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Using Podcasts in CTools

The course will provide video and audio podcasts to support the material in class. Podcasts are very important, particularly for beginning students, because they allow you to review the material over and over.

The audio podcasts are encoded using MP3, a common format that is playable by nearly all computers with the provided software. The MP3 audio files also can be downloaded to pretty much every portable media player and so you can carry them around if you like.

The video/screen podcasts are encoded in MPEG-4 using QuickTime.

I will cover several scenarios using several different software approaches and on a PC and Macintosh. Don't think of this as a series of steps that you must do from beginning to end; it is a series of alternatives to be chosen based on your situation. Before starting, make sure to skim through the entire document to see which scenario applies to you before starting any of these steps.

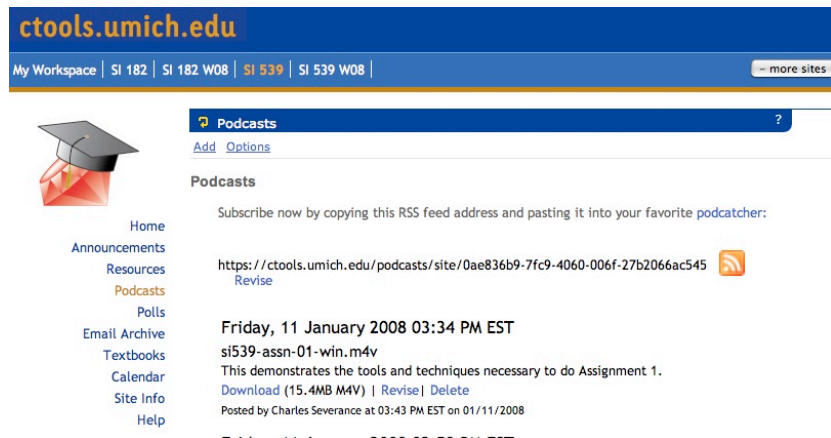
Finding the "Podcast Feed" Address

In some of the scenarios you need to use the "Podcast Feed" address. This address starts with "podcasts" and looks as follows:

<https://ctools.umich.edu/podcasts/site/0ae836b9-7fc9-4060-006f-27b2066ac545>

The Id at the end of the URL will be different for each course site that you are enrolled in.

Go into CTools, to the Course Site, and then into the Podcasts tool. You will be presented with a screen that looks like this:



The screenshot shows the CTools interface for a course site. At the top, the URL ctools.umich.edu is displayed. Below the navigation bar, there are links for "My Workspace", "SI 182", "SI 182 W08", "SI 539", "SI 539 W08", and a "more sites" button. The main content area is titled "Podcasts" and includes a search bar with a question mark. Below the title, there are links for "Add" and "Options". The page instructs users to subscribe by copying the RSS feed address: <https://ctools.umich.edu/podcasts/site/0ae836b9-7fc9-4060-006f-27b2066ac545>. A recent podcast entry is shown with the title "Friday, 11 January 2008 03:34 PM EST", the filename "si539-assn-01-win.m4v", and a description: "This demonstrates the tools and techniques necessary to do Assignment 1." The entry includes a "Download (15.4MB M4V)" link, "Revise" and "Delete" links, and a timestamp: "Posted by Charles Severance at 03:43 PM EST on 01/11/2008". A sidebar on the left contains navigation links: Home, Announcements, Resources, Podcasts, Polls, Email Archive, Textbooks, Calendar, Site Info, and Help.

