CSC311H1S 20251 (All Sections): Introduction to Machine Learning

Jump to Today



CSC311H1S Introduction to Machine Learning University of Toronto, St. George Campus, Winter 2025

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Your Instructor

Hi! I am Professor Alice Gao (she/her). I will be your instructor for this course. Feel free to call me Professor, Professor Gao or Alice.

I am an assistant professor, teaching stream in the computer science department. This is my third year at UofT, and I am enjoying it very much! I have been regularly teaching Intro to AI (CSC384) and Intro ML (CSC311). I am teaching Deep Learning (CSC413) for the first time this term. If you enjoy this course, please consider taking another one with me. I'd love to get to know you better. If you're interested in research, consider taking CSC494/495 with me. We'll work on a research project and learning the computer science department. This is my third year at UofT, and I am enjoying it very much! I have been regularly teaching Intro to AI (CSC384) and Intro ML (CSC311). I am teaching Deep Learning (CSC413) for the first time this term. If you enjoy this course, please consider taking another one with me. I'd love to get to know you better. If you're interested in research, consider taking CSC494/495 with me.

together. For more information on my teaching experience, research projects, and how to request a reference letter, visit my website (https://www.cs.toronto.edu/~axgao/).

Please do not email me regarding this course. Instead, attend my office hours or send a message to course email account (see the "Seeking Help" section below for details). My office is in Bahen 4240. I you want to chat, I recommend making an appointment beforehand.

Teaching Assistants

I am fortunate to have nine excellent teaching assistants working with me this term. They will hold off hours, answer Piazza questions, and invigilate and mark your term tests and the final exam. We will put the TA office hour information on Piazza throughout the term. Please talk to the teaching assistants. They are eager to help you.

By the way, your TAs are graduate students in computer science. If you are (even remotely) intereste pursuing graduate studies, you might want to chat with them. They should have excellent insights into what graduate school is all about.

Seeking Help <u>↑ Conter</u>

The teaching assistants and I are ready and eager to help you inside and outside of class. Please remember that seeking help is not a sign of weakness. To the contrary, we encourage you to seek he from us early and often so that we can help you succeed in this course. You can get in touch with us through the following channels.

Help and Support Resources

Platform Descriptions

Platform

Descriptions

Piazza is one of the best ways of reaching the course staff. It gives you the flexibility ask a question anywhere, anytime. Moreover, all the students in the course can bene from your conversation with the course staff. We encourage you to post your question on Piazza publicly. However, please make your post private if your question contains sensitive information (e.g., hints for assignments/tests or personal information).

Piazza

The teaching assistants and I will aim to respond to your Piazza posts within 48 business hours. Note that if you post a question outside of business hours, we canno guarantee responding to your question until the next business day.

We will make *important announcements on Piazza* rather than Quercus.

See the <u>Tips for Success</u> on "Check Announcements Regularly" and "Search Before Post."

I have set aside three weekly hours to meet with you. Feel free to chat with me about this course, my experience, or anything else I can help you with. If there are a lot of students (and there will be when a deadline is near =), I will prioritize answering cours related questions.

Professor

Prof Gao Office Hours

Office Hours

Day	Time	Location	
Wednesdays	3:30 - 5 pm	Bahen 4240	_
Thursdays	1:30 - 3 pm	Bahen 4240	

These will be combined office hours for CSC311 and CSC413.

TA Q&A Hours

The TAs will hold in-person and online office hours to answer your questions. Each To will specialize in answering questions for one topic so that they can provide the best help for you. The in-person office hours will happen in the Help Centre (BA 2270). The online office hours will occur on Zoom. The TA office hours will not follow a regular schedule. We will announce the TA office hour information on Piazza.

Platform

Descriptions

csc311-2025-01@cs.toronto.edu (mailto:csc311-2025-01@cs.toronto.edu)

Course

email address

If you have an administrative issue, please message us at the course email address above. However, if you have a remark request or special consideration request, it is sufficient to fill out the respective online form. Please avoid sending us an email unles you must provide information that cannot be included in the form responses.

