Introduction to GitHub

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Introduction

Why GitHub, Why Here

► GitHub helps to achieve reproducibility.

Reproducibility is key for credible empirical research.

Goals of This Session

Understand what is GitHub.

Learn how to use GitHub for this course.

► Get an idea of how you can use GitHub in your own research.

Some Background

► GitHub has long been the largest open source platforms for versioning. From 2018, it belongs to Microsoft.

► It has over 37M users.

Most of the software and packages that you use are on GitHub. Python is among them.

▶ We use GitHub to organize our work throughout the course.

Git and GitHub

▶ **Git** is a version control system, i.e. a way to keep track of the whole history of things you do on a file. It is useful to save, manage and edit all the different versions of your project.

▶ **GitHub** is a web service that allows to conveniently work with Git. It allows you to create your own directories, see projects of other people and collaborate with them. It is like a social network, but for developers.

▶ GitHub offers four different subscription plans. We will work with a free one, which means that *everybody* can see what we do. However, with an academic account, you can also create private repositories with unlimited co-authors.

What It Does And Does Not Do

No matter which subscription plan you choose, GitHub offers very limited storage space (you cannot upload files > 100MB). Therefore, it is **not** suitable for storing large files (e.g. datasets). **GitHub is not a substitute for a cloud**.

► GitHub is a platform where to upload mostly **source files** (e.g. .tex, .txt, .m, .R, .do, .py, .jl, .doc,...) and light pdf.

You can read more about Git and GitHub here and here.

GitHub Desktop

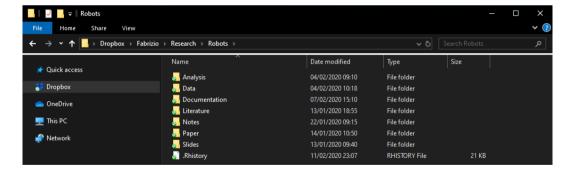
- ▶ In this course, we interact with GitHub mostly through the GitHub Desktop application.
- ▶ GitHub Desktop provides a simple yet powerful desktop interface to GitHub.
- You can download GitHub desktop here.
- ➤ You can also interact with GitHub using the Terminal (not covered in this class). Linux users can only do that via terminal. If you are a Linux user, read here.

Realistic Workflow

Suppose you are beginning a new project. If you use GitHub, you can

- 1. Create a GitHub project with your favourite folders (e.g. code, slides, paper,...).
- 2. Work on your files locally and then save different versions of them on GitHub. (No more: paper_v1, paper_v1.A, paper_v2.89.x7%,...).
- 3. Scroll through different versions of your files when you need. Collaborate with other people. (No more: paper_v1_myedition, paper_v1_youredition,...).

Combine Version Control and Cloud Services



I only push "Analysis" to GitHub. The rest is on the cloud.

First steps

Essential Vocabulary

- ▶ Repository are the containers of your project. They can include folders, files, images, etc. Each repository is made of one or more branches.
- ▶ The default **branch** of your repository is called *master*. One can copy the master into other branches. In this way, you can work on multiple versions of the same file in parallel.
- Commits are changes you make to files contained in branches.
- Commits are only displayed locally until you **push** them to a branch online.
- ➤ You can **merge** branches by opening **pull** requests.

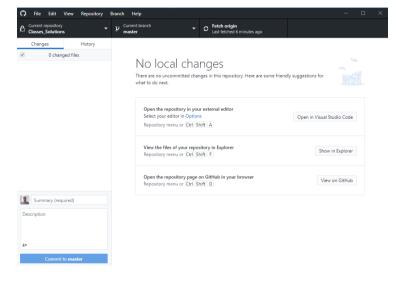
You can read more about these concepts here.

First Steps With GitHub Desktop

➤ You should already have (1) opened a GitHub account and (2) downloaded GitHub Desktop.

► If not, please do it now here and here.

Desktop Interface



Desktop Interface

Please take a few moments to familiarise with GitHub Desktop. It allows you to

Manage existing repositories, create versions, see history of changes, revert changes (this class).

Create and manage new repositories (homework).

Collaborate with other people (try it yourself).