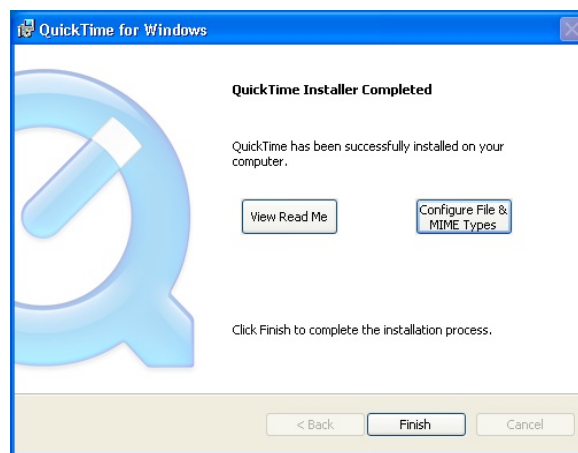
If you have a browser such as Firefox that knows how to subscribe to a podcast directly, you can use the little orange icon to subscribe to the feed in your browser - then your browser will retrieve the feed from time to time and you can retrieve new podcasts through your browser.

Installing QuickTime on a PC

If you have a PC, to play any podcast with video you will need the QuickTime media player that is free and comes from Apple. You can download this software at:

<http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/>

You can save the install package to your desktop and run it from your desktop. The install takes a few minutes. It is pretty straightforward. At the end you will see a screen that looks as follows:

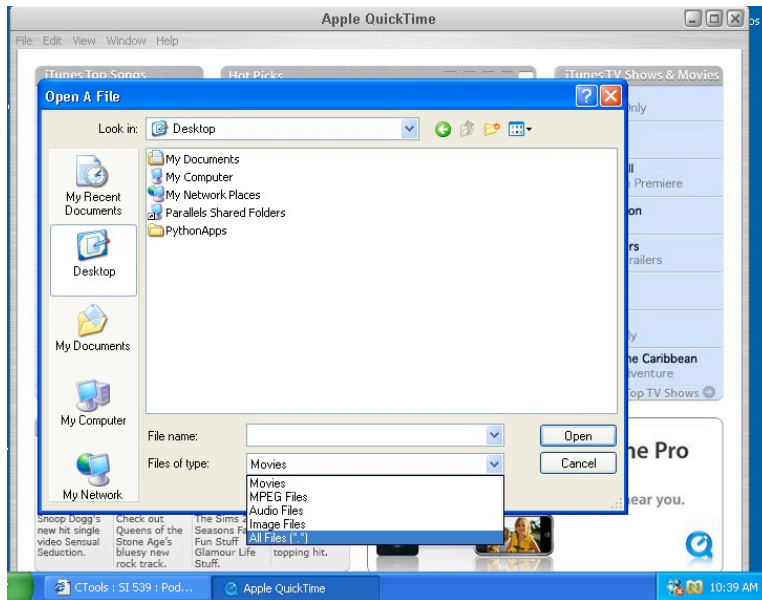


Just press "Finish" - the MIME Types that you need to have configured are already configured.

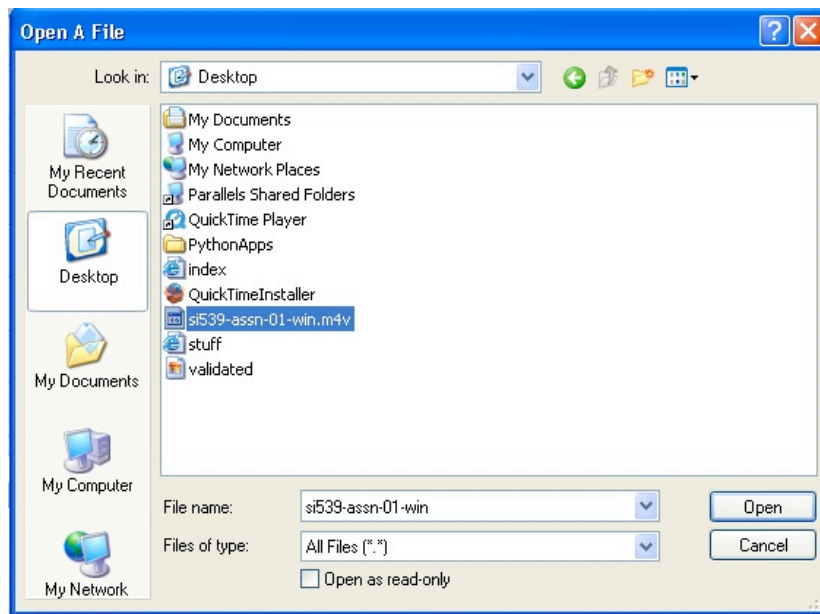
Viewing Podcasts with QuickTime on a PC

The simplest approach to viewing the podcasts on a PC is to install QuickTime as shown above and then use the CTools Podcast tool to download each podcast to your computer and then open the files in QuickTime.