Course Description

↑ Conter

In this course, you will learn about the fundamentals of machine learning. I have designed this course achieve the *course outcomes* below.

This course aims to combine theory and practice. You will learn about the theory in lectures and demonstrate your understanding of the theory on the term tests and the final exam. Moreover, you wi apply the theory to solve realistic problems by completing the labs and the project.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to apply supervised and unsupervised learning models solve machine learning problems. Models covered typically include linear regression, logistic regression probabilistic models (Naive Bayes), decision trees, neural networks, k-means clustering, expectation-maximization, and principal component analysis. In particular, students will:

- Understand and apply the mathematical techniques used in machine learning models, particularly how to turn a learning problem into an optimization problem and solve that optimization problem (e.g., via gradient descent or other methods)
- Use numerical computing libraries (e.g., NumPy) to build and analyze models; analyze and prepa data for modelling.
- Apply hyperparameter tuning and choose models by evaluating model performance considering the bias-variance tradeoff.
- Evaluate model results on real-world data; communicate the performance and limitations of a model
- Understand and communicate ethical considerations in deploying a model, including the concerns related to algorithmic fairness.

Recommended Textbook

There is no required textbook. However, specific readings will be recommended from various sources primarily from "The Elements of Statistical Learning", Second Edition, by Hastie, Tibshirani and Friedman.

Course Schedule ↑ Conter

I have compiled a course schedule for you below. This schedule outlines all the lectures, labs, assignment due dates, and term test dates for the whole term.

I highly recommend that you take some time to put all the important dates in your calendar right now. See the <u>Tips for Success</u> for more details.

Course Schedule					
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
Mon, Jan 6		Wed to 0		Fri, Jan 10	
Week 1:		Wed, Jan 8	Lab 01		
ML Fundamentals				Nearest Neighbo	
Mon, Jan 13				Fri Ion 17	
Week 2:		Wed, Jan 15		Fri, Jan 17	
Decision Trees				Lab 02	
Lab 01 due 1pm				Decision Trees	
Mon, Jan 20			Thu, Jan 23	Fri, Jan 24	
Week 3:		Wed, Jan 22 Project Data			
Linear Regression			Collection due	Lab 03	
Lab 02 due 1pm			1pm	Linear Regressic	
Mon, Jan 27					
Week 4:		Wed, Jan 29		Fri, Jan 31	
Logistic Regression		1100, 0011 20		Lab 04	
				Logistic Regress	
Lab 03 due 1pm					
Mon, Feb 3		Wed, Feb 5		Fri, Feb 7	
Week 5:				Test 1 (Weeks 1	

Perceptrons				
				2pm BA
Lab 04 due 1pm				1170/1200/1220
Man Fab 10			Thu Fob 12	Fri, Feb 14
Mon, Feb 10		Wed, Feb 12	Thu, Feb 13	Lab 06
Week 6:			Project Team due	Multi-layer
Backpropagation			1pm	Perceptrons
Mon, Feb 17		Wed, Feb 19		Fri, Feb 21
Family Day	Reading Week	Reading Week	Reading Week	Reading Week
Mon, Feb 24				Fri, Feb 28
Week 7:		Wed, Feb 26		Lab 07
Naive Bayes				Bias-Variance
Lab 06 due 1pm				Decomposition
Mon, Mar 3				
Week 8:				Fri, Mar 7
Gaussian		Wed, Mar 5		Lab 08
Discriminant				
Analysis				Naive Bayes
Lab 07 due 1pm				
Mon, Mar 10				
Week 9:		Wed, Mar 12		Fri, Mar 14
Clustering, K-		Gaussian Mixture		Lab 09
Means		Model		Clustering
Lab 08 due 1pm				

		Fri, Mar 21
	Wed, Mar 19	Test 2 (Weeks 5
		11am WI 1016/1
		2pm EX 100
	Wed, Mar 26	Fri, Mar 28
		No Lab
Tue, Apr 1		
Project Prediction	Wed, Apr 2	Fri, Apr 4
Script and Report	Conclusion	
due at 1pm		
	Project Prediction Script and Report	Project Prediction Wed, Apr 2 Script and Report Conclusion

Grading Scheme

<u>↑ Conter</u>

Please take a careful look at the grading scheme chart below.