This Course

Use GitHub Desktop For This Course

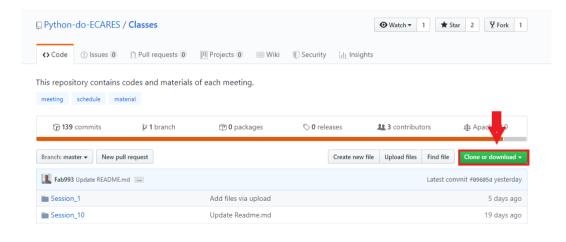
► This section shows how to clone a repository, how to create your own version and how to commit and push changes to it.

Please, refer to this procedure when working on your homework.

► Make sure to be familiar with each step. You will do this many times in the future.

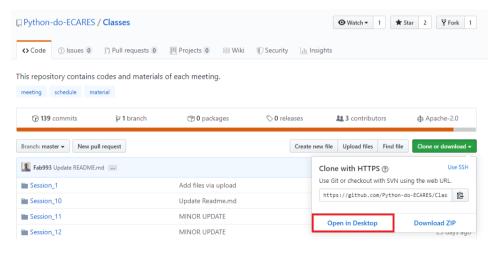
Step 1. Clone Repository

Go to the Classes repository on GitHub and click on the "Clone or download" button.



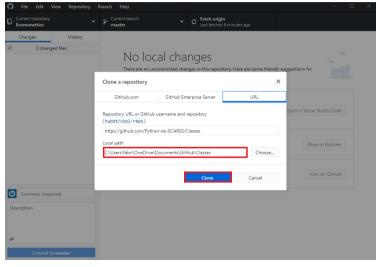
Step 1.A. Open Repository

Choose "Open in Desktop".

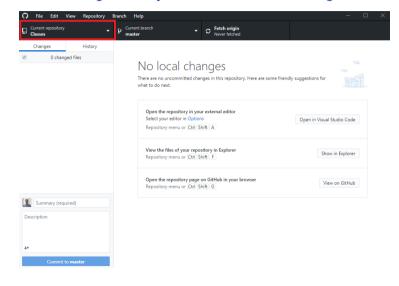


Step 1.B. Clone Repository

Check the local path where to clone the repository and hit "Clone".



Step 1.C. Visualize Repository on GitHub Desktop

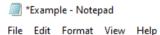


Step 2. Go to the Local Path on Your Computer



Step 2.A Modify a File

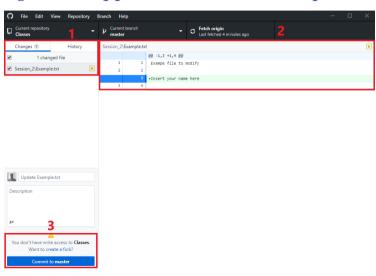
Open Example.txt, type in your name and save



Exampe file to modify

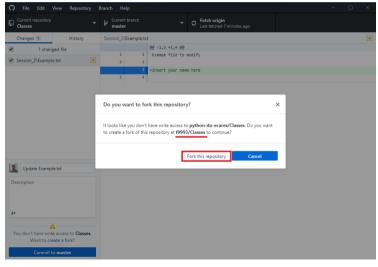
Insert your name here

Step 2.B Changes Will Appear on GitHub Desktop As Follows



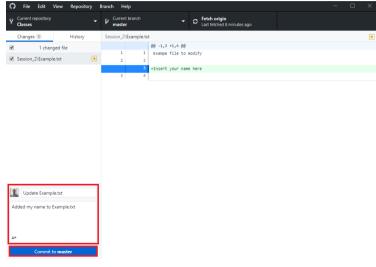
Step 2.C Fork The Master on Your Account

You cannot directly push to the Master. Only administrators can.

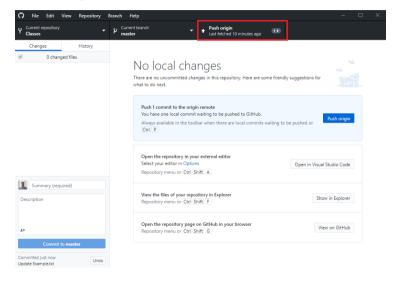


Step 2.D Commit to Your Master

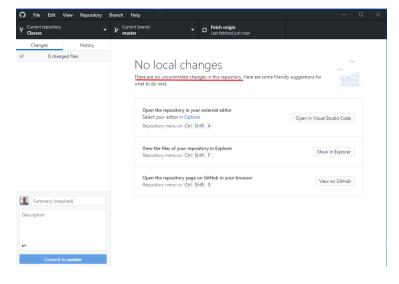
Give an informative name and description



Step 2.D Push Changes Online

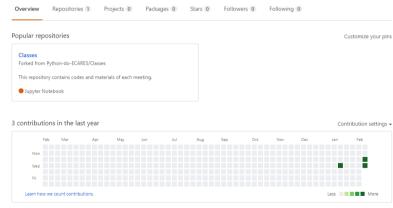


Step 2.E Done!