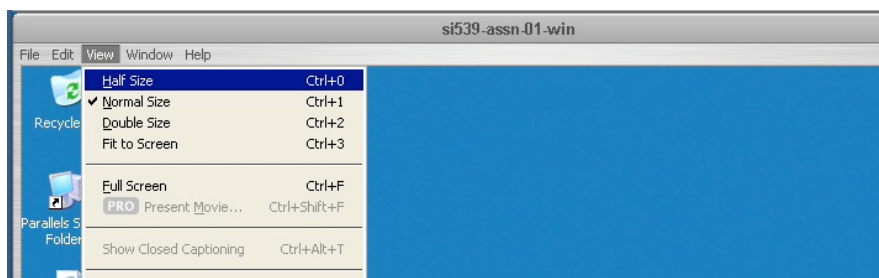
The safest way to view the video/screen podcasts is to so **Start -> All Programs -> QuickTime -> QuickTime Player** - once you are in QuickTime Player you can do **File -> Open -> Switch the "Files of Type" dropdown to "All Files"**



You should then see your file in the display and be able to open it.

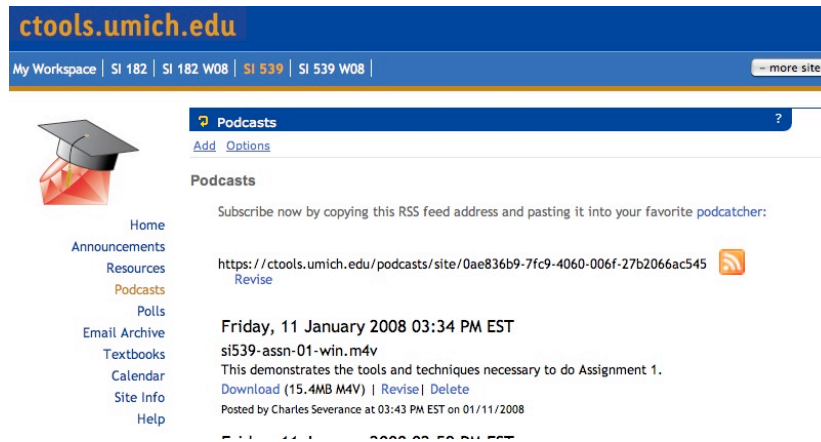


There is one more little trick because some of these screen casts are large - they may seem to take over your whole screen and be so large that you can't even grab the lower right corner to resize. The trick here is to go into **View -> Half Size** as shown below. This should make the window small enough so you can resize it however you like.



Viewing Podcasts on A Macintosh using QuickTime (not iTunes)

Go to the course web site and navigate to the Podcast tool and download the desired podcast(s) to your computer.

