Welcome to

Advanced Systems Programming

Spring 2026
COMS 4995-004

https://cs4157.github.io/www/2026-1/

Teaching Staff

- TAs:
  - Annie Wang aw3515@barnard.edu
  - Robert Fornos rf2830@columbia.edu
  - Madalina Stoicov mms2379@barnard.edu
  - Jonathan Ang ma4624@columbia.edu

- Email to all teaching staff:
  - ta-4157@googlegroups.com

Teaching Staff

Jae Woo Lee

- Senior lecturer in Computer Science
  - Teaching first, research second
- Just call me Jae (pronounced 'Jay')
  - Note that this is NOT a general rule – address instructors as Professors unless told otherwise
- Contact: jae@cs.columbia.edu / 715 CEPSR

Background

- Undergrad in Columbia College
- Many years of professional experience
  - Designing and coding large-scale software systems
  - Running a startup company
- Came back to Columbia for Ph.D.
- More info at http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~jae/

Course Homepage

`cs4157.github.io/www/2026-1/`

Please see the homepage for:

- Lecture schedule and notes
- Office hours calendar
- Exam dates and assignment deadlines
- Other course material

Course Prerequisites

1. Solid C programming experience
   - **DON'T TAKE THIS CLASS IF YOU DON'T KNOW C COLD!**

2. UNIX environment
   - Must be **comfortable** with command line interface

3. Computer Architecture
   - **Basic knowledge** of computer hardware: register, cache, etc.
   - Should be able to **read simple assembly code**: load, store, add, jmp, etc.

4. Data Structures
   - Nothing fancy, but must be **solid on the basics**: list, tree, stack & queue, map

Columbia courses:

For #1 and #2:
W3157 Advanced Programming

For #3:
W3827 Fundamentals of Computer Systems

For #4:
W3134 Data Structures

Mailing Lists

Whole class: cs4157@lists.cs.columbia.edu
Teaching staff: ta-4157@googlegroups.com

- Subject tags in brackets:
  - [cs4157] – prepended automatically to all class listserv emails
  - [ANN] – important announcements by teaching staff
  - [HW2], [EXAM1], etc.

- Learn to manage high volume – setup Gmail filters

- At the very least, do not miss any [ANN]s

Mailing List Etiquette

Do:

- Ask & answer non-personal questions on class listserv
- Provide helpful tips & links for classmates
- Be considerate & friendly

Don't:

- Ask questions without first trying to solve it yourself
- Post code or critical info that leads directly to solution
- Be impatient & rude

Prefer using class listserv over TA listserv

- We may redirect general questions to listserv with ID redacted

Textbooks

Advanced Programming in the UNIX Environment (APUE)
3rd Edition, 2013, Addison-Wesley – by W. Richard Stevens, Stephen A. Rago

Computer Systems: A Programmer's Perspective (CSAPP)
3rd Edition, 2015, Pearson – by Randal E. Bryant, David R. O'Hallaron

Various other online guides, blog posts, and original papers

Lectures and Auditing

In-person lectures: **MW 2:40-3:55pm, 633 Mudd**

- Recordings will be available on CW shortly afterwards
- Optional review sessions by TAs may be held – details TBA

Auditors are welcome to lectures & listserv

- But no GitHub repos, no HW/exam submissions, no TA access

Exams

Two **synchronous** and **in-person** exams:

- Exam 1: **Wednesday March 25, 2:40-3:55pm**
- Exam 2: **Monday, May 4, 2:40-3:55pm**
- No final exam

No make-up and no alternative exams

- Please do not take ASP this semester if you can't make these times

Extended-time exams at ODS/CARDS must overlap with official exam time by at least an hour

- You may not be able to have a class before/after ASP

CVN students: see remote proctoring procedure at the end

Homework and Grading

- 5-6 group assignments
  - Work in team of up to three people
  - By default, all HWs will be graded and equally weighted
  - But I reserve the right to change HW grading scheme during the semester – unequal weights, dropped/optional hw, etc.
  - 20% late penalty after deadline up to 24 hours; zero afterwards
- HW (32%), E1 (32%), E2 (32%), Attendance (4%)
  - Attendance logistics TBA but will allow at least 25% absence
  - Letter grades are curved
  - No predetermined cutoffs
  - Expect mean/median to be around B/B+
  - Grading policy may change later

Please don’t cheat

REQUIRED READING:
http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~jae/honesty.html

You are cheating if you:

