



## CS 2250 / Computability and Complexity / 2023 Fall

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*Locations:* See: Brightspace

### **Class meetings**

*Section A:* T/Th 01:15–02:30 PM, Lafayette L107

*Section B:* T/Th 02:50–04:05 PM, Morrill Hall 010

**Overview** This course is a study in automata, the fundamental limits of computing, and complexity theory. Topics include: formal languages, regular expressions, DFA/NFAs, Turing machines, decidability, computable functions, reducibility, and time complexity classes. This course fulfills the Qualitative Reasoning (QR) requirement of the Fall 2020 revision of the Catamount Core curriculum. See: <https://go.uvm.edu/qr>.

### **Important dates**

- First exam: 2023-09-28, in class
- Second exam: 2023-10-26, in class
- Final exam, section A: 2023-12-12, 04:30–07:15 PM Lafayette L107
- Final exam, section B: 2023-12-14, 04:30–07:15 PM Morrill 010

**Course materials:** Textbook: Sipser, Michael. *Introduction to the Theory of Computation*, 3rd edition. ISBN: 978-1-133-18779-0. eBook rental available direct from Cengage. ISBN: 978-1-285-32073-1. If you are already using a Cengage text in another course, you may already have access through Cengage Unlimited. Other materials supplied Brightspace.

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**Learning objectives:**

- Prove properties of languages and automata using formal mathematical methods.
- Collaborate with peers to solve problems and present results.
- Recognize flaws in invalid proofs.
- Trace an automaton's action on a given input (*e.g.*, determine whether a given DFA accepts a given string).
- Design automata (*e.g.*, DFA, Turing machine, *etc.*) or grammar to recognize a specific language or to satisfy a given property.
- Describe the language recognized by an automaton or generated by a regular expression or context-free grammar.
- Understand decidability and undecidability.
- Understand how reduction techniques are used to prove decidability or undecidability.
- Understand relationships between languages in the context of the Chomsky hierarchy.
- Explain the relationship between time complexity classes P, NP, NP-hard, and NP-complete.

**Important websites:**

- Brightspace, for course materials and announcements.
- Gradescope, for submitting assignments and seeing grading feedback.

**Online quizzes:** There will be twelve online quizzes administered on Brightspace. These will occur in weeks where there is no in class exam. Online quizzes will be open book, open notes, but no collaboration. There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes, however the lowest two scores will be dropped, in part to accommodate illness or other unforeseen events.

**In class exams:** There will be two partial, in class exams administered in class (see schedule). Each in class exam counts for 10% of your overall grade. These will be administered in pencil and paper format. For in class exams you will be allowed two 8.5" × 11" pages of *handwritten notes* (both sides OK).

**Active learning exercises:** Throughout the semester, we'll have active learning exercises in class. These will be conducted in small groups (*i.e.*, three to five students per group). Active learning exercises will be graded on a simple check, check plus, kind of scale. Weights of individual exercises TBD.

**Homework:** You will have five homework assignments at various intervals. Information about homework, including due dates will be announced in class and posted on Brightspace. Each assignment counts for 5% of your overall grade. All homework is due by 11:59 PM on the specified due date and should be submitted via Gradescope (links on Brightspace). Late homework is subject to a 10% penalty per day for up to two days after the due date. After two days (48 hours), late submissions will no longer be accepted.

**Final exam:** The final exam, which counts for 20% of your overall grade, will be administered at times scheduled by the Office of the Registrar. Exams will be administered using pencil and paper. Notes will be permitted, exact format of permissible notes TBD. The final exam will be cumulative, but primary emphasis will be on Turing machines, decidability, reducibility, and time complexity classes.

**Grading:**

Component	Weight
Online quizzes (12, drop 2)	20%
In class exams (2)	20%
Active learning and participation	15%
Homework (5)	25%
Final exam	20%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

Assignment of letter grades will be on a conventional scale. Any grade appeal (assignment, quiz, lab, exam, *etc.*) must be directed to your grader within one week of the grade being posted. If grading is done on Gradescope (*e.g.*, for homework), there’s a *regrade request* feature which should be used for grade appeals.

