COMP9321 Data Services Engineering

Term1, 2025

Course Code	COMP9321
Course Title	Data Services Engineering
Convenor	[Morty Al-Banna](#)
Admin	[Mohammadali Yaghoubzadehfard](#)
Classes	[Timetable for all classes](#)
Consultations	There will be consultation labs every day during the week starting Week2 (schedule will be made available in WebCMS). To Schedule a consultation with the LiC please send an e-mail (cs9321@cse.unsw.edu.au)
Units of Credit	6
Course Website	http://www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~cs9321
Handbook Entry	http://www.handbook.unsw.edu.au/postgraduate/courses/current/COMP9321.html

Course Summary

Software engineering has advanced rapidly in recent years. The knowledge-, service-, and cloud-based economy in parallel with the continuous improvement in connectivity, storage and data processing capabilities allow access to a data deluge from sensors, social-media, news, user-generated, government and private data sources. Accordingly, in a modern data-oriented landscape, data-driven applications may need to deal with a collection of data sets - from unstructured, relational to NoSQL - that holds a vast amount of information gathered from various private/open data sources. Therefore, well-engineered service-oriented functionalities are critical for ingesting, organizing and querying the growing volume of data in modern web-based applications.

This course aims to introduce the student to core concepts and practical skills for engineering the data in service-oriented data-driven applications. Specifically, the course aims to answer these questions:

- *How to access and ingest data from various external sources?*
- *How to process and store the data for applications?*
- *How to curate (e.g. Extract, Transform, Correct, Aggregate, and Merge/Split) and publish the data?*
- *How to apply available analytics to the data?*
- *How to visualize the data to communicate effectively*

Fundamentally, we will look at these questions through the lens of 'service-oriented' software design and implementation principles. At each topic, we will learn some core concepts, and how to implement the concepts in software through services.

The course uses the Python Programming Language as the practical basis for its modules. However, the concepts taught are universal and can be applied to any other web development framework.

For 2025T1, the course will be delivered fully **Online**. The lab activities along with walkthroughs will be made available and online consultation labs will be scheduled to provide additional support.

Assumed Knowledge

Before commencing this course, we will assume that students have:

- Completed one programming course (expected to be in Python)
- Basic data modelling and relational database knowledge

These are assumed to have been acquired in the following courses: For Postgrad - COMP9021 and COMP9311. For Undergrad - COMP1531 and COMP2041.

Student Learning Outcomes

When you successfully complete this course, you should be able to:

- Understand how to work with data and the various technologies involved in accessing, curating, storing, and publishing data
- Understand how to apply existing analytics and visualisation techniques to data
- Describe the main requirements to design and implement APIs (specifically REST APIs).
- Describe the main architecture of a modern Web-based, data-oriented services.
- Design and develop non-trivial data services solutions. The solutions can be about building applications that utilise the above technologies, or about making the technologies accessible to potential consumers
- Understand the basic issues with scalability, security/privacy and using online data processing platforms

Prospective students should note that this course does not aim to introduce you to the latest packages or products available in the market. Rather, it strives to teach students the basic concepts and the fundamental principles in their implementation technologies so that they are able to follow and absorb technological developments in this space.

This course contributes to the development of the following graduate capabilities:

Graduate Capability	Acquired in
Scholars capable of independent and collaborative enquiry, rigorous in their analysis, critique and reflection, and able to innovate by applying their knowledge and skills to the solution of novel as well as routine problems	lectures and assignments
Entrepreneurial leaders capable of initiating and embracing innovation and change, as well as engaging and enabling others to contribute to change	forums
Professionals capable of ethical, self- directed practice and independent lifelong learning	assignments
Global citizens who are culturally adept and capable of respecting diversity and acting in a socially just and responsible way	forums

Teaching Strategies

- Lectures: introduce concepts, show examples (Online lecture for 2025T1)
- Lab Activities: introduce technology required for the assignments
- Consultation Labs every day of the week
- Online Quizzes: revision of the concepts introduced in Lectures and Lab Work
- Assignments: solve significant problems

Teaching Rationale

This course is taught the way it is because we believe in structured learning, also learning by doing. We provide timely feedback for learning via small, step-by-step individual assignments that gradually build up knowledge and practical skills.

Assessment*

Item	Topics	Due	Marks
Quizzes	All topics (5 quizzes)	Throughout the session	10%
Assignment 1	Data ingestion, manipulation and visualization	Week 5	15%
Assignment 2	Data publication as a RESTful service API	Week 7	20%
Assignment 3	Data Analytics	Week 10	15%
Final Exam	All topics	Exam period	40%

* 5% bonus marks are to be awarded based on community engagement and participating in announced challenges during the lectures. The weight of the marks awarded is weighted based on the achievement level. The Bonus is added to the assignment overall which is capped at 50%.

Course Schedule

Week	Lectures	Labs	Assignments	Quizzes
1	Course intro	(No Lab, student should start by the Setup Python, Flask, NumPy, Pandas)	-	-
2	Data Access and ingestion	Accessing NoSQL DB, API data sourced, CSV files, text files.	-	Quiz 1
3	Data Cleansing and Manipulation	Cleansing data with Python Pandas and Open refine	Assgn1 release	Quiz 2
4	Data Visualization	Using matplotlib library for charts and plots		Quiz 3
5	Building a Data service (part1)	Build a simple Flask REST API	Assgn1 due Release Ass2	-
6	---	---	---	----
7	Building a Data service (part2)	RESTful Client	Assgn2 Due Release Assgn3	-
8	Data Analytics Applied Techniques and Tools part1	Classification example		Quiz 4
9	Data Analytics Applied Techniques and Tools part2	Clustering example	-	Quiz 5
10	Final wrap-up	-	Assgn3 due	-

*Note: The Course Schedule might change according to the progress of the topics and feedback throughout the course. Although the quizzes are planned as indicated, but the actual number may vary depending on the progress of the weekly topics.

