University of Illinois at Chicago  
Spring 2016  
CS 421 — Natural Language Processing  
Course Syllabus

**Room:** 238 SES  
**Time:** TuTh 12:30 – 1:45  
**URL:** via Blackboard for all materials; via Piazza for discussions and questions  
*(No class materials will be posted on Piazza)*

**Staff**

**Instructor:** Barbara Di Eugenio  
**Office:** 916 SEO, 6-7566  
**E-mail:** bdieugen@uic.edu  
**Office Hours:** Wed 2:30-4; Th 9:30-10:45

**Teaching Assistant:** Mehrdad Alizadeh  
**Office:** 1228 SEL West  
**E-mail:** maliza2@uic.edu  
**Office Hrs:** Tu 9:30-11; Fr 12-1:30

**Course Objectives**

The aim of this course is to introduce students to the field of Natural Language Processing (NLP), also called Human Language Technology, or Natural Language Engineering, or Computational Linguistics. NLP studies algorithms to enable the computer to interpret and produce *natural languages*, i.e. English, Russian, Mandarin Chinese, Italian, Turkish, etc. By now, applications of NLP include successful systems such as Google Translate and Siri.

The course will provide students with the linguistic foundations that underlie NLP, introduce them to the algorithms used in the field, and provide practice in building components of NLP systems.

**Reading Materials**


**Important.** The international edition is different enough that if you choose to use it, you are responsible for matching sections and pages across the two books.

**Prerequisites**

CS 301.
Notes

- I use email a lot to communicate with the whole class. Please check your email frequently, especially around deadlines (homeworks and exams).
- The web page (Blackboard) will contain all materials relevant to the class, syllabus, assignments etc. You can also see you own grades.
- When you have a question of general interest, rather than sending me or the TA mail, post your questions to the discussion board on Piazza – after you’ve checked the text of the homework, the notes posted on Blackboard, etc

Tentative Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Ch. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 2-4</td>
<td>Words, n-grams, Part-of-speech tagging</td>
<td>Excerpts from Ch. 3-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5-7</td>
<td>Syntax: Parsing</td>
<td>Ch. 12-14, excerpts from Ch. 15-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8-9</td>
<td>Semantics</td>
<td>Ch. 17, excerpts from Ch. 18-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10-11</td>
<td>Discourse and Dialogue</td>
<td>Ch. 21, 24</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Natural Language Generation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13-15</td>
<td>Applications: Summarization, NLP / the web / blogs</td>
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Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/16 (Tu)</td>
<td>Midterm 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/17 (Th)</td>
<td>Midterm 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/6 8-10am (Fr)</td>
<td>Final</td>
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Grading Criteria

The class will be graded out of 1000 points, distributed as follows:

- **Homework 0 (Zero)** (20 points): during weeks 2-3 of class, come to introduce yourself to the instructor or TA during office hours. The purpose of this “assignment” is to make students comfortable with coming to office hours later in the semester.

- **2-3 Homework Assignments** (40-80 points each): These will be fast assignments.

- **Project** (250-300 points): The project will comprise two parts, for a total of 25-30% of the grade. The goal of the project is to design and implement a simple NLP systems. You are encouraged to do the project in pairs.

- **3 Exams** (600 points): 2 midterms (worth 140 and 160 points, respectively), 1 final (300 points).
IMPORTANT NOTE: To pass the class you must get at least 60% of the total available points for the three exams, i.e., your cumulative score across the three exams must be at least 330 points. Letter grades will be decided only at the end. However, the following guidelines will be adhered to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Score (undergraduate)</th>
<th>Overall Score (graduate)</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
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Policies on homeworks and exams

General Policies

1. Late homeworks will not be accepted in any case, unless there is a documented personal emergency. Arrangements must be made with the instructor as soon as possible after the emergency arises, preferably before the homework due date.
   Advice: If for whatever reason you don’t manage to finish an assignment, hand in what you have. Partial credit will be given.

2. Statute of Limitations: Two weeks! No grading questions or complaints — no matter how justified — will be listened to two weeks after the item in question has been returned.

Exams

1. The two midterms will be given during class time; consequently, no make-ups will be given.

2. Exams will be closed-book.

3. The final will be cumulative, although it will stress the materials covered after the second midterm.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please see the CS department policy below on the topic; this policy specifies penalties for violations.

What is academic dishonesty? To hand in any work which is not 100% the student’s creation, unless you are explicitly allowed to do so. Thus:

1. Exams. All work on all exams must be individually performed.

2. Homeworks: No student may give any other student any portion of their solutions or code, through any means. Students are not allowed to help each other debug the code, or to show each other any portions of code or homework.

Important Note: every semester somebody is caught red-handed and as a consequence fails the class. Isn’t it better to get a B or a C than an F?
CS department policy on academic dishonesty

The CS Department will not tolerate cheating by its students. The MINIMUM penalty for any student found cheating will be to receive an F for the course and to have the event recorded in a department and/or College record. The maximum penalty will be expulsion from the University. Cheating includes all the following, though this is not a complete list:

- Copying or any other form of getting or giving assistance from another student during any test, quiz, exam, midterm, etc.
- Plagiarism—turning in writing that is copied from some other source.
- Obtaining solutions to homework by posting to the Internet for assistance, purchasing assistance, obtaining copies of solutions manuals for instructors, and obtaining copies of previous year’s homework solutions.
- Computer programs: Any time you look at another student’s code, it is cheating. (Exception: If you are EXPLICITLY told that you may do so by the instructor, for instance, in working on group projects.)

For computer programs, if for some reason we cannot determine who copied from whom, we may, at our discretion, give failing grades to both students.

It is the responsibility of all engineering and computer science professionals to safeguard their company’s “trade secrets.” An employee who allows trade secrets to be obtained by competitors will almost certainly be fired. So, YOU are responsible for making sure that your directories / folders have permissions set so that only you can read your files, for being sure to log out at the end of working in the computer lab, etc.