

**THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER**

**ASEN 5007: Introduction to Finite Element Methods  
Spring 2026**

**SYLLABUS**

**Instructor:** Assistant Professor Maryam Shakiba

**Teaching Fellow:** Aditya Singh

**Lecture:** Time: Monday/Wednesday, 2:30 pm – 3:45 pm  
Location: AERO N250

**Office Hours:** Maryam Shakiba:

Aditya Singh:

**Web Page:** Canvas ([canvas.colorado.edu](https://canvas.colorado.edu))

**Course Objective:**

Introduces finite element methods used for solving linear problems in structural and continuum mechanics. Covers modeling, mathematical formulation, and computer implementation.

**Prerequisites:**

This class requires an undergraduate course in matrix algebra. Students should also have experience with vector calculus and differential equations, and it is highly recommended that students have a working knowledge of MATLAB.

**Required Textbooks:**

There are no required textbooks for this class. Instead, notes will be released on a periodic basis to students through the course website.

**Reference Textbook:**

*The Finite Element Method: Linear Static and Dynamic Finite Element Analysis*, Hughes, Dover, First Edition, 2000.

**Topics:**

1. History of Finite Element Analysis
2. Finite Element Analysis of a One-Dimensional Model Problem
3. Finite Element Analysis of Two-Dimensional Steady Heat Conduction
4. Primal Finite Element Analysis of Plane Strain Linear Elastostatics
5. Mixed Finite Element Analysis of Plane Strain Linear Elastostatics

**Class Format:**

The class meets twice a week for an hour and fifteen minutes of formal lecture and discussion.

**Grading:**

15% Homework Assignments  
15% Concept Quizzes  
20% Mini-Project  
20% Midterm Exam  
30% Final Exam

Grades will be posted to the class website on Canvas.

The 1 homework assignment + Concept Quiz with the lowest score will be dropped. If the score of the midterm exams is lower than the score of the final exam, the midterm is dropped, and the weighting of the final is increased from 30% to 50%.

No make-up homework assignments and make-up exams will be offered. If a student does not turn in a homework assignment or quizzes (in time) or does not take an exam, a zero score will be assigned. Please, see policy on grading homework assignments and exams. A make-up final will be offered if the student provides a valid justification for missing the final.

**Homework Assignments:**

There will be three homework assignments covering both theory and implementation:

- Assignment 1: One-Dimensional Finite Element Analysis  
Assigned: 01-26, Due: 02-16 (Start of Class)
- Assignment 2: Finite Element Analysis of Steady Heat Conduction  
Assigned: 3-09, Due: 04-06 (Start of Class)
- Assignment 3: Primal Finite Element Analysis of Plane Strain Linear Elastostatics  
Assigned: 04-06, Due: 04-22 (Start of Class)

Homework assignments are to be turned in through the course website by the start of class on their due date. Students should make an effort to turn in assignments that are organized, professional looking, and legible. Homework assignments will be graded on a completion basis only, and solutions will be made available so students can check the correctness of their work.

Collaboration is permitted on homework assignments. This means students may discuss the means and methods for solving problems and even compare answers, but students are not free to copy

someone else's homework assignment. The work that a student turns in must be their own – copying is not allowed and will not be tolerated. Copying material from any resource (including code from another student, online, or from Generative AI) and submitting it as one's own is considered plagiarism and is an Honor Code violation. Students who are caught copying material will receive a zero grade for the assignment and will be reported for an "Honor Code Violation" for additional punitive action.

### **Concept Quizzes:**

There will be five concept quizzes throughout the semester:

Quiz 1: Strong, Weak, Minimization, and Variational Forms

Released: 01-21, Due: 01-26

Quiz 2: One-Dimensional Finite Element Analysis

Released: 02-04, Due: 02-09

Quiz 3: One-Dimensional Finite Element Implementation

Released: 02-18, Due: 02-23

Quiz 4: Finite Element Analysis of Steady Heat Conduction

Released: 03-18, Due: 03-30

Quiz 5: Mixed Finite Element Analysis of Plane Strain Linear Elastostatics

Released: 04-20, Due: 04-24

The quizzes are intended to help students identify, practice, and comprehend important finite element concepts. The quizzes will be administered as Canvas quizzes, and each quiz will be released on a Wednesday immediately following lecture and due by the start of the following lecture. Students will have fifteen minutes to complete each quiz, and students will be able to take the quizzes as many times as they like before they are due.

### **Mini-Project:**

Students will use MATLAB to implement a finite element method for a one-dimensional model problem in the first half of the semester:

Mini-Project: Computer Implementation of a One-Dimensional Finite Element Code

Assigned: 02-16, Due: 03-23 (Start of Class)

In this mini-project, students will not only create a MATLAB code to solve the given model problem using a finite element method, they will also create a MATLAB post-processing scheme to visualize the resulting solution field and construct a suitable verification test to confirm their code works as intended.

The mini-project is to be turned in through the course website by the start of class on its due date. Submissions should be organized and professional looking. Code should be commented. A readme should be included indicating how to run a student's code. The mini-project will be graded on both a completion basis and a correctness basis.