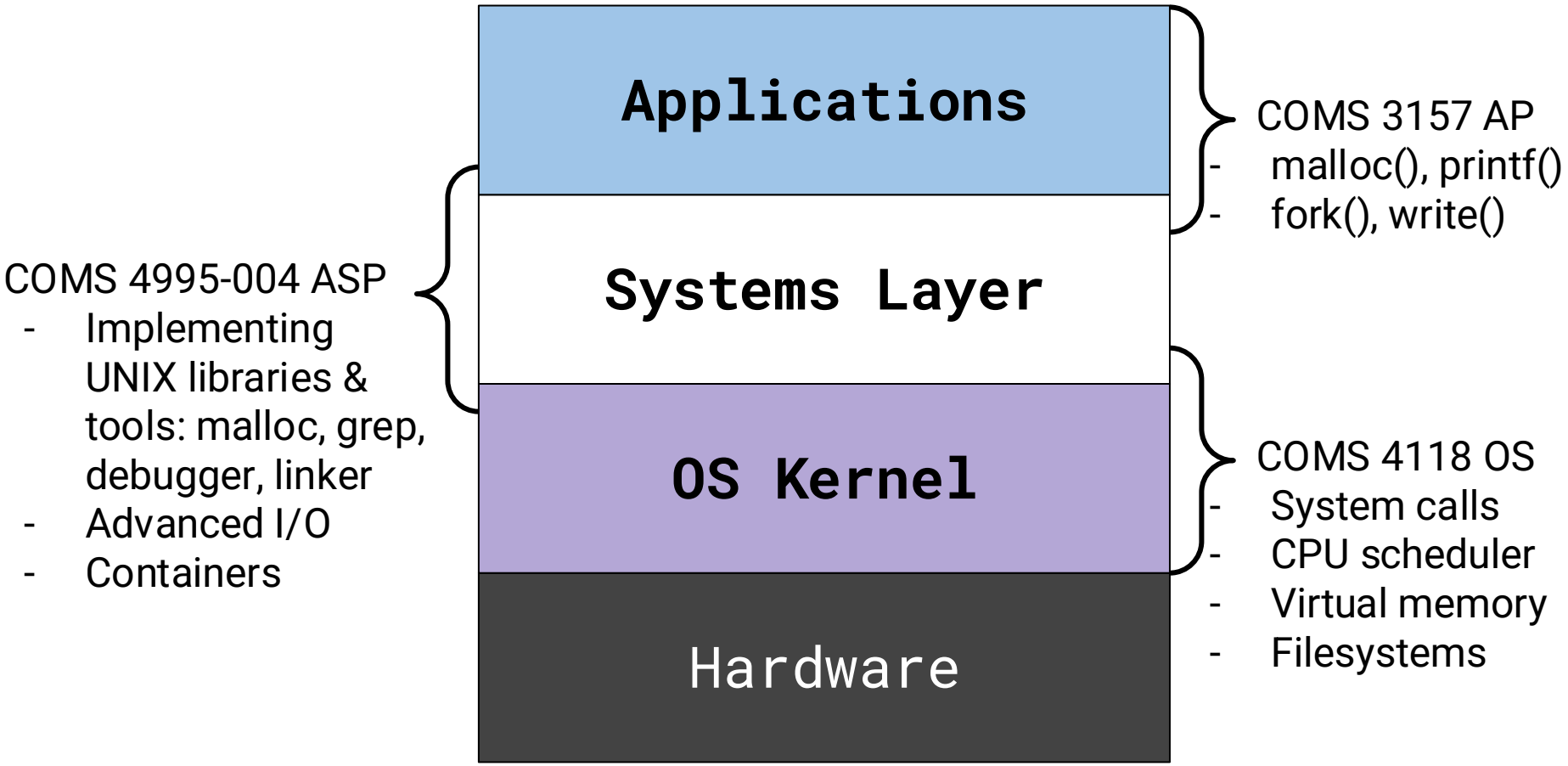
- Take code from other people, the Internet, or AI
- Look at solutions that your friend has from previous semester
- Upload any class materials (including your own code) to publicly viewable repositories during or after this semester

AI policy in AP (as a reference)

- Think of AI as a private tutor who:
  - Knows everything (he certainly thinks he does)
  - Never stops you from crossing the line to cheating
  - *Hiring tutor isn't cheating but almost always leads to that*
- AI will take away from you:
  - Cognitive struggle
  - Productive failure
  - *Exactly the experiences where real learning takes place in AP*
- Bottom line:
  - Yes, you should learn to use AI well, but not in AP
  - Not using AI will make AP difficult – exactly what you want
  - AI will replace many humans – you want to be one of them?

Your learning continues in ASP, but you have more agency

Advanced Systems Programming



Let’s get to work! (1/2)

1. Subscribe to the cs4157 ListServ TODAY:
https://lists.cs.columbia.edu/mailman/listinfo/cs4157

- In the textbox “Your name (optional)” put **Your Full Name (UNI)**
  - For example: Jae Woo Lee (jwl3)
- You must reply to the confirm email (which might be in your spam folder)
- Then receive “Welcome to the "Cs4157" mailing list”
  - This email contains your password for accessing archives of past postings
- All emails to listservs or teaching staff **MUST include your UNI**

Let’s get to work! (2/2)

2. Read the following two documents:
   - http://www.cs.columbia.edu/education/honesty
   - http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~jae/honesty.html

3. See course home page for **HW0 and reading assignments**

4. Start forming groups of up to 3 – feel free to advertise on listserv with [LFG]