Changes made in response to MyExperience feedback

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the following adjustments were made to address students' comments in the MyExperience Survey from the last offering:

- Relying on Three additional Tutors to ensure fast response on the Course Forum
- Switching the Q&A platform to Ed Stream as it has been noted by students it is more user friendly and engaging than WebCMS Forum
- Creating Assignment specs workgroup, for developing the Assignments' specifications. This will help making sure everything is clear, checked, double checked and triple checked.
- Establishing stronger line of communication between the teaching team through weekly stand-ups and frequent check-ins. This will minimize misunderstandings and increase consistency.
- Include more in-lecture exercises.
- Adjusting the strategy for Bonus marks

Student Conduct

The **Student Code of Conduct** (Information , Policy) sets out what the University expects from students as members of the UNSW community. As well as the learning, teaching and research environment, the University aims to provide an environment that enables students to achieve their full potential and to provide an experience consistent with the University's values and guiding principles. A condition of enrolment is that students *inform themselves* of the University's rules and policies affecting them, and conduct themselves accordingly.

In particular, students have the responsibility to observe standards of equity and respect in dealing with every member of the University community. This applies to all activities on UNSW premises and all external activities related to study and research. This includes behaviour in person as well as behaviour on social media, for example Facebook groups set up for the purpose of discussing UNSW courses or course work. Behaviour that is considered in breach of the Student Code Policy as discriminatory, sexually inappropriate, bullying, harassing, invading another's privacy or causing any person to fear for their personal safety is serious misconduct and can lead to severe penalties, including suspension or exclusion from UNSW.

If you have any concerns, you may raise them with your lecturer, or approach the School Ethics Officer , Grievance Officer , or one of the student representatives.

Plagiarism is defined as using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. UNSW and CSE treat plagiarism as academic misconduct, which means that it carries penalties as severe as being excluded from further study at UNSW. There are several on-line sources to help you understand what plagiarism is and how it is dealt with at UNSW:

- Plagiarism and Academic Integrity
- UNSW Plagiarism Procedure

Make sure that you read and understand these. Ignorance is not accepted as an excuse for plagiarism. In particular, you are also responsible that your assignment files are not accessible by anyone but you by setting the correct permissions in your CSE directory and code repository, if using. Note also that plagiarism includes paying or asking another person to do a piece of work for you and then submitting it as your own work.

UNSW has an ongoing commitment to fostering a culture of learning informed by academic integrity. All UNSW staff and students have a responsibility to adhere to this principle of academic integrity. Plagiarism undermines academic integrity and is not tolerated at UNSW. Plagiarism at UNSW is defined as using the words or ideas of others and passing them off as your own.

If you haven't done so yet, please take the time to read the full text of

- [UNSW's policy regarding academic honesty and plagiarism](#)

The pages below describe the policies and procedures in more detail:

- [Student Code Policy](#)
- [Student Misconduct Procedure](#)
- [Plagiarism Policy Statement](#)
- [Plagiarism Procedure](#)

You should also read the following page which describes your rights and responsibilities in the CSE context:

- [Essential Advice for CSE Students](#)

Artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, CoPilot, CodePilot, and built-in tools within Word are modern tools that are useful in some circumstances, but reliance on them is not a path to success at university or in your later career. Reaching for a calculator to add up 1+1 is possible but not professionally sustainable for an engineer or scientist (or one might say in our educated society at all!), and that is why you learnt to do that yourself at primary school. Likewise, in your degree at UNSW, we're teaching you skills that are needed for your professional life, which is a combination of some things that AI could feasibly do for you and lots of things that the AI tools cannot do for you â€" if we were only teaching you things that AI could do, your degree would be worthless and you wouldn't have a job in 5 years. You can therefore see that from an academic standards perspective, the output from an AI tool will be below the minimum standards expected for a course, even if you were to submit it (which you should not!). Your ability to complete later assessments where AI cannot help you will also be compromised if you've relied upon AI earlier.

It is also worth remembering what these AI tools such as ChatGPT are: they are only statistical models about how groups of words frequently appear. These AI based tools are not smart, they don't know anything other than how words are often grouped, and they most certainly do not understand any of the content from any of your courses. Some consequences of their word-statistics and non-scientific basis are:

- They generate confident-sounding text that is completely wrong from a technical point of view.
- The text mangles jargon very badly.
- The output gets causality backwards and so often argues completely the wrong thing.
- The output will include unit conversions but it will often get them wrong.
- They generate text that is often very generic, bland, lacking on detail, and not actually very helpful.

The output is often just a collection of loosely related factual-sounding sentences that don't answer the question that was actually asked.

In summary, the AI tools generate text output that is superficially reasonable, very confident sounding, and very often wrong. We are setting an expectation that our graduates should out-perform AI, meaning that it is a tool of limited academic use in your degree.

Resources for Students

See Student Resources from the course site menu.

Although there is no official textbook for the course, but here are some of useful books:

- Python Data Science Handbook: Essential Tools for Working with Data, 2nd edition. By Jake Vanderplas.
- Python for Data Analysis, Wes McKinney
- RESTful Web Clients: Enabling Reuse Through Hypermedia, By Mike Amundsen
- Mastering Machine Learning with Scikit-Learn, Second Edition. Gavin Hackeling

Course Evaluation and Development

This course is evaluated each session using the myExperience system.