

Course Syllabus



Course Description

This half semester course will provide hands-on experience with popular microscopic computational materials science and engineering software through project-based learning in electronic structure calculation (Quantum Espresso), molecular simulation (LAMMPS), and using a Quantum Computer. Students will also develop proficiency in Colab (Python) and AI (Gemini) for setting up their simulations. The course will prioritize the physical principles underlying the software to confer an understanding of their applicability and limitations, and hands-on immersive praxis to give students the confidence and expertise to independently use these tools. Aluminum and molecular hydrogen will serve as a pervasive subject of study to expose students to its analysis at different levels of theory in the Computational Materials Science and Engineering (CMSE) paradigm, and illustrate couplings between these different levels of theory and computation in the spirit of ICME (Integrated Computational Materials Engineering).

Schedule:

Lecture: Tues/Thurs 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm;

Lab: Tues/Thurs 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm; L440 Digital Computing Lab;

Office hours: Andre Schleife (Tues/Thurs, 3.30 – 4.00 pm CST)

Prerequisites

Basic familiarity with MATLAB or Python expected; Linux/bash familiarity useful but not required.

Required Text

None.

Alternative Texts

C. Newham (O'Reilly Media, Inc., 2009) Integrated Computational Materials Engineering (ICME) for Metals: Using Multiscale Modeling to Invigorate Engineering Design with Science, M. F. Horstemeyer (Wiley, 2012)

Quantum-Espresso Manual: <http://www.quantum-espresso.org/resources/users-manual> 
(<http://www.quantum-espresso.org/resources/users-manual>)

LAMMPS Manual: <http://lammps.sandia.gov/doc/Manual.html> 

(<http://lammps.sandia.gov/doc/Manual.html>)

IBM Qiskit Manual: <https://quantum.cloud.ibm.com/docs/en/guides> 

(<https://quantum.cloud.ibm.com/docs/en/guides>)

Projects

The primary assessment vehicles are homework projects associated with each module (Quantum Espresso, LAMMPS, Qiskit). Students will be provided a detailed brief describing the specific goals and deliverables for each project, and are expected to perform analyses using the software package and produce a short report detailing their findings. Students will submit the project deliverables by the deadline stated in the MSE 404MIC Canvas. The only format that will be accepted for submission is a single, properly ordered PDF, in portrait format; your name must be printed legibly on the top of the first page and you must submit through the link on the MSE 404MIC Canvas. The report will be graded. Late submissions will not be accepted, but students with legitimate excuses should contact Prof. Schleife well before the due date. If you cannot fully complete the project, you should submit the incomplete report, so you can get partial credit.

Term Project

Computational materials science and engineering is a field with increasing importance in research and industry; to provide experience with applying the tools of computational modeling to materials science and engineering, students will design, and perform a short individual research project on a student-defined topic in computational materials science and engineering (CMSE) or integrated computational materials engineering (ICME). Projects must be computational in nature and address the microscale, but need not use one of the tools covered in the course.

Topic:

Prof. Schleife will be available to discuss and advise topic selection. Early topic identification is encouraged. Submissions should take the form of a one-sentence topic title and short (maximum 300 word) abstract. Make sure that your abstract provides direct and explicit answers to these questions

(<https://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/heilmeier-catechism>  (<https://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/heilmeier-catechism>)):

- What are you trying to do? Articulate your objectives using absolutely no jargon.
- How is it done today, and what are the limits of current practice?
- What is new in your approach and why do you think it will be successful?
- Who cares? If you are successful, what difference will it make?
- What are the risks?
- How many hours of pure simulation time will it take?

- How long will data analysis take?
- What are the mid-term and final “exams”/“criteria” to check for success?

Each of these eight bullet points, and the project title, are worth one point if addressed and zero points if not addressed in your abstract. In addition, you will receive feedback on the content and tips for the implementation, which does not affect whether you will or won't be awarded these points.