Since the final exam covers all the topics in the course, you must obtain *a minimum grade of 40%* on final exam to *pass* this course. If your final exam grade is less than 40%, the maximum final grade yo can obtain for the course will be 47%.

Grading Scheme

Component	Weight
Ethics Module	4%
Labs	11%
Project	15%
Test 1	15%
Test 2	15%
Final Exam	40%

Let's take a look at the course components individually.

Scheduled Time Slots

Each section has three scheduled time slots each week, as shown below. Each week, we will have 2 hours of lectures on Monday and Wednesday and 1 hour of lab on Friday.

Scheduled Time Slots and Locations

Section	Time	Monday Lecture	Wednesday Lecture	Friday Lab
101	11 am - 12 pm	BA 1180	MC 252	KP (Koffler House) 108
201 2 pm - 3	2 nm 3 nm	MC 102	BA 1170	BA 1130
	2 piii - 3 piii	IVIC 102		Fri, Jan 24 in MP 102

Lectures

We will roughly cover a different topic in lectures each week. See the course schedule above for the weekly lecture topics.

Lecture recordings will be generated and posted automatically for all the lectures. Remember that covideos and materials belong to your instructor and the University and are protected by copyright. You permitted to download videos and materials for your own personal academic use, but you may not conshare, or otherwise distribute them without explicit permission from the instructor.

Ethics Module

In week 11, we will cover an ethics module. This module is worth 4% of your final grade.

The Monday lecture will discuss recommender systems from the computer science perspective. The Wednesday lecture will discuss recommender systems from the ethics perspective. You will complete survey before the lectures and a survey after the lectures. In addition, you will write a short reflection based on some readings and the lecture contents. See the grading scheme below.

Grading Scheme for Ethics Module

Component	Weight	Due Date	Marking Criteria
Pre-Module Survey	1%	11:59pm ET TBD, 2025	Marked for completion only.
Post-Module Survey	1%	11:59pm ET TBD, 2025	Marked for completion only.

Written Reflection	2%	11.59piii ⊑ 1	Marked for a good-faith effort.
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Math Prepare Quizzes and Videos

In the Quizzes section, we have made several "Math Prepare" quizzes available. The math prepare c includes 2-4 multiple choice questions on key mathematical concepts that you need to be able to fully understand the lecture. Most of this content will be a review of pre-requisite concepts. Each multiple-choice question will be accompanied by a video to help you review the concept.

These quizzes are **not worth any marks**. Rather, they are additional **resources to help you prepar for the upcoming lectures**. We strongly encourage you to attempt these quizzes and watch the corresponding videos before the Monday lecture. You can attempt each quiz as many times as you lil

Practice Problems

Each week, we will provide practice problems that resemble the types of questions you might encoun on tests and the final exam. You are welcome to submit **the solutions to two problems** for feedback every week. These submissions **will receive feedback only** and **will not be graded**. We will aim to return your work with feedback promptly so that they can help you prepare for the tests and the final exam.

Labs

Throughout this course, you will complete approximately **8 programming labs**. These labs are a gre opportunity to implement machine learning models with the support of your TAs. You have the option **work with a partner**, who can be from a different section. The exercises are designed to be complete during the lab sessions, but **attendance is optional**. One TA will supervise both sections for the sam lab, and you are encouraged to attend the lab sessions to receive help from the TA. Feel free to atteneither lab section as long as space is available.

To accommodate any unforeseen issues, lab deadlines are set for **1 PM ET on Mondays**, and you w submit your work on **MarkUs**.

