responsive, and self-directed*.

As far as I'm concerned, signing up for this class means you agree to coming to class and lab, being on time for class and lab, doing assigned work and submitting it on time, and generally participating in all the class has to offer. That being said, life happens and people have different priorities. You might need to miss class or extend a deadline. So long as you communicate with me about it, as a professional would with a co-worker, then we won't have a problem. If you simply skip class without warning, always show up late, or regularly fail to do assigned work in a timely manner, then I expect that those failures to meet dispositional expectations to be reflected in your self-evaluation.

There is one exception to my "no grade-based policy" on assignments and deadlines and that is the self-evaluations and reflections. The self-evaluation process is critical to this class and in no way optional. **If you fail attend the portfolio review meetings or always show up completely un-prepared then I reserve to give you a final grade of D or lower for the course.** You'll find I can be pretty relaxed about a lot of other assignments and deadlines, but I draw the line at the self-evaluation process.

Academic Honesty

You don't learn by trying to pass off someone's work as your own. In an ungraded class it makes even less sense to cheat and steal work from somewhere else. There are no points, you gain nothing from it and you certainly will learn nothing from it. In this ungraded class, academic dishonesty is still not tolerated.

From the Monmouth College Academic Honesty Policy:

We believe that academic honesty is of the utmost importance for the maintenance and growth of our intellectual community. At Monmouth College, the faculty and staff strive to create positive and transformational learning experiences. One step in our mission to provide excellent teaching involves our emphasis on the promotion of free inquiry, original thinking and the holistic development of our students. Monmouth College strives to offer a learning environment which stresses a vigorous work ethic and stringent moral codes of behavior.

We believe that one of our core commitments is the fostering of personal and academic integrity. Our students are encouraged to think of the campus as an educational community with ties to the local, national and global society. Honesty in one's academic work is of the utmost importance for the maintenance and growth of the individual and of our intellectual community.

We therefore require all our students to contribute to this community of learners and to make a vigorous commitment to academic honesty. We view academic dishonesty as a threat to the

integrity and intellectual mission of our institution. Any breach of the academic honesty policy—either intentionally or unintentionally—will be taken seriously and may result not only in failure in the course, but in suspension or expulsion from the College.

It is each student's responsibility to read, understand and comply with the general academic honesty policy at Monmouth College, as defined here in the Scots Guide, and to the specific guidelines for each course, as elaborated on the professor's syllabus.

The following areas are examples of violations of the academic honesty policy:

1. Cheating on tests, labs, etc;
2. Plagiarism, i.e., using the words, ideas, writing, or work of another without giving appropriate credit;
3. Improper collaboration between students, i.e., not doing one's own work on outside assignments specified as group projects by the instructor;
4. Submitting work previously submitted in another course, without previous authorization by the instructor.

Please note that this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The complete Monmouth College Academic Honesty Policy can be found on the College web page.

<https://www.monmouthcollege.edu/offices/student-affairs/academic-regulations/>

In this course, any violation of the academic honesty policy will have varying consequences depending on the severity of the infraction as judged by the instructor. Expect violations to be reported to the appropriate Dean and to weaken your case for higher grades at the end of the course. Severe violations can result in an F for the course and expulsion from the course. Do your own work. If you even think something you're doing could be construed as academically dishonest, then ask for guidance and clarification first.

Generative AI Policy

In general, you are not allowed to use generative AI to generate any portion of your work. No ChatGPT, no Github CoPilot, none of that. If you're turning the work into me with your name on it, then it should be your work. Writing or tweaking a prompt to generate a solution is not the same as actually generating the solution on your own. We may explore the use of these tools in developing software systems and writing code, but in such cases you will be explicitly told that you can use AI. If you use AI to generate work without the express permission of the instructor, then you will have committed an act of academic dishonesty and will face appropriate consequences (see above).

While you cannot use AI to generate work, you can use AI as a study guide and a tool to assist in learning. This includes getting new study problems from an AI, having AI summarize or paraphrase portions of a reading when studying (not as part of an assignment!), and otherwise finding creative uses for AI. If, at any point, you are in doubt about whether or not your use of AI is appropriate for the course, ask. In fact, I'd love to hear about creative ways you're using AI.

5 Academic Support & Accessibility

Academic Support Services

The Academic Support Office offers free resources to assist Monmouth College students with their academic success. Programs include Supplemental Instruction for classes, Drop-In and appointment tutoring, and individual Academic Coaching. Our Office is here to help all students excel academically, since every student can work toward better grades, practice stronger study skills, and manage their time better. Please email succeed@monmouthcollege.edu for assistance.

Accessibility Services

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability please make an appointment with the Accessibility Services Office (ASO) as soon as possible.

Email: access@monmouthcollege.edu

Phone: 309-457-2257

The accessibility of this course for every learner is important to me. If at any time you experience a barrier to learning, please bring it to my attention and I will do my best to address it.

At any point in the semester, if you encounter difficulty with the course or feel you could be performing at a higher level, consult with me.

Tutoring is available for this course. The schedule will be announced when it is available.

5.1 Calendar

This calendar aspirational and is subject to change based on the circumstances of the course. A more detailed, regularly updated calendar can be found on the course website. Below *IN* is Instructors Notes, and *TLCL* is the Linux text listed above.

<u>Week</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Assignments Due</u>	<u>Chapter(s)</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1	8/24 - 8/28		IN	
2	8/31 - 9/4	Lab 1. Hwk 1.	IN	
3	9/7 - 9/11	Quiz 1.	TLCL1-2	No Class nor Lab Monday.
4	9/14 - 9/18	Lab 2.	TLCL1-4	
5	9/21 - 9/25	Lab 3. Hwk 2.	TLCL17,9.	
6	9/28 - 10/2	Lab 4. Quiz 2.	TLCL6,19	
7	10/5 - 10/9		Lab 5. Hwk 3.	TLCL18,20
8	10/12 - 10/16	<i>Midterm Exam</i>		No Class Th-F. Fall Break
9	10/19 - 10/23	Lab 6. Hwk 4.	IN,TLCL16,20	
10	10/26 - 10/30	Lab 7. Quiz 4.	IN,TLCL16,20	
11	11/2 - 11/6	Lab 8. Hwk 5.	IN,TLCL10	
12	11/9 - 11/13	Lab 9. Quiz 5.	IN,TLCL10,24	
13	11/16 - 11/20	Hwk 6.	IN,TLCL24	
14	11/23 - 11/27	Lab 10.	IN	No Class Wed-Fri. Thanksgiving
15	11/30 - 12/4	Quiz 7.	IN	
16	12/7 - 12/11		<i>Final Exam. (Friday 12/11. 3-6pm).</i>	No Class Th. Reading Day.