CS 4375: Theory of Operating Systems

Fall 2021

Instructor: Nigel Ward, nigel@utep.edu
Office Hours: T 2:30 - 3:30 and W 3:50 – 4:50, or by appointment,
Computer Science 3.0408, also 747-6827

TA: Jonathan E. Avila, jeavila6@miners.utep.edu
Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30pm, W 1:30-2:30pm, F 10:30am-12:30pm, CCSB
G.0512, or by appointment

Class Time: MW 10:30 – 11:50, Education Building, room 302

Textbooks: Operating Systems: Three Easy Pieces, by Remzi H. Arpaci-Dusseau and Andrea C.
Arpaci-Dusseau.


Course Description: Process and thread management, processor scheduling and concurrency,
interprocess communication, memory management, input/output management, file systems, and
networking basics

Goal: Introduce concepts that will be foundational for further study, whether academic or
professional, of 1) Computer Security and Forensics, 2) Systems Administration and Network
Administration, and 3) Systems Programming and Network Programming, including developing for
embedded systems, cloud systems, and high-performance systems.

Course Policies

The prerequisite for this class is CS 3432 with a C or better.

Assigned readings are to be done before class.

Bring to class a whiteboard marker or two and the relevant textbook, either hardcopy or on your
device, or on your buddy’s device.

Assignments are to be submitted in hardcopy, unless otherwise specified. The maximum points
attainable for late assignments will be reduced by 10% per day or partial day of lateness, for up to five
days, or more if the lateness impedes participation in class or the assignment is received after the
solution has been discussed. Email submissions of assignments are not accepted unless otherwise
specified.

Assignments are to be done individually unless specifically designated as group assignments. While
you may discuss assignments with others, your solutions should be designed, written/assembled, and
tested by you alone. If you need help, consult the TA or the instructor.

The use of found code and shared code is acceptable, unless otherwise specified, provided that you
acknowledge your sources, state specifically what you used, and understand every line of code.

Programming assignments will be graded primarily on functionally, design quality, thoroughness of
testing, and readability. Some of these factors inevitably involve subjective judgments; if you have
questions about the criteria, please see the TA or the instructor.

Tests will be closed-book, except that one single-sided page of hand-written notes may be used for the
first test, two for the second test, and three for the final. If you leave the room for any reason, your
test will be graded on only what you did up until that time. No make-up exams or assignments will be
given except under the conditions set forth in the Catalog.

Grades will be based on four components, weighted approximately as follows: 45% assignments, 22% final examination, 28% tests, and 5% other factors, including quizzes, in-class exercises, and participation.

Assignments and tests will be challenging. Grading will be on a points-earned basis (points above zero), rather than a points-off basis (points below expectation). Letter grades will be assigned accordingly: the A/B break will probably be around 80% and the B/C break around 70%. Final grades may be adjusted upwards in cases where performance on both the assignments and the tests is solid.

Students are free to attend class or not, bearing in mind that absence may annoy other students, interfere with learning, and result in a lower grade.

**General Policies**

No make-up exams or assignments will be given except under the conditions set forth in the Catalog. Students are expected to be punctual, and, as always, to conduct themselves professionally and courteously.

If you have or suspect a disability and need accommodation, contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 747-5148 or at cass@utep.edu or visit Room 106 Union East.

**Topics, Readings and Major Assignments, tentative**

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<tr>
<th>Introduction (3 days)</th>
<th>ADAD Ch. 1-4</th>
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<td><em>Python warm-up assignment</em></td>
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<td>Processes (3 days)</td>
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<td><em>Shell assignment</em></td>
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<td>Memory (3 days)</td>
<td>ADAD Ch 12-18</td>
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<td><em>sundry exercises</em></td>
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<td>Test 1</td>
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<td>Sockets (3 days)</td>
<td>various readings</td>
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<td><em>Sockets assignments</em></td>
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<td>Threads and Concurrency (5 days)</td>
<td>ADAD 25 - 26; 28 - 32, portions</td>
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<td><em>various assignments</em></td>
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<td>Test 2</td>
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<td>Networking (5 days)</td>
<td>ADAD 48; PD Ch 1, §2.1, §3.1 thru 3.1.1, §3.3 thru 3.3.5, Ch 5 thru 5.2.3, §7.1, Ch 8 thru 8.2, §8.5.6, §9.3.1</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>sundry exercises</em></td>
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<td>Files and Devices (4 days)</td>
<td>ADAD Ch. 35-37, 39-40; 38-46 portions</td>
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**Course Website:** [http://www.cs.utep.edu/nigel/os/](http://www.cs.utep.edu/nigel/os/)

**Important Dates** (tentative)

- August 23: Class begins
- September 6: Labor Day
Level 1 Outcomes: Knowledge and Comprehension

Level 1 outcomes are those in which the student has been exposed to the terms and concepts at a basic level and can supply basic definitions. The material has been presented only at a superficial level.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

V1i. Choose a scheduling approach suitable for given simple problem.
V1j. Explain segmentation and its security implications.
V1l. Explain some ways in which virtualization creates vulnerabilities.
V1m. Describe and motivate the components of process and virtual machine context.
V1n. Explain the need for paging and the basics of demand loading.
V1o. Describe the motivation for and gross characteristics of a trusted computing base.
C1c. Given an application, identify the factors relevant to choosing a synchronous or asynchronous solution.

Level 2 Outcomes: Application and Analysis

Level 2 outcomes are those in which the student can apply the material in familiar situations, e.g., can work a problem of familiar structure with minor changes in the details.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

V2q. Use the concepts of process state and state transition to characterize system and process behavior.
V2r. Relate the distinction between supervisor and user permissions to the design and implementation of system calls.
V2t. Write programs that use interprocess communication, specifically pipes and/or sockets.
V2u. Use simple system calls for common needs.
C2g. Implement producer-consumer coordination.
C2h. Build a server-side program that uses multi-threading to handle multiple simultaneous clients.
C2i. Identify situations where deadlock may occur, and suggest ways to prevent it.
A2g. Perform simple arithmetic computations related to major families (e.g. determine page number or whether an address is within a power-of-2 segment)

Level 3 Outcomes: Synthesis and Evaluation

Level 3 outcomes are those in which the student can apply the material in new situations. This is the highest level of mastery.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

V3p. Choose among virtual machines, processes, containers and sandboxes as ways to support common programmer needs.
V3w. When a process or a computer is running too slowly, infer some probable causes.
C3j. Distinguish when blocking vs nonblocking calls are appropriate.