**Weekly schedule of topics**  
(tentative and subject to change)

Week	Week of	Topics covered	Assessment
01	28 Aug	Mathematical terminology and proofs	online quiz
02	04 Sep	Finite automata–DFAs	online quiz
03	11 Sep	NFAs; subset construction	online quiz
04	18 Sep	Regular expressions	online quiz
05	25 Sep	Non-regular languages	exam
06	02 Oct	Pumping lemma; context-free grammars	online quiz
07	09 Oct	Ambiguity, CNF, and PDAs	online quiz
08	16 Oct	PDAs (continued); BNF; introduction to Turing machines	online quiz
09	23 Oct	Review: regular and context-free languages	exam
10	30 Oct	Variants of Turing machines / Church-Turing thesis	online quiz
11	06 Nov	Decidability and the <i>Entscheidungsproblem</i>	online quiz
12	13 Nov	Reducibility	online quiz
–	20 Nov	Thanksgiving recess	
13	27 Nov	Computational complexity	online quiz
14	04 Dec	Complexity classes: P, NP, NP-Complete, NP-Hard	online quiz
–	11 Dec	Reading and exams	final exam

**Academic integrity:** The Department of Computer Science enforces UVM’s Code of Academic Integrity. Any suspected violation of this policy will be referred immediately to UVM’s Center for Student Conduct (<https://www.uvm.edu/sconduct>). Sanctions for a violation may include a grade of XF in the course. Additional violations can result in dismissal from the university. In a word: *Don’t*. All students should be read and understand this policy. See: <https://go.uvm.edu/cai>.

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Collaboration on quizzes and exams is strictly prohibited. Use of online services as a source of solutions is strictly prohibited. Using AI-content generators such as ChatGPT or websites such as Chegg or Course Hero to complete coursework is a form of academic dishonesty. Work you submit for an individual grade must be your own. Any work not produced by you (or teammates in the case of active learning exercises or labs, where applicable) must be cited. If you have any questions ask!

Any attempt to tamper with any autograder is a form of academic dishonesty. This applies wherever autograders are in use, for example on Brightspace or Gradescope.

Exams, quizzes, homework assignments, answer keys and solutions, presentations or lecture notes, specifications and rubrics are copyright protected works, unless clearly and explicitly indicated otherwise. Any unauthorized copying or distribution of protected works is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action. This includes submission of protected works as prompts to generative AI. Sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the instructor may be a violation of the University's Code of Academic Integrity and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in disciplinary action. Violations will be handled under UVM's Intellectual Property Policy and Code of Academic Integrity, as appropriate. See: <https://go.uvm.edu/ipp> and <https://go.uvm.edu/cai>.

**Attendance:** The UVM attendance policy is available at <https://go.uvm.edu/srr>. There will be no make-ups for in class active learning exercises if you did not attend class without prior notification and approval. While there is no explicit weight for your attendance, a good attendance record will be taken into consideration when assigning letter grades in the course (e.g., whether a close score is rounded up for final grade).

If you are not able to attend in-person classes please notify the instructor via email as soon as possible. Depending on the nature of your absence, it may be appropriate for you to contact UVM Student Health Services (<https://www.uvm.edu/health/SHS>), CEMS Student Services (<https://www.uvm.edu/cems/student-services>), or the Dean's Office for your college. In many cases, these can provide an official request for flexibility on your behalf. While reasonable accommodations will be granted in the event of documented illness or emergencies, you are responsible for making up any work you have missed.

The secret word is “umbrella.”

