

Andrew Michael Calhoun (calhouna)

Email: calhouna@oregonstate.edu

Assignment 0: Introductions – Part I

Date: 9/25/2015

Personal Introduction:

My name is Andrew Michael Calhoun and I am from Los Angeles, California. I am a graduate from UC Berkeley and hold a double major in American Studies and German. I have also received a certificate in Applications Programming from the UCLA Extension Program. Currently, I work as a field interviewer for the RAND Corporation and am part of a project in tandem with the Boys and Girls Clubs of the LA Area. The goal is to understand the perceptions of and actual usage of controlled substances and alcohol by young teens.

I was originally intimidated by math and coding courses and missed out on the opportunity to study Computer Science during my first go-round in higher education. OSU offers a great and flexible option to get a B.S. in Computer Science from a well-respected school. My other options were far too expensive and time-consuming for me to realistically manage; so now I am on the 1.25 year track and am in my third quarter.

Academically, I am interested in the theory of computer science behind machine learning, data science, artificial intelligence, and game programming and creation. Outside of academics, I enjoy live-action roleplaying, card, video, and board games, reading fiction, non-fiction, and graphic novels, working out, and watching (all genres of) movies. I have no solid plans following graduation at the moment, but I intend to gain employment with an established company or one of the local startups in Los Angeles or the Bay Area. I am realistic and not setting my heart for employment with the Big Four (Facebook, Apple, Google, Amazon) and may look into an online graduate program if funding and time permit.

Where I am going to be in five to ten years is a tricky question. I suppose I will be working for a stable, profitable company and have risen through the ranks into project management or software architecture. The tech industry and world is so fast paced, it is difficult to make predictions regarding where I will be in five years to a decade.

Regarding the issue posed on the assignment sheet, I agree that CS and EECS does have a perception problem within the general public. While “geek” has gained a considerable amount of cool, the perceived difficulty of the coursework and amount of math that many students must endure to earn their degree is one of the biggest barriers towards pursuing the degree. Additionally, when I was a student in the early 2000s, the general perception was the students who were in EECS were generally unhygienic workaholics and had no lives outside of their coursework, further adding to the negative stereotypes and fears people have toward CS. This is not true in all cases, but serves as a definite perception problem, both from an academic and social standpoint.

Many prospective CS majors fear they will not have a social life or lose other opportunities that their peers will have if they pursue hard sciences. The classes can also be quite dry and challenging. Concepts can connect or not, and the process of getting to “what works” can be incredibly tedious. I have had many late nights myself trying to accomplish trying to an assignment that is now rather trivial and

simple. Ultimately, workload perception and self-restriction are the more accurate turn-offs for many potential students.

As far as intro courses, I think that sometimes the coding assignments are what ultimately send students to other majors or lead to many potential students believing that CS will be purely coding. A beginning class that introduces the core concepts of computer science along with coding might better prepare potential students for their decision of major.

PROGRAMMING EXPERIENCE:

I have worked as a programmer for a few years now, mostly in web development and SEO.

My primary programming platform of choice is Sublime Text, given its wide support of languages. I also use Visual Studio extensively when programming in C#. I also work with AptanaStudio for development in Python.

- MySQL/PHP/JS – 3 years, mostly tampering with Wordpress/Drupal/Joomla templates and modifying them.
- HTML – playing with handcoding and WYSIWYG editors for over 15 years.
- C/C++ - 3 years, however did not learn C++ in depth until I took the intro courses at OSU.
- C# - 2 years, am now a bit rusty.
- Python – familiar, but never worked with it professionally.
- Java – took one course, am familiar with the syntax, but never used it afterwards.
- I have taken CS162/162, CS 225, CS 271, and CS352 and am currently taking CS261, CS290, and CS340.