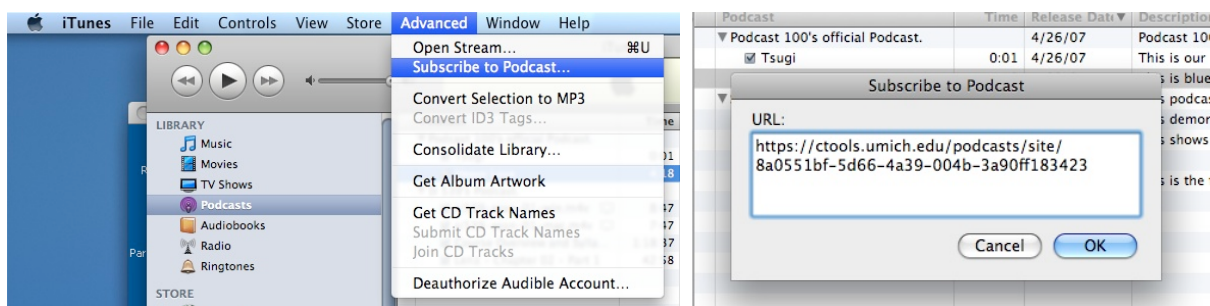


Run the QuickTime Player (**Applications -> QuickTime Player**) and open the downloaded file. If you simply click on the file - it will be opened in iTunes - you may not want to do this as it makes an extra copy of the file into your iTunes space. So I prefer to simply open it in QuickTime manually.

It is a good idea to keep QuickTime in your Apple dock bar so you can easily launch QuickTime or even drag the file onto the QuickTime icon in the toolbar.

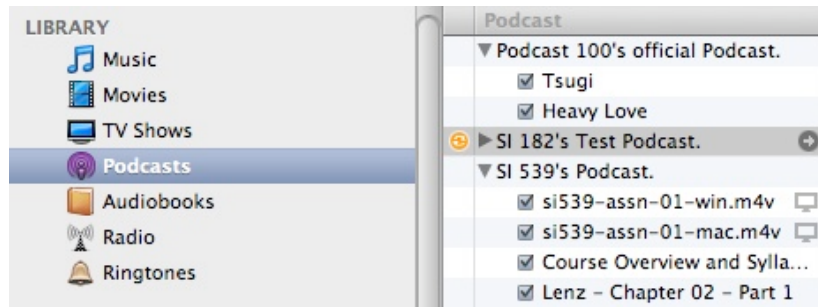
Using iTunes on A Macintosh

Mac systems already have iTunes installed - you can subscribe to the podcast by going to **Advanced -> Subscribe to Podcast** and going into the Podcast in CTools and pasting the subscribe URL into the dialog box.

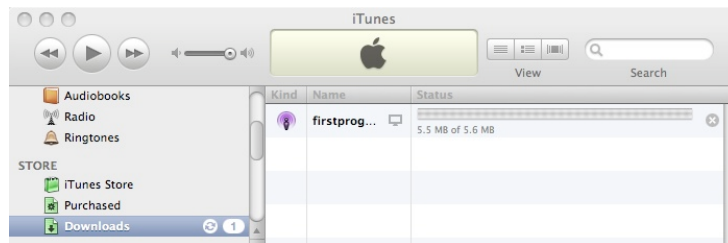


Remember that each course has a different podcast address.