Report:

Written reports are assigned to practice the communication of engineering concepts in writing. Term project reports should be 5-8 pages in length (excl. figures and bibliography; 12-pt font, 1-inch margins, single-spaced). Reports should be neat and organized, hand-written or typed. Tables and graphical representations of results should be generated using some software program such as Python, Excel, TecPlot, MatLab, etc., rather than being hand-drawn. Reports should be structured using the following sections: Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion, Conclusions, Bibliography. Prof. Schleife will be available to discuss and advise term projects and production of the report. Term projects will be graded on (i) design of computational materials research project (20 %), (ii) appropriate and competent use of computational tools (50 %), and (iii) clarity of the report (30 %). It is imperative to start work sufficiently early to perform the project and compose the report. You must submit the report through the link on the MSE 404MIC Canvas. Late submissions will not be accepted, but students with legitimate excuses should contact Prof. Schleife well before the due date. If you cannot fully complete the project, still submit the incomplete report, so you can get partial credit.

Disability-Related Accommodations

To obtain disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the course instructor and the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES, <http://disability.illinois.edu>) as soon as possible, and no later than Sep. 9. To contact DRES, you may visit 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign, call 333-4603, e-mail disability or go to <https://www.disability.illinois.edu>. If you are concerned you have a disability-related condition that is impacting your academic progress, there are academic screening appointments available that can help diagnosis a previously undiagnosed disability. You may access these by visiting the DRES website and selecting “Request an Academic Screening” at the bottom of the page.

Grading

Participation and Quizzes: 25%

Project 1 (Density Functional Theory): 15 %

Project 2 (Molecular Dynamics): 15 %

Project 3 (Quantum Computer): 15 %

Term Project Abstract: 10 %

Term Project: 20 %

Final Grade

A+	98
A	95
A-	92.5
B+	87.5
B	85
B-	80
C+	77.5
C	75
C-	66.7
D+	58.3
D	50
D-	30
F	<30

Class attendance

The class sessions on Tue and Thur will be split between (i) formal lectures covering the theoretical and algorithmic underpinnings of the software, (ii) hands-on introduction to the software packages, and (iii) in-class time to work on projects under supervision of the instructor. Attendance to these classes will be assessed through Canvas assignments. Lectures will be recorded and subsequently made available for watching by anyone unable to attend the live lecture. Either attending the live lecture or watching the recording immediately afterwards is mandatory and will help to understand the material and to use the software

Lab attendance

The purpose of the lab sessions is to provide students with a dedicated time to work on homework projects. Lab attendance is optional, the instructor will not be present and no lectures will be delivered, but this time may be used for make-up lectures.

Projects

Term Project and Abstract

Plagiarism

Students are responsible for producing their answers and project reports. Collaborative interaction in small groups is encouraged, but each student must perform all calculations themselves, and write their own reports. In particular, each student is required to produce their own figures and write their own text. This means that exact copies will be considered plagiarism and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Verified incidents will result in formal academic sanctions. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the definition of and penalties for plagiarism in Section I-401 of the UIUC Student Code. Note that plagiarism includes “copying another student’s paper or working with another person when both submit similar papers without authorization to satisfy an individual assignment”.

Obtaining help

The main two ways to obtain help are online on Canvas for this course or during class or office hours. You can also speak with your professor briefly after lecture. Please do not send emails for routine help or absences. In cases of emergencies related to exams (e.g., illness) you should email your professor at the earliest possible opportunity.

Absences

Excused Absence Request Form: <https://forms.illinois.edu/sec/1175532>
(<https://forms.illinois.edu/sec/1175532>)

Excuses from assessments will only be given in the following circumstances: (a) Illness. (b) Personal crisis (e.g., car accident, required court appearance, death of a close relative). (c) Required attendance at an official UIUC activity (e.g., varsity athletics, band concert). 2. In all cases you must complete the online Excused Absence Request Form and upload a scan of the official written documentation explaining your absence. 3. In cases (a) or (b) an official excuse letter from the Dean on Duty must be submitted via the online form within 2 weeks of the due date of the missed assessment, but no later than Oct 19. In cases of extended or unusual illness, late submission of excuse documentation will be considered. See Student Assistance Center. 4. In case (c) an official letter from the designated university official must be submitted via the online form at least one week prior to the due date of the missed assessment. 5. Notwithstanding the above, at the professor’s discretion you may be required to make up any excused work or attend substitute instruction or assessment.

