

Computer Systems (ECEG 431) Code of Ethics

As a Nand2Tetris student, you will have to deal with challenging and time-consuming (but cool) projects. In many cases, you may wish to discuss these projects with others. At that point, you will find yourself walking a fine line between *cooperation*, which we encourage, and *cheating*, which we prosecute.

Cooperation versus cheating: You can *discuss* the homework problem with other students. You can *read* together code from the lecture notes, from the course site, or from the textbook, and think together how to attack the problem. However, at some point the consultation must end, and from this point onward *you are on your own*. Each student should write the code or solve the problem separately, without further consultation.

The minute you start working on a computer together, you are cheating. The minute you start sharing pieces of code or solution steps, or use solutions of other people, obviously you are cheating.

In some Nand2Tetris courses students are allowed to work in pairs. In this case you are allowed to share all your work within the pair. For projects in which pair-work is allowed, it will be noted on the project assignment.

What to do when you get stuck: Most students cheat because they struggle with difficult problems under time pressure. When the problem that you are working on goes nowhere, it is tempting to cut corners. What can you do instead?

There are at least two alternatives. First, you can seek help from the course staff (i.e., Prof. Thomas), either via email or via personal consultation. Second, you can always submit *any* program or partial solution for grading, even if the program is not working or the solution is not perfect. It's not the end of the world, and you will always get partial credit for your work. Let's keep things in perspective: this program that gives you a hard time is only one part of the homework; and this homework is only one part of many assignments in this course; and all these assignments, taken together, are only one part of the course grade' and this course grade amounts to about 1/30 of your overall grade point average. So in most cheating cases, students *risk their entire careers* in order to up improve their GPA from, say, 3.2979 to 3.2984. This is not a rational behavior.

How we detect cheating: It's quite simple. Students who cheat submit programs or text that are either identical to, or contain deviations from, the original source. It is very simple for graders to detect these pseudo-identical programs and documents. We really don't care who wrote the original and who copied it. They are both treated equally, as cheaters. It is also very easy to find the source of borrowed work over the Internet. The graders know how to use search engines just as well as you do.

What we do with suspected cheaters: We turn over all evidence to the academic responsibility board. You should know that everything that you do in this course – in *any* course – can have far reaching implications on your career.

So what's the bottom line? **Stick to your own work. It's part of your education.**