Informatics 2A 2014–15

Lecture 1

Introduction and Course Administration

Alex Simpson
John Longley

16th September 2014

Subject of the course

The full title of the course is:

Informatics 2A: Processing Formal and Natural Languages

The course is about ways of describing, specifying and processing both computer languages and human languages.

Remarkably, many important ideas and methods are common to both of these — though there are also major differences.

Lecture 2 will give a overview and roadmap of the intellectual content of the course.

Course staff

Lecturers:

- Alex Simpson (als@inf.ed.ac.uk)
  Office hour: Wednesdays 10:00–11:00 (from Wk 3), IF 5.25

- John Longley (jrl@inf.ed.ac.uk)
  Office hour: Wednesdays 12:00–13:00 (from Wk 3), IF 5.12

Inf2 Year Organiser:

- Sharon Goldwater (sgwater@inf.ed.ac.uk)

Course Secretary:

- Kendal Reid, ITO (ito@inf.ed.ac.uk, AT 4.02)

Communication mechanisms

Course website: `http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/courses/inf2a/`
This is the main anchor point for all course information and material. Bookmark it now!

Email list: `inf2a-students@inf.ed.ac.uk`
Important administrative announcements (e.g. changes to deadlines) will be posted here.

Discussion forum: for technical aspects of course material.

Course reps: `ug2-reps@inf.ed.ac.uk`
For feedback from you to course staff.

It is your responsibility to check (especially) your email and the website and to stay in touch with what's going on.

Lectures

Lectures are on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons.

- Tuesdays & Fridays: 16:10–17:00, Appleton Tower, LT 1.
- Thursdays: 17:10–18:00, Appleton Tower, LT 2.

The last lecture is a revision lecture on Thursday of Week 11 (27 November).

Lectures will be videoed with videos linked from the webpage.

Lecture materials

The website contains links to the slides for each lecture.

These links will become live immediately after (or just before) the lecture takes place.

For those who wish to see the material in advance (e.g., students with an adjustment schedule), last year's slides are available via a link at the top of the page.

If you want printed copies of lecture slides, please print them off yourself if you need them, bearing in mind the cost to the planet. (E.g., use the 4up option.)

Tutorials

Tutorials for Inf2a start in Week 3 (beginning Monday 29 Sept). So Tutorial n happens in Week $n + 2$.

Each tutorial will cover material from the previous week's lectures. A *tutorial sheet*, consisting of problems to be discussed in Tutorial n, will be released (on the course website) before the Friday lecture of Week $n + 1$.

You should have today received an email from Kendal Reid via inf2a-students, advertising the preliminary allocation of students to tutor groups. If you can't make the time of your allocated group, please email Kendal suggesting some groups you *could* manage. Or if you wish to change tutor groups for any other reason, please let Kendal know.

N.B. If you miss two tutorials in a row, your PT will be notified and you will be chased up!

Python and Lab Sessions

In parallel with the lecture material, you are also expected to pick up a new programming language (Python) and to learn to use the associated Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK). These skills will be needed for the second assessed course assignment.

This can be done with the help of worksheets, available via the website, which you can work through at the Lab Session to which you have been assigned (or a different one, or on your own).

The purposes of the lab sessions are: to assist you learning Python/NLTK; assistance with coursework; obtaining additional feedback on coursework 1. Lab Demonstrators will be on hand at these sessions to offer help.

Lab sessions start in Week 3.

Assessed coursework

There will be two assessed coursework assignments, carrying equal weight. Each is worth 12.5% of the course mark.

Assignment 1: issued Tue 14 Oct, due in Tue 28 Oct, 4pm
Assignment 2: issued Fri 7 Nov, due in Fri 28 Nov, 4pm

Both assignments will be computer-based, and are to be submitted online from DICE machines. Assignment 1 is in Java and Assignment 2 is in Python.

Marked assignments will be available for collection by students 2 weeks after the submission deadline.

All assessed work must be your own individual work.

Inf2A exam

The main exam takes place in December 2014.
The resit is in August 2015.

Exam dates are set by Student Administration, not us. We'll let you know once they are announced.

The exam is pen-and-paper, and lasts 2 hours. It consists of:

- 5 compulsory short questions (10% each), and
- a choice of 2 out of 3 longer questions (25% each).

The total 100% contributes 75% to the course mark.

Recommended reading

The following textbook is highly recommended for this course and many other Natural Language courses in later years:

- D. Jurafsky and J. Martin, Speech and Language Processing (2nd edition), Prentice-Hall, 2009.

For the formal language side, a comprehensive text is:

- D. Kozen, Automata and Computability, Springer, 2000.

Lectures will stick closely to the terminology and notation of these texts. Another useful resource is:

- S. Bird, E. Klein and E. Loper, Natural Language Processing with Python, O'Reilly, 2009. Available online at `http://www.nltk.org/book`

Formative feedback

Assessed coursework provides you with summative feedback on the course.

Formative feedback is feedback on non-assessed parts of the course. This helps your understanding and serves as *feedforward* towards future assessed components (e.g., the exam). Formative feedback provided in Inf2A includes:

- Self-assessment and challenge questions in lectures.
- Feedback from tutors in tutorials.
- Feedback from demonstrators in lab sessions.
- Feedback from lecturers at drop-in office hours.

Needing help?

- If you are suffering from personal circumstances that may be adversely affecting your work, contact your PT.
- If you wish to apply for a coursework deadline extension (for a good reason!), contact the Informatics Teaching Organization, *not* the lecturers. Except in exceptional circumstances, extensions will only be granted if applied for *prior to* the coursework deadline.
- If you are having difficulties understanding the course material, possible sources of help are: your class mates, the discussion forum, your tutor, the course teaching assistants, the lecturers.
- If you wish to anonymously raise any issue about the course material or delivery, contact `ug2-reps@inf.ed.ac.uk`

Enjoy the course!

Lecture 2 on Thursday: Overview and roadmap of the intellectual content of the course (JL).

Any questions?