Collaboration is permitted on the mini-project. This means students may discuss the means and methods for solving problems and even compare answers, but students are not free to copy someone

else's code. MOSS (Measure Of Software Similarity) will be used to detect potential cases of plagiarism. Students who are caught copying code (or providing their code to another) will receive an "F" for the course and reported to the Dean's office for further punitive action.

### **Midterm Exam:**

There will be a midterm exam on March 11, 2026. This midterm exam will test material associated with "Finite Element Analysis of a One-Dimensional Model Problem". It will also test material associated with Homework Assignment 1, and Concept Quizzes 1-3.

The midterm exam will consist of a closed-book conceptual portion and an open-book applied portion. The conceptual portion will test a student's understanding of basic finite element concepts, while the applied portion will test a student's understanding of applied finite element concepts. Students will have seventy five minutes to complete the midterm exam. Online students will have 24 hours to take the exam from the start of the in-person exam, and their exam must be proctored.

Collaboration on the midterm exam will not be tolerated. Students who are caught in these activities will receive an "F" for the course and reported to the Dean's office for further punitive action. Students are free to ask the instructor any clarification questions.

### **Final Exam:**

There will be a final exam that will take place during Finals Week (date and time still to be set). The final exam will test all material associated with the course. In particular, it will test material associated with Homework Assignments 1-3, Concept Quizzes 1-5, the Mini-Project, and the Midterm Exam. However, the final exam will emphasize material covered after "Finite Element Analysis of a One-Dimensional Model Problem".

Like the midterm exam, the final exam will consist of a closed-book conceptual portion and an open-book applied portion. Students will have two and a half hours to complete the final exam. Online students will have 24 hours to take the exam from the start of the in-person exam, and their exam must be proctored.

### **MATLAB, Gmsh, and Paraview:**

The homework assignments and mini-project will make heavy use of MATLAB, Gmsh, and Paraview. Each of these software packages is available for Windows, MacOS, and Linux. CU Boulder has a campus site license for MATLAB. To download MATLAB, visit:

<https://oit.colorado.edu/software-hardware/software-downloads-and-licensing/matlab#download>

Gmsh is freely available to download at:

<https://gmsh.info>

Paraview is freely available to download at:

<https://www.paraview.org>

It is recommended that students download these packages as soon as possible.

### **Slack:**

A Slack channel has been created to foster communication. Students will receive an e-mail invitation to join this channel. Students can use Slack to ask questions regarding lecture material, homework assignments, concept quizzes, the mini-project, and the midterm and final exams. Slack is the instructor's preferred means of communication, and he will make every effort to respond to Slack messages within 24 hours.

### **Late Assignment and Missed Exam Policy:**

Generally speaking, late assignment submissions will not be accepted, and there will be no make-up quizzes or exams. That being said, please contact the instructor if you are unable to submit an assignment or take a quiz or exam due to illness, technical issues, or other challenging extenuating circumstances. Reasonable accommodations will be made where appropriate provided you contact the instructor before the assignment due date or quiz or exam date.

### **Honor Code:**

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code may include but are not limited to: plagiarism (including use of paper writing services or technology [such as essay bots]), cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. Understanding the course's syllabus is a vital part in adhering to the Honor Code.

All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution: [StudentConduct@colorado.edu](mailto:StudentConduct@colorado.edu). Students found responsible for violating the [Honor Code](#) will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Visit [Honor Code](#) for more information on the academic integrity policy.

### **Accommodation for Disabilities, Temporal Medical Conditions, and Medical Isolation:**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [DSinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:DSinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

Students should expect to receive accommodations for a timed assessment (e.g., exam) only if their faculty instructor(s) receive the student's accommodations letter at least 5 business days before the assessment, as a departmental policy, in order to facilitate administering the assessment.

If you have a temporary illness, injury or required medical isolation for which you require adjustment, please contact the instructional team as early as possible.

### **Accommodation for Religious Obligations:**

Campus policy requires faculty to provide reasonable accommodations for students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please communicate the need for a religious accommodation in a timely manner.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

### **Preferred Student Names and Pronouns:**

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

### **Classroom Behavior:**

Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote, or online. Failure to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation, or political philosophy.

For more information, see the [classroom behavior policy](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

### **Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation:**

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits [protected-class](#) discrimination and harassment, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email [CUreport@colorado.edu](mailto:CUreport@colorado.edu). Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and [OIEC support resources](#) including confidential services can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors are required to inform OIEC when they are made aware of incidents related to these concerns regardless of when or where something occurred. This is to ensure that individuals impacted receive outreach from OIEC about their options and support

resources. To learn more about reporting and support for a variety of concerns, visit the [Don't Ignore It](#) page.

**Mental Health and Wellness:**

The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to the well-being of all students. If you are struggling with personal stressors, mental health or substance use concerns that are impacting academic or daily life, please contact [Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#) located in C4C or call (303) 492-2277, 24/7.

Free and unlimited telehealth is also available through [Academic Live Care](#). The [Academic Live Care](#) site also provides information about additional wellness services on campus that are available to students.

**Prepared by:** Maryam Shakiba

Date: January 14, 2026