Syllabus

The goal of this course is for you to learn how to program a computer. In this course you will develop the skills that enable you to go from the statement of a problem to be solved on the computer to the creation of a usable, correct, understandable, easily modifiable, and efficient computer program that solves the problem. The vehicle we will use is the programming language Visual Basic .NET, one of the most commonly used programming languages in the world.

Programming involves thinking and problem solving. One learns programming by understanding the basic principles involved and then developing one's skills on a variety of problems. This is not a "memorization" course. It is a "doing" course. Most of the learning will take place at the computer rather than in class. We hope to stretch your thinking and problem solving skills.

In this course it is critical that you attend every class and do all of the homework. It is easy to keep current in the course but difficult to catch up. If you are ill or find yourself falling behind for any other reason, it is important that you contact either me or the teaching assistant, as quickly as possible so we can get you back up to speed. My objective in this course is to optimize your learning and development. I am flexible in the pace of the course so if you don't understand the material in class please stop me and ask for additional explanations.

This class should be an excellent way for you to learn computer programming and to help you determine possible career choices. The class should be both challenging and enjoyable.

Prerequisite

The prerequisite for this course is MC/CS021 Computers in Management. I will assume that you know Excel. If you have not taken CS021 please see me. On the other hand, I will assume that you know nothing about programming. If you already know how to program please see me so we can determine if you should place out of the course.

Alternative Course

CS101 Computer Science I is an alternative to this course. CS101 is taught in Java, rather than Visual Basic, and is intended for students interested in majoring in Computer Science. This course, CS157, is the first course for students interested in Information Systems. If you are
confused about which you should take, I am happy to discuss it with you.

Computer Assignments

There will be regular programming assignments in Visual Basic that will help you understand the topics covered in class. These assignments are the most critical part of the course. You cannot learn programming just by sitting in class and listening to me. The only way to really learn this material is by doing it. You should plan to spend at least 6 to 9 hours per week on the homework. It is important that you do these assignments on your own. Assignments will be submitted through WebCT. All assignments will be graded. Assignments will be due 15 minutes before class one week after they are handed out. Late assignments are not accepted. Solutions to the homework often will be handed out in class. Programs take longer than expected. It is your responsibility to submit your assignments on time.

Academic Honesty

I expect you to abide by the standards of academic honesty set in the student guide. Cheating and plagiarism are not worthy of Boston College students. You may discuss your homework with your peers, but your submitted solutions must involve only your individual effort.

In addition, I expect that you are familiar with the computer ethics policy authored by the Office of the Dean for Student Development, which is also part of the student guide. If you don't have a student guide, both standards (academic honesty and computer ethics) are available on-line through: http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity, Section VI. Policies and Procedures (items related to Community Standards, Academic Honesty, Computer Ethics Policies and Integrity and Protection of Technological and Information Resources). Please familiarize yourself with them.

Class Attendance

While I do not take formal attendance I strongly advise you to attend every class. This course is cumulative so understanding the material presented in class depends on your understanding all of the material presented so far.

Computers and Software

We will be learning standard Visual Basic .NET in class. I will be running programs using the Microsoft Visual Basic .NET system on a Windows XP machine in class.

The textbook as sold in the Bookstore (the “Value Pack”) should include a full copy of Visual Basic.NET. To be sure you have gotten the proper text and Value Pack you should make sure that the ISBN on your purchase is 0-13-178588-5 and the text is “Visual Basic.NET 2003” by
Deitel, Deitel, and Yaeger.

You also can use the Windows computers in O’Neill or in the Computer Science Lab in Fulton 160. To use the latter you will need to obtain a system password from Mrs. Costello, the Computer Science Department secretary, in Fulton 460.

Note that the older versions of the software – for example, Visual Basic 6 and Visual Studio 6 – are much different than what we will cover and are not appropriate for use in this course.

Exams

There will be two or three in-class exams and a final exam. The final exam must be taken on its scheduled date and time – Tuesday, December 13 at 9:00AM in a room TBD. It cannot be taken early.

Grades

Your final grade will be determined 1/3 by homeworks, 1/3 by class exams, and 1/3 by the final exam. Additional information regarding grade average details that correspond to letter grades can be found on WebCT. You should plan for about one homework assignment per week which means there will be between 10 and 12 homework assignments. Because each assignment builds upon the concepts to its predecessor it is important to complete each assignment. However, for grading purposes I will eliminate the lowest homework score when calculating the overall homework average.

Textbook

*Simply Visual Basic.NET 2003: An Application-Driven Tutorial Approach* by Deitel, Deitel, and Yaeger published by Prentice Hall and is available in the BC Bookstore. The book should be shrink-wrapped with five or six CDs. To be sure you have gotten the proper text and Value Pack you should make sure that the ISBN on your purchase is 0-13-178588-5. Be careful, if you order this text through a source other than the BC bookstore make sure it has the identical ISBN as software incompatibilities could be very problematic in this class.

Software

You’ll need to install the software provided with the text. The process that needs to be followed is documented, in detail, in the “Before You Begin” section of the text. This process can take several hours to complete and during the process you may find that you need to install prerequisites before you can continue. Finding sources for the prerequisites and installing them can also be a time consuming process. AS SOON AS YOU PURCHASE THE TEXT I WOULD STRONGLY SUGGEST YOU BEGIN THE SOFTWARE INSTALLATION PROCESS.
WebCT

WebCT will be utilized extensively to provide routine class administration. It will be the resource you should use to track grades, retrieve and submit homework, get access to the class lecture notes and handouts, track the detailed class schedule and for all other administrative needs. If you are not familiar with or feel you can not access WebCT please see me immediately.

Teaching Assistant

Kevin Schohl will support this class as its Teaching Assistant. Kevin will be responsible for fielding and grading all WebCT homework submissions and for posting the homework grades on WebCT. Kevin’s e-mail address is SCHOHL@bc.edu and his office hours in Fulton 160 will be posted on WebCT when they are determined.

Seeing me in my Office

Please feel free to stop by my office in the Computer Science Department in Fulton 414 during my posted office hours (see WebCT for details). You can make an appointment to see me anytime by speaking with me after class or by phoning me at 552-3975 or by email (brownyqy@bc.edu). Please stop by to talk about the course, careers, or anything else.