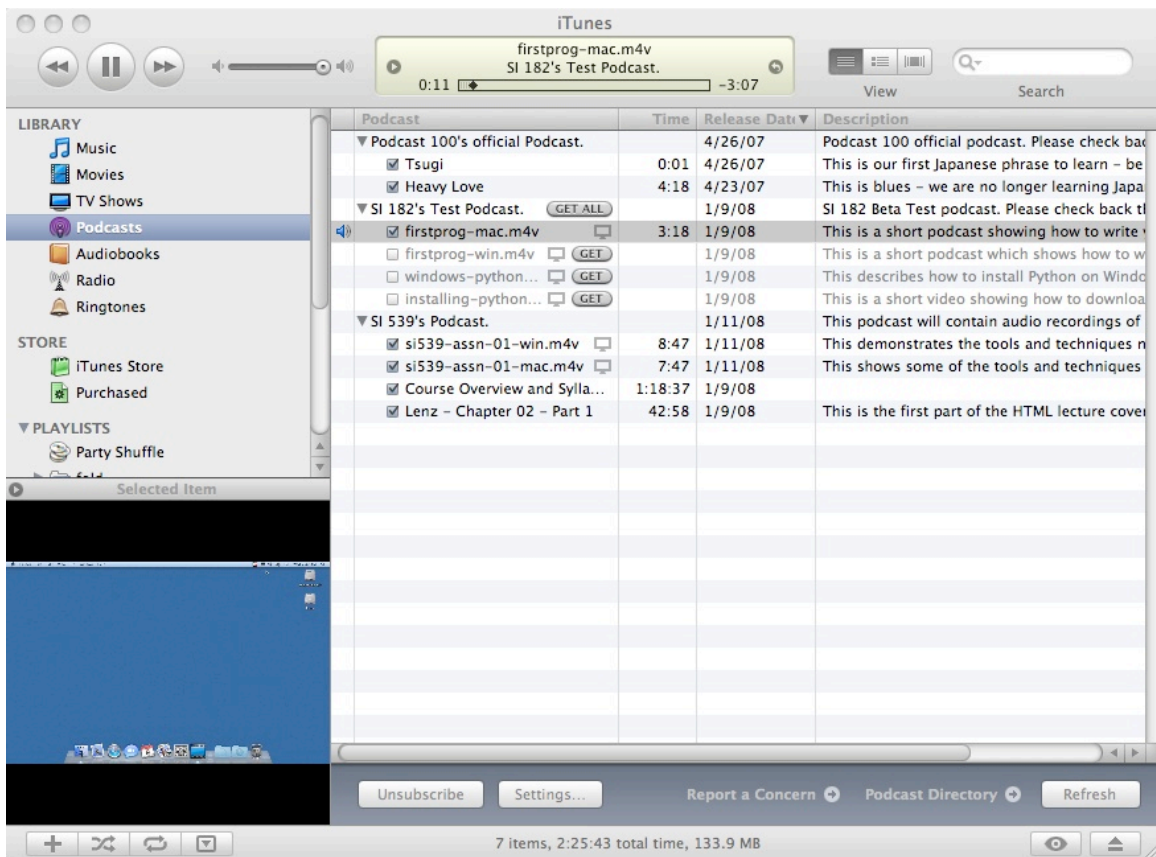
Once this is completed you should see a new podcast in the list of your podcasts. You will see a little spinning orange icon as the iTunes downloads the podcast.



You can monitor download progress under the **Downloads** section of iTunes:



The iTunes software downloads the feed and downloads the first entry in the feed. You can tell it to download the whole feed by pressing the **"Get All"** button near the feed. Another important button is the **Refresh** button in the lower right hand corner of the screen. This tells iTunes to re-check for new information in the feed.



When you click on a podcast to play it, it plays small in the lower right corner. To play the screencast at a more reasonable size, simply click once on the lower left hand window and iTunes will pop up a larger window.

Using iTunes on a Windows System (Advanced)

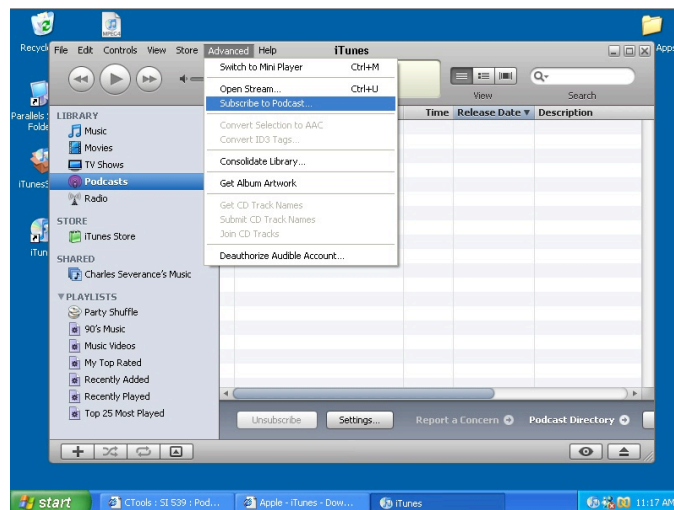
Apple's iTunes works pretty much the same in Windows as it does on a Macintosh. However unless you have an iPod that you use with your PC, there is **not** much benefit in downloading iTunes just to watch the podcasts for this course. Instead simply download and use QuickTime as described above.