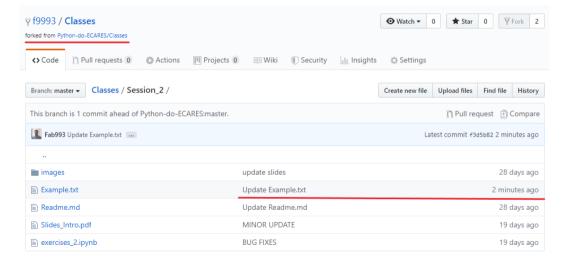


What Happens Online?





See Your Repository

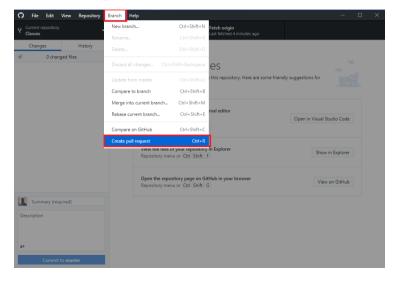


Next Steps

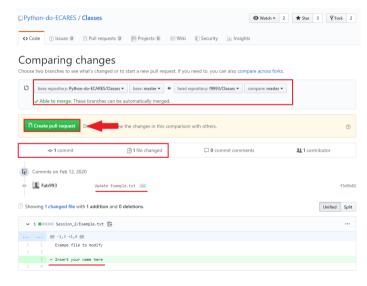
You can now edit, commit and push changes to your copy of the course repository.

▶ When you are done with the homework, **pull** changes to the original master.

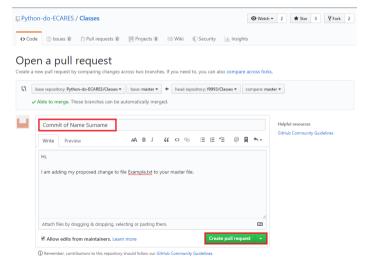
Step 3. Open a Pull Request



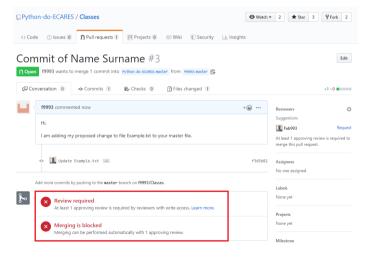
Step 3.A You Will Be Redirected to GitHub Online



Step 3.B Document Your Pull Request

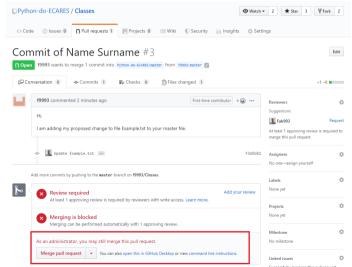


Step 3.C Wait For Review



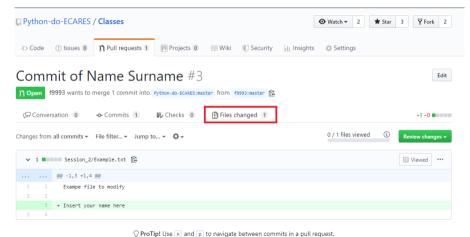
Bonus. What Happens to the Original Repository?

Only Admins can merge pull requests



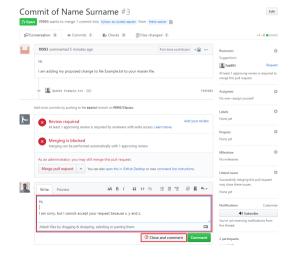
Bonus. What Happens to the Original Repository?

Check changes that people made on the original file

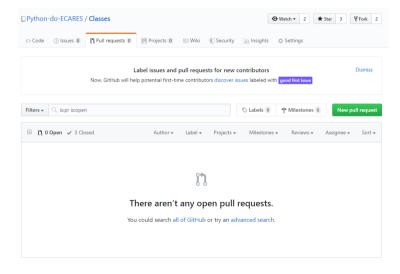


Bonus. What Happens to the Original Repository?