**Class participation:** You are expected to be an active participant in class. The more engaged you are, the more you will learn—and the more fun you'll have. This includes being prepared and attentive, responding when called on, participating in group discussion, and asking questions as appropriate. When it comes to asking questions, *please don't be shy!* There's no such thing as a “dumb” or “silly” question. If there's something you don't understand—*ask!* Asking questions helps you understand the material presented in the course. Asking questions is good for your classmates. It's almost certain that if you need clarification on some point, that there's at least one other student in the class with the same question. So help each other out—*ask!* Finally, when you ask a question you help the instructor to do a better job of explaining. If someone explains something, and you still don't quite grasp it, it's not unlikely that the explanation could be improved or clarified.

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion:** UVM is a place where you should be treated with respect and kindness. We welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, interests, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability, and other visible and non-visible differences. All students are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the community. If you ever feel that you have been unfairly treated or judged by an instructor, a mentor, another student, or another member of the community, please let someone know. Your instructors and advisors in the CEMS Office of Student

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Services are available to discuss any concerns, or you can report an incident of bias through the bias report program ([https://www.uvm.edu/deanofstudents/bias\\_response\\_program](https://www.uvm.edu/deanofstudents/bias_response_program)).

**Conduct:** Be kind to one another and to yourself. Be respectful of yourself, others, and the institution. Please arrive on time. Please, no food in class. Please, no cell phones in class (except for using the iClicker app when requested). You may use a laptop or tablet, but only for active learning sessions, pair programming, taking notes, or assistive technologies.

For other policies on classroom conduct, please see: <https://go.uvm.edu/srr> and <https://go.uvm.edu/csc>.

**Accommodations:** In keeping with UVM policy, if you have a documented disability and are interested in utilizing ADA accommodations, you should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS), the office of Disability Services on campus for students. SAS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations, which are communicated to faculty in an accommodation letter.

Contact SAS: A170 Living/Learning Center; +1 802 656 7753; [access@uvm.edu](mailto:access@uvm.edu); or visit <https://www.uvm.edu/access>.

If you are entitled to use the Exam Proctoring Center, please book reservations at least four days in advance.

**Promoting health and safety:** If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (+1 802 656 3380). If you would like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the Dean of Students website at <https://www.uvm.edu/deanofstudents>.

**Wellbeing resources:**

- Center for Health and Wellbeing: <https://www.uvm.edu/health>
- Counseling and Psychiatry Services (CAPS): +1 802 656 3340
- Food Insecurity Assistance: <https://www.uvm.edu/health/food-insecurity-uvm>

**Student advocacy:** [https://www.uvm.edu/deanofstudents/student\\_advocacy](https://www.uvm.edu/deanofstudents/student_advocacy)

**Your identity at UVM:** Students at UVM can specify the first name and pronoun they want used on campus. For information on how to update your preferred name and personal pronouns as well as keeping your legal name private, see: <https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/name-and-pronouns>. For UVM policy on lived name and pronouns, see: <https://go.uvm.edu/lnpr>.

**Religious holidays:** Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. In order to receive extensions or excused absences, you should submit via email your documented religious holiday schedule for the semester within the first two weeks of class. Reasonable extensions will be granted where assignment deadlines conflict with religious holidays.

**Student athletes:** In order to receive extensions or excused absences, you should submit via email appropriate documentation as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Reasonable extensions will be granted where assignment deadlines conflict with team events or team travel.

**Statement on alcohol and other drugs:** We want you to get the most you can out of this course. Therefore, you are expected to familiarize yourself and abide by the University's policies with regard to

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alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, and other drug use. See: <https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/UVM-Policies/policies/drugandalco.pdf> Please do everything you can to optimize your learning and to participate fully in this course.

**Class format changes:** The University of Vermont reserves the right to make changes in the course offerings, mode of delivery, degree requirements, charges, regulations, and procedures contained herein as educational, financial, and health, safety, and welfare considerations require, or as necessary to be compliant with governmental, accreditation, or public health directives.

**Changes to this document:** This document is subject to change. Any such change will be communicated via class email and with an announcement on Brightspace. The latest version of the syllabus will always be available on Brightspace.