If you want to play with the podcast features of iTunes you can download and install iTunes from this URL:

<http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/>

QuickTime is automatically installed when iTunes is installed, so you do not have to do a separate iTunes install.

Once iTunes is installed, simply subscribe to the podcast as shown in the iTunes on the Macintosh section above and it should work the same as on the Macintosh.



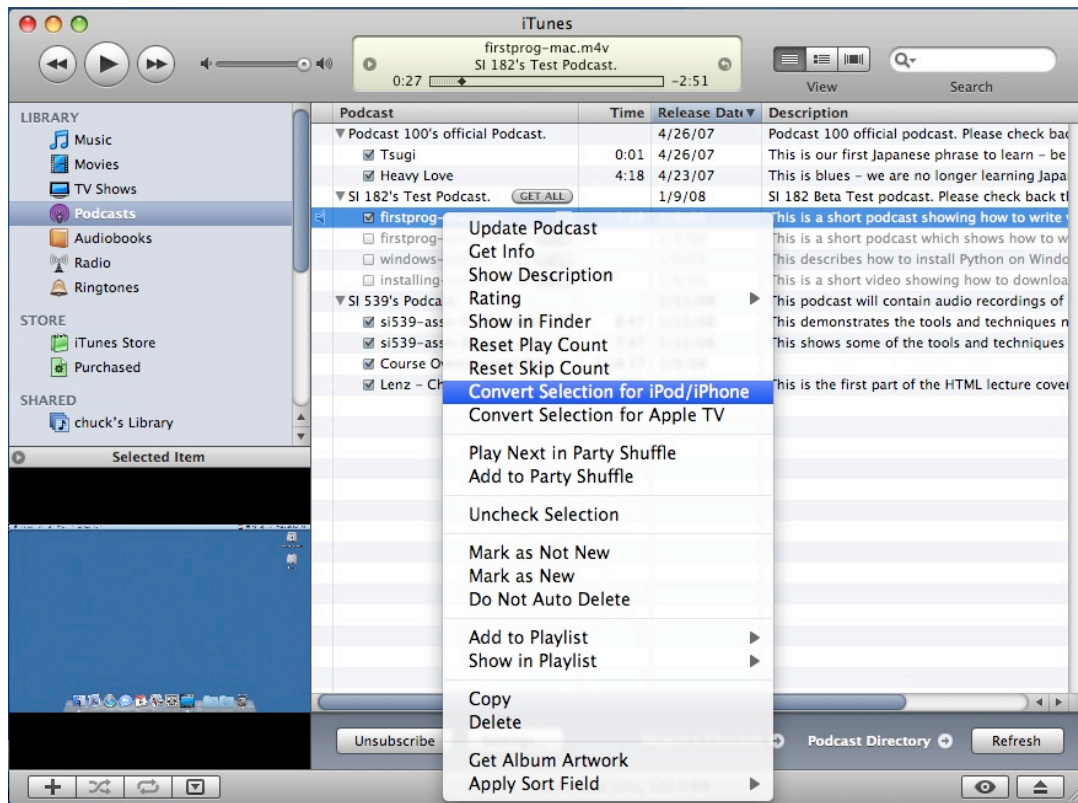
You can look at the Macintosh section for details on how to use iTunes with Podcasts.

Playing Video Podcasts on your Apple Media Player (Advanced)

This is a very advanced section and assumes that you have iTunes and an Apple iPod or iPhone.

You should be able to sync the audio directly to your iPod by telling iTunes to put the podcast onto the iPod. However the screencast video is not encoded properly for use on an iPod device because if it were encoded for the iPod, it would be too small and detail would be lost.

You can use iTunes to convert the screencast material for the iPod using iTunes. Go into the **Podcasts** section and CTRL-Click on the podcast you want to convert and select the option to **Convert Selection for iPhone/iPod**.



This will run for a few minutes depending on the size of the file. Once it is complete, the new file will appear in the **Movies** section of iTunes. It does not do the conversion in place. You then synchronize the file from Movies into your iPod/iPhone. And viola!

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