We will **drop your 2 lowest lab grades**, so your final lab grade will be based on your best 6 out of th **labs.**

Project (ML Challenge)

As part of the CSC311 Machine Learning Challenge, you will work in **teams of 3-4 students** to devel a classifier that predicts which food item a student refers to based on their responses. You will receive dataset containing student responses about several popular food items. Your objective is to create a model that performs well on an unseen test set, which will be compiled from responses by TAs and

instructors. This project will provide practical experience in data collection, model building, and performance evaluation.

The project consists of several components with specific deadlines (see the course schedule table above). Your final grade for the project will be based on the quality of your model and the thoroughne of your report. We encourage you to start early and communicate regularly with your team to ensure successful project.

We will aim to post detailed instructions around reading week. You can expect to dedicate the last for weeks of the course to the project.

Tests

There will be two tests. Each test is 50 minutes long. You can think of the two tests as roughly equiva to one midterm worth 30%.

The tests will occur *on Fridays during lecture time slots*. See the course schedule above for the test dates.

You can bring one aid sheet (one-sided 8.5" by 11") to each test.

Why two tests instead of one midterm? The main purpose of having two tests instead of one midterm to motivate you to study regularly! See "Study Regularly" in the <u>Tips for Success</u> section below.

How do I prepare for tests? The tests contain theoretical questions only. There will not be programmil questions. You can expect two types of questions on the test. The conceptual questions test your understanding of the properties of the algorithms. The execution questions ask you to show the steps executing an algorithm to solve a problem. Education research has shown that the best way to prepa for tests is to solve practice problems (ideally under time pressure). See "Solve Practice Problems" in Tips for Success section below.

Final Exam

The final exam will cover all the topics in the course. For any topics already covered in the two tests, final exam will likely include more challenging questions. I encourage you to use the past exams in th Old Exam Repository (https://login.library.utoronto.ca/index.php?url=https://exams.library.utoronto.ca since doing practice questions is one of the best ways of preparing for an exam.

You can bring one aid sheet (two-sided 8.5" by 11") to the final exam.

The final exam schedules will be available at the end of February on the A&S page (https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/faculty-registrar/exams-assessments/exam-assessment-schedule

Course Policies

↑ Conter

Test Attendance Policy

You must attend each test in your registered section. If you must attend the test in another section du extenuating circumstances, please email us at the course email account.

Special Consideration Policies

↑ Conter

If you need an assignment deadline extension, cannot complete an assignment, or cannot write a test due to extraordinary circumstances beyond your control, please submit a special consideration request as soon as possible. Special consideration will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and is not granted automatically. Sometimes, we cannot grant you exactly the special consideration you seek.

Special Consideration Policies for Labs:

 We created the labs as low-stakes opportunities for you to apply the machine learning theory in practice. Because the labs occur weekly, processing special consideration requests in time would challenging. Therefore, we will not accept late submissions for labs. Instead, we will drop the two lowest lab grades from your final lab grade.

Special Consideration Policies for Tests:

• If you miss a test for approved reasons, we will shift the test's weight to the final exam.

Special Consideration Policies for Missing Multiple Major Assessments (Tests and Project):

After missing two major assessments (including tests and the project), you have missed valuable opportunities to get feedback and are possibly in danger of failing the course. Therefore, we will require you to make an appointment with your <u>College Registrar (https://registrar.utoronto.ca/list-faculty-colleges-and-campus-registrar-offices/)</u> to create a concrete plan for the rest of the term. W will require confirmation from your College Registrar that you have met with them and that your pl for the rest of the term is realistic before we approve special consideration requests for any major assessments.

Special Consideration Policies if you are registered with Accessibility Services:

Your accommodation letter will allow for an extension of up to 7 full days. However, due to the
incremental nature of CS courses, granting such a long extension from the onset may cause you
fall behind and be disadvantaged. As such, we will start by suggesting an initial 3-day extension. \u20ad will grant the 7-day extension later if necessary.

Please complete and submit the appropriate special consideration request form below. We will aim to respond to you within 48 business hours.