Rejecting a pull request



Done



What Did It Happen?

- ➤ You have **forked** a repo, **committed** to your own version of it and **pulled** your changes to the owner.
- ► This is the "GitHub way" of copying the assignment questions, work on it at home and submit it in class.
- ➤ You can scroll pull requests under any repository and see the list of changes that people is proposing. In this course, you can scroll pull requests to see what other people have done.
- ▶ We will only merge into the master a few things (e.g. slides, solution). All other pull request will remain open until the end of the course.
- Software developers seem to work alike.

Update Your Fork

Make sure that your fork is up to date with the origin

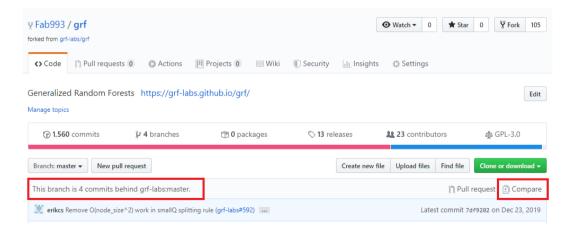
If you only fork once, you don't know if the upstream branch has been updated.

▶ In this course, we will commit to the original master to upload homework, slides and solutions.

You need to make sure to have the latest copy of the original branch.

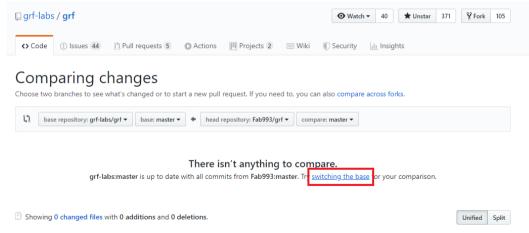
Step 4. How to Update a Fork

Go to the master of your forked repository and hit "compare"

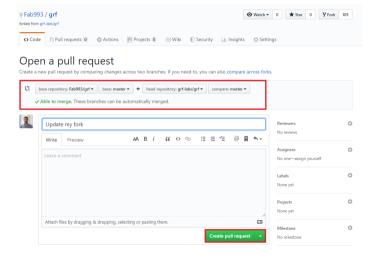


Step 4.A. Click on "Switching The Base"

If you have not modified any file, you will see the following

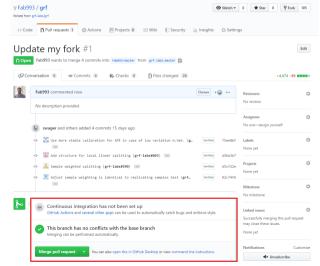


Step 4.B. Open a Pull Request to Yourself



Step 4.C. Merge the Pull Request

You can do this because you own your fork



Taking Stocks

➤ You are now able to create and maintain **your own branch** for each session of this course.

- ➤ You are not allowed to push to the master. If you try, you will get an error. This is a useful feature if you manage a project and do not want collaborators to modify the master directly.
- ▶ Please remember to update your forked version of the master regularly.

Standards

Commit and Push

- ► **Committing** and **pushing** are two important actions that you have to familiarize with.
- Committing changes to a branch, means that you are creating a new version of your file.
- Pushing changes means, instead, that you are publishing them online on GitHub. Think of the pushing action as a way of creating different stable releases of your code.
- Only push changes online if you have made a stable change.

Commit and Local Saving

Notice that **committing to GitHub** and **saving your file locally** are very different things.

▶ If you save locally, you only change the file on your device. If you commit, you add a "node" to the chain of your versions.

▶ With this respect, we recommend to commit changes regularly, but also to use **standards**.

Commit Standards

▶ We encourage you to adopt the following standards to commit tidily.

"Summary" should be either Minor Change, Major Change or Bug Fixes. The first should indicate small changes in syntaxis or general improvements. The second to major modifications (e.g. add new section or function), while the third is to notify that you have fixed some bug.

▶ **Description** should briefly explain what the summary refers to.

Example

▶ Suppose you **create a new function for data cleaning in your code**. When pushing this change to GitHub, you want to give **Major Change** as summary and "added function for data cleaning" as description.

A tidy commit activities will create a full history of changes in GitHub that you can scroll through to check different versions of your code.

Finally, it will also help other people to understand your work.