Emergency Response Recommendations

Emergency response recommendations can be found at the following website:

<http://police.illinois.edu/emergency-preparedness/> (<http://police.illinois.edu/emergency-preparedness/>)

I encourage you to review this website and the campus building floor plans website within the first 10 days of class: <http://police.illinois.edu/emergency-preparedness/building-emergency-action-plans/> (<http://police.illinois.edu/emergency-preparedness/building-emergency-action-plans/>)

Sexual Misconduct Reporting Obligation

The University of Illinois is committed to combating sexual misconduct. Faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct to the University's Title IX Office. In turn, an individual with the Title IX Office will provide information about rights and options, including accommodations, support services, the campus disciplinary process, and law enforcement options. A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors, confidential advisors, and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: <http://wecare.illinois.edu/resources/students/#confidential> (<http://wecare.illinois.edu/resources/students/#confidential>)

Academic Integrity

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Student Code should also be considered as a part of this syllabus. Students should pay particular attention to Article 1, Part 4: Academic Integrity. Read the Code at the following URL: <http://studentcode.illinois.edu/> (<http://studentcode.illinois.edu/>) Academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade. Every student is expected to review and abide by the Academic Integrity Policy: <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-401/> (<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-401/>) Ignorance is not an excuse for any academic dishonesty. It is your responsibility to read this policy to avoid any misunderstanding. Do not hesitate to ask the instructor(s) if you are ever in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or any other breach of academic integrity.

Religious Observances

Illinois law requires the University to reasonably accommodate its students' religious beliefs, observances, and practices in regard to admissions, class attendance, and the scheduling of examinations and work requirements. You should examine this syllabus at the beginning of the semester for potential conflicts between course deadlines and any of your religious observances. If a conflict exists, you should notify your instructor of the conflict and follow the procedure at <https://odos.illinois.edu/communityof-care/resources/students/religious-observances/> (<https://odos.illinois.edu/communityof-care/resources/students/religious-observances/>) to request appropriate accommodations. This should be done in the first two weeks of classes.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Any student who has suppressed their directory information pursuant to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) should self-identify to the instructor to ensure protection of the privacy of their attendance in this course. See <https://registrar.illinois.edu/academicrecords/ferpa/> (<https://registrar.illinois.edu/academicrecords/ferpa/>) for more information on FERPA.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Tue Aug 25, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 8/25</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1753401)	due by 5pm
Thu Aug 27, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 8/27</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1753406)	due by 5pm
Fri Aug 28, 2026	 <u>Two Sentences About your Project</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756912)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Sep 1, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 9/1</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756782)	due by 5pm
Thu Sep 3, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 9/3</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756785)	due by 5pm
Fri Sep 4, 2026	 <u>Your Abstract Draft</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756921)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Sep 8, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 9/8</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756789)	due by 5pm
Thu Sep 10, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 9/10</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756792)	due by 5pm
Fri Sep 11, 2026	 <u>Your Final Abstract</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756929)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Sep 15, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 9/15</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756796)	due by 5pm
Thu Sep 17, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 9/17</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756799)	due by 5pm

Date	Details	Due
Fri Sep 18, 2026	 <u>First Project Check In</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756941)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Sep 22, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 9/22</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756806)	due by 5pm
Thu Sep 24, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 9/24</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756807)	due by 5pm
Tue Sep 29, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 9/29</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756815)	due by 5pm
Thu Oct 1, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 10/1</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756825)	due by 5pm
Fri Oct 2, 2026	 <u>Second Project Check In</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756946)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Oct 6, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 10/6</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756831)	due by 5pm
Thu Oct 8, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 10/8</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756833)	due by 5pm
Tue Oct 13, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 10/13</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756834)	due by 5pm
Thu Oct 15, 2026	 <u>Class Attendance 10/15</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756835)	due by 5pm
Fri Oct 16, 2026	 <u>Final Project</u> (https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/74812/assignments/1756960)	due by 11:59pm