Distributed Systems and Algorithms  
CSCI 4510/6510 – Fall 2017  
http://www.cs.rpi.edu/~pattes3/dsa/  

Course Description  
This course explores the principles of distributed computing systems, emphasizing fundamental issues underlying the design of such systems: communication, coordination, synchronization, and fault-tolerance. We will study key algorithms and theoretical results and explore how these foundations play out in modern systems and applications like cloud computing, pervasive computing, and peer-to-peer systems.  

Below is a list of course topics and a preliminary schedule. The instructor may change the order and the contents depending on students’ backgrounds and other considerations.  

Lecture 1: Introduction to Distributed Systems  
Lectures 2-3: Clocks and the ordering of events in distributed systems  
Lectures 4-5: The Distributed Log Problem  
Lectures 6-9: Distributed Mutual Exclusion  
Lecture 10: Global Snapshots  
Lectures 11-12: Broadcast Algorithms  
Lectures 13-17: Distributed Agreement  
Lectures 18: Leader Election  
Lectures 19–20: Byzantine Agreement  
Lectures 21: Commit Protocols  
Lectures 22-23: Concurrency Control  
Lectures 24-25: Replication Algorithms  
Lectures 26-27: Consistent Hashing and Distributed Hash Tables  
Lecture 28: Digital Currencies  

Pre-requisites  
• CSCI-4210: Operating Systems  
• CSCI-2300: Introduction to Algorithms  

Learning Outcomes  
Upon successful completion of this course, a student is able to:  
• Understand and apply different models and abstractions for distributed systems  
• Describe and analyze key algorithms for distributed systems  
• Identify fundamental limitations and impossibility results for distributed systems  
• Implement distributed algorithms in real-world distributed computing platforms  
• Understand and identify applications of distributed algorithms in real-world systems  

Textbook  
There is no required textbook for this course. All course material will be presented in lecture, and conference and journal papers related to this material will be posted on the course web site.
An optional, supplementary textbook is:
This text may describe different algorithm variations than those I present in class. You are responsible for learning the algorithms versions and content presented in lecture.

**Grading**

Grading will be based on the following:

- **Quizzes:** 50%
- **Take-home Final Exam:** 15%
- **Programming Projects:** 35%

Grades will be posted in Submitty. The following chart will be used to assign course letter grades. I may lower the cutoff points, and a different curve may be used for 4510 and 6510.

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>B+</td>
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**Quizzes**

There will be 5 to 7 in-class quizzes. Each quiz will be about 45 minutes. Quizzes will be announced in the lecture preceding the quiz date. Requests for quiz regrades must be made within 7 days of their return. Quiz makeups will only be given if you have an excused absence.

**Final Exam**

The final exam will be a comprehensive, take-home exam. It will be an open notes exam, and it will be due in the last week of classes. More details will be given closer to the end of the semester.

**Programming Projects**

There will be two programming projects in which students will implement applications using algorithms studied in class. The projects will be done in groups of two, unless the professor approves otherwise. For each project, students must submit their code and a project report and give a demonstration of their application. Late code, reports, and demonstrations will not be accepted.

**Students with Special Needs**

Federal law requires all colleges and universities to provide specified types of assistance to students with disabilities. If you have such special assistance, please obtain an authorizing memo from Disability Services for Students. Information about a student's special needs will be treated as confidential. Please submit a copy of your authorizing memo to me at least two weeks in advance of any affected assignment. Failure to do so may result in a lack of special accommodations.

**Academic Integrity**

For programming assignments, discussion is allowed, but you must write all of your own code. Unless otherwise specified by the instructor, quizzes will be closed book and will be done independently. The policy for the final exam will be announced closer to the exam date.

Violation of the policies for projects, quizzes, or exams will be considered a breach of academic integrity, and the student will be subject to penalties outlined in *The Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities*, including "an academic (grade) penalty administered by the professor and/or disciplinary action through the Rensselaer judicial process described in this handbook."