Browse History

Browse Through History Of Changes

With GitHub Desktop, you can also browse through the entire history of your commits. This is very helpful to

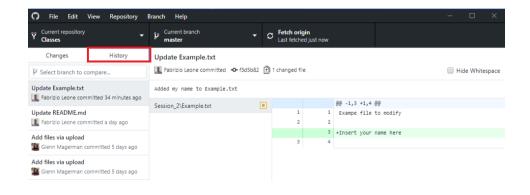
- ▶ **Revert back changes**. Imagine you update a code but, at some point, you realise that one of the previous releases was better.
- ► Compare different versions. From time to time, you may want to look back at previous versions of your work (slide, paper, code,...).

Commit Folk Theorem

A tidy committing activity will help you to easily browse through meaningful versions of your work. If you commit too often, you have to search a lot (versions only differ marginally from one another). If you commit too infrequently, you may lose information.

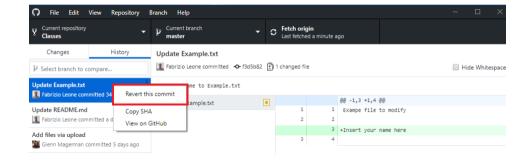
Revert Back Changes

Step 2. Open GitHub Desktop at the current repository. Then hit "History".



Revert Back Changes

Step 2. Find the node you want to restore. Click on "Revert this commit" to go back to that version.



More Details

You can switch back and forth your versions as many times as you want. Your local directories will change accordingly.

▶ If instead of "Revert this commit" you hit "View on GitHub", you can see online all the differences between two versions of your file.

Introduction First steps This Course Standards Browse History Occool Occ

More

Create Your Repository

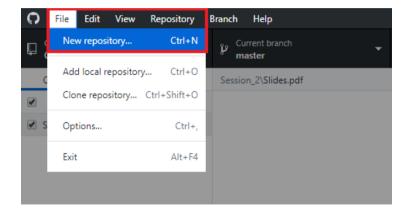
➤ You are starting a new project, or you want to upload to GitHub an existing one.

It only takes very few steps to do it.

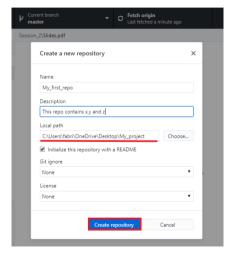
Commit and push work exactly as before.

Step 1. Open GitHub Desktop

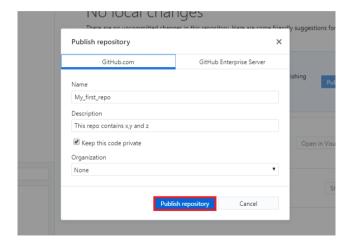
File ⇒ New repository



Step 2. Setup Repo



Step 3. Publish Repo



Step 4. See Repo Online



Alternative Procedure

You can also do the following

► Go to GitHub Online.

Create a new repository.

► Clone it locally.

Commit and push work as before.

Further Functionalities

Other useful GitHub functionalities you may want to check

- ➤ Create more branches under the same repository. This is particularly useful to work in parallel on different versions of your project (e.g. no more code_version1, code_version2, etc. in one folder).
- Communicate with other people (your coauthors, other developers, etc.) by creating issues.
- ► Automatic workflow. No need to manage your work manually.
- Create a website.
- Create a Project Board.
- ► GitHub integrations for R Studio, VS code and Atom editors.
- ► Gitignore files.

Conclusion

Conclusion

- ► GitHub and GitHub Desktop are powerful tools that help you to organize and make your research reproducible.
- ▶ **GitHub features a learning curve**. First commits will be quite messy: you will likely commit too often, you will create too many branches and you will be tempted to modify things from the web interface rather than from GitHub Desktop (or the terminal).
- Before adopting your own standards, see what more experienced people do. There are plenty of web articles that suggest best practices and standards for GitHub. Among them, find your favourite workflow.
- ▶ Use GitHub to organize your research from the very initial step until the end. Sooner or later you will like it.

Exercises

Exercises

Try at home

- ▶ Go to GitHub online and create a new repository, call it "My_first_repo".
- Clone the repository locally on your computer. Create and save there a new file.
- ➤ Create a new branch and call it "branch-try". Commit and push your changes to this branch.
- Merge the branch into the master.
- **Extra**. Under the master, open an issue an assign it to yourself. Familiarize with mentions and comments. Then close the issue.