Special consideration request form for tests (Link To Be Posted)

Make sure to include supporting documentation with your request. Please read the new <u>Student</u>

<u>Absences (https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academics/student-absences)</u> page from the Faculty

Arts & Science carefully. It contains detailed information on the recognized forms of documentation at the circumstances under which you should use the Absence Declaration tool.

Below are some **invalid** reasons for applying for a special consideration request. These reasons are invalid because the circumstances are **neither unexpected nor outside of your control**.

- · Heavy course load
- Multiple assignments are due in the same week.
- Multiple tests are scheduled in the same week.
- I need to catch up on missed work.

If you have difficulty managing stress and time, don't hesitate to contact your College Registrar, who suggest wellness counselling, academic advising, and/or learning strategist services.

Remark Requests

↑ Conter

If you believe there was an error in the marking of a test, or if you have questions about how we marked your work, you may submit a remark request. We do **NOT accept remark requests the first 24 hours after the grades are released**. You should spend this time reading and understanding your assessment results, the sample solutions and the marking scheme.

Below are some examples of *valid* reasons for requesting a remark.

- My answer was marked incorrectly based on the marking scheme.
- There was an error when adding up the marks.
- I should get more marks based on the marking scheme.
- I interpreted the question differently, which caused my answer to differ from the sample solutions.

After 24 hours, you will have **one week** to submit a remark request by filling out the appropriate form below. Please provide a detailed justification --- this will help us process your request efficiently.

Remark request form for tests (https://forms.office.com/r/PnGeEkKrTN)

We will process the remark requests after one week.

Academic Integrity

↑ Conter

All work you submit must be your own. It is an academic offence to copy the work of someone else *unless you explicitly and clearly attribute the work to its source*. This includes words, sentences, entire documents, and even ideas. Whether you copy or let someone else copy, it is an offence. Academic offences are taken very seriously and can have correspondingly serious consequences.

At the same time, we want you to benefit from working with other students. For the programming assignments in this course, you cannot submit the same code as another student. However, you can discuss how to solve the problems with anyone you wish. The purpose of the assignments is to allow you to practice implementing an algorithm to solve a real problem. Even if you did not figure out all th implementation yourself, you could still receive full credit for writing up a program with a list of ALL sources you consulted: textbooks, web pages, students with whom you discussed the problem, etc. Include all the citations in the Python files that you submit.

You are also welcome to discuss course material and technology related to assignments with each of and we encourage you to do so. For example, you may work through examples that help you underst course material or new technology or help each other configure your system to run a supporting piece software.

Please take a few minutes to consult the **Academic Integrity at U of T**

(https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/) website: it contains good information and concrete strate to help support your learning in ways that follow the principles of academic integrity, in addition to references to formal policies and procedures.

Generative Al Policies

In this course, you may use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (like ChatGPT and GitHub Copi as learning aids and to help complete the programming assignments. You will NOT be permitted to use generative AI on the term tests or final exam. While some generative AI tools are currently available for free in Canada, these tools have not been vetted by the University of Toronto. They may not meet University guidelines or requirements for privacy, intellectual property, security, accessibility, and recoverent retention. Generative AI may produce content that is incorrect, misleading, or inconsistent with the expectations of this course. They may even provide citations to sources that don't exist—and submit work with false citations is an academic offence. These tools may be subject to service interruptions, software modifications, and pricing changes during the semester.

Generative AI is NOT required to complete any aspect of this course, and we caution you not to on these tools to complete your coursework. Instead, we recommend treating generative AI as a supplementary tool only for exploration or drafting content — always remembering to cite any resource you used to generate your answers. Ultimately, you (and not any AI tool) are responsible your learning in this course and for all the work you submit for credit. It is your responsibility to evalua the content generated critically and to assess your learning independent of generative AI tools regula Overreliance on generative AI may give you a false sense of how much you have learned, which can lead to poor performance in this course, later courses, or your future career.

