

Course materials will be posted on the course website:

<https://www.cs.princeton.edu/~hy2/teaching/spring26-cos423/index.html>

There will be five PSets. They will be released approximately two weeks apart, and each is informally “due” by the release date of the next PSet. **However, they will not be graded.** Instead, the portion in the final grade is replaced by “participation.”

Grades will be up to 40% participation from the *1-1 coaching sessions* (see below), and remaining from the exams. There will be two in-class Midterms, and a scheduled Final. Suppose you earn  $p$  points from participation,  $m_1, m_2$  points from the two Midterms respectively and  $f$  points from the Final ( $p \in [0, 40], m_1, m_2, f \in [0, 100]$ ). Then your grade is

$$p + (1 - p/100) \left( \frac{\min\{m_1, m_2\}}{6} + \frac{\max\{m_1, m_2\}}{3} + \frac{f}{2} \right).$$

To interpret it, suppose you earn all 40 points from participation. Your grade is going to be 40, plus 10% of your worse Midterm, plus 20% of your better Midterm, plus 30% of the Final. For a lower participation  $p$ , you don’t directly lose the points, rather the “lost points” are redistributed to proportionally increase the weights of exams.

- There are Coaching Sessions available for 10 to 11 weeks. Attending one session earns you 5 participation points. You may earn up to 40 participation points.
- Students will get an assigned Coach at the beginning of the semester, and will schedule a weekly recurring 20-to-30-minute slot. Coaches will set a hard stop at the end of the slot (to manage back-to-back 1-1s).
- The Coach will be available during that slot every week.<sup>a</sup> They will try their best to help you develop your problem-solving ability for that slot, however you choose to use that time.
- If there are issues with students regularly showing up late and/or missing slots without notice, the instructor will intervene and/or create guidelines surrounding that. For now, we hope that won’t be necessary.
- Absolutely nothing that happens during your Coaching session will directly impact your grade. Impressing your Coach does not count as participation (but if you’re impressing your Coach, that probably means you’ll do well on the exam!), and having a rough week will not risk losing credits (provided you pass the Marshawn Lynch Test). Any notes they take will be shared with the instructor only for the purpose of helping to make a plan for your development, and cannot impact your participation or letter grade in any way.
- The Coach’s ‘job’ is to work with you as efficiently as possible in the session – the goal is to get twenty-to-thirty minutes of training in and to leave with a plan to be efficient with your self-training during the week. The Coach may not necessarily live-grade your entire PSet, or answer all your questions, but they will still hard stop the session at the end of the time slot. If you have remaining questions, you can bring them to office hours or ask on Ed.
- See more on the Coaching Session infosheet.

<sup>a</sup>Within reason – each Coach may have a week they need to miss, or get sick, and they will let you know in advance if they need to cancel. If that happens, we may find a Coach to cover, or may cancel that week.

## PSets

- **Treat the PSets as if they are being graded.** In particular, write out your solutions as if you were submitting them for a grade. This is the only way to get feedback on whether you're actually solving the problems, and whether you're prepared to write a complete solution on an exam.
- **Make sure you're effectively training on your own.** Problem-solving skills take time and engagement to learn! 30 minutes/week is *plenty of time to figure out how to effectively spend your remaining  $\gg 30$  minutes/week*, but *nowhere near enough time to develop as a problem-solver*. The primary goal of the coaching sessions is to guide your training – it cannot be the totality of your training.