Computer Science 168
Course Policies
Spring 2012

IMPORTANT: Please read this document and sign below. Return it to a TA on hours or after class. You will not receive credit for any assignments until we have this on file.

Most CS courses at Brown allow virtually no cooperation or discussion between students. Many students and TAs feel that these policies actually stifle the learning process to some extent, and have spoken out in favor of a more liberal and honor-system-based policy that depends on the maturity of the students to know what work should be their own and what they can share with their peers.

So we're doing things a little differently in CS168, loosening up the policies in the hope of stimulating a better learning environment. Without going outside the basic Academic Code (see Basic Policy, "Principles of the Brown University Community," http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/academic_code/code.html), we are providing the following set of guidelines.

The basic premise is that you should do your own thinking, your own design, and your own coding. You're allowed to talk to other students about the content of the lectures and of the textbook and about high-level concepts in general. You may answer questions from other students about packages used for assignments, as long as the problem is a narrow one and not one that helps in the problem-solving process at large. Finally, you may assist another student with debugging if he or she is stuck with a specific low-level problem that has been impeding progress on the work.

Obviously, code should be shared liberally between group members on group assignments. We encourage you to practice pair-programming.

On a general level, what is not allowed is that you let yourself be led by another student to the extent that your task becomes significantly less challenging because of your discussion with him or her. More specifically, you should do your own problem solving, program design and decomposition, and design your own data structures. In conversation with other students, be sure not to venture into design and coding specifics and, especially, never sit down to discuss an assignment with someone else before you've analyzed the problem in depth on your own.

To be blunt, the most blatant violation that can occur is code-copying, and this absolutely will not be tolerated. We reserve the right to do a "wire-pull test" (i.e., ask you to explain your program). In addition, we will use highly reliable tools to compare your code to that of other students (including assignments from years past) for violations. In a similar vein, make sure that all of your coursework on the filesystem has the proper permissions so that other students cannot view and potentially copy your work. See `chmod(1)` or ask a consultant for help if you don't know how to go about this. Failure to do this can potentially be viewed as a violation of the academic code.

Similar guidelines hold for written homework assignments. You may work in groups in the process of solving the problems, but in all circumstances, the written answer must be your work. You must completely understand the answers you give, and we reserve the same "wire-pull test" rights as on programs.

We believe that this policy is explicit enough to guide your judgment and that we have not left you many gray areas. If you are ever in doubt about the legality of your actions, be sure to clear them with Professor Fonseca or a TA, even if only after the event has occurred. When we confront a student with a case of suspected violation, an answer of "I didn't know that this was wrong" is not likely to find much sympathy.

Again, note that you are expected always to approach a problem initially on your own and seriously attempt to find a solution. You are honor-bound to preserve your independence of thinking. And remember that the TAs should always be your first resource when you have a question or problem.

I have read and agree to abide by the above policy

_____
Name (please print)

_____
Signature

_____
Date

_____ ☐ (none)
CS Account