Tips for Student Success

<u>↑ Conter</u>

Tips for Student Success

Title Details I highly recommend that you take a few minutes to record the important date (such as test dates and assignment due dates) in your calendar. Also, I Put Important Dates recommend you do so for all the courses you are taking this term. Once you In Your Calendar at have completed this, take a careful look at your calendar. Do you have any t the Beginning of the times or assignment due dates that are conflicting or close to each other? I Term suggest planning for these times in advance so you can complete these assessments to the best of your abilities without leaving the work to the last minute. We will make important announcements on Piazza. I prefer Piazza to Querc Check for announcements since Piazza provides a way for you to respond to the **Announcements** announcement immediately. I strongly suggest you check Piazza a few time Regularly each week to ensure you know the important announcements. Before posting a question on Piazza, please search to see if other students have asked similar questions. Doing this is especially important when the Search Before Post number of questions skyrockets near an assignment deadline. If a student h asked a similar question already, we would prefer that you post a follow-up question rather than creating a new post. I recommend viewing the tests as learning opportunities rather than conside them exams. The purpose of having one test every 2-3 weeks is to *motivate* Study Regularly you to study regularly. The tests are designed to be low-stakes and low-stre opportunities to get feedback on your learning. The tests contain theoretical questions only. You can expect two types of questions: conceptual and execution. The conceptual questions will mostly t you on the properties of the algorithms, whereas the execution questions wi ask you to solve a problem by executing an algorithm. For conceptual Solve Practice questions, I recommend summarizing the algorithm properties in your own **Problems** words using flashcards or concept maps. For execution questions, I recommend practising executing an algorithm. Education research has show that the best way to prepare for a test is to solve practice problems. I recommend practising under time pressure. Doing this will ensure that you d solve the problems correctly and reasonably quickly.

Student Support Resources

↑ Conter

<u>UofT Mental Health Portal (https://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca/)</u>

If you go into Explore Our Care Model, One-On-One Sessions, View Services and Resources, you w get to Mental Health Clinical Services (Mental Health Clinical Services (https://studentlige.utoronto.ca/service/same-day-counselling-appointment/). Book an appointment by calling Health & Wellness at 416-978-8030 (select option 5).

If you are in a crisis, UofT Telus Health Student Support (formerly U of T My SSP) provides *real-time*, *confidential*, *24-hour* support for any school, health, or general life concern at no cost to you. Call 1-8 451-9700 or 001-416-380-6578 (if outside of North America).

You can also contact the Good2Talk Student Helpline (Call 1-866-925-5454 or text GOOD2TALKON 1 686868).

<u>Accessibility Services (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/accessibility-services-registration-and-documentation-requirements/)</u>

Check out the <u>Accessibility Services registration & documentation requirements – St. George Campus (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/accessibility-services-registration-and-documentation-requirements/)</u>. Register with Accessibility Services before 5 p.m. on Friday, October 13, 2023, for fin assessment accommodations.

Student Life Portal (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/)

Check under <u>Health and Wellness (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/)</u> for a range of programs and services.

Take a look at the <u>Academic Success (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task_levels/academic-success/)</u> section. There are many resources on topics such as <u>Better note-taking</u>

(https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/better-note-taking/), Studying, concentration and memory (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/studying-concentration-and-memory/), Goal setting and motivation (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/goal-setting-and-motivation/), Reboot after an academic setback (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/reboot-after-an-academic-setback/), etc. They also offer a free online course on 5 Keys to Succeed at UofT (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/5-keys-to-succeed-at-uto-online-course/).

Recognized Study Groups (https://sidneysmithcommons.artsci.utoronto.ca/recognized-study-groups/)

Recognized Study Groups (RSG) are student-led study groups of up to eight classmates enrolled in t same Faculty of Arts & Science course. RSGs can meet online or in person on the St. George Campi You can apply to lead or join an RSG at the start of each academic term.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
	ML Challenge: Data Collection (https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/380054/assignments/1450776)	