Assignment Report

At the onset of designing the CSCB20 course website, we looked for inspiration in Anna Bretscher's CSCB20 website and Ahmed Mashiat's CSC309 website. After navigating the two sites, the minor problems in Bretscher's site such as inconsistent background shadings and inconvenient links opening in the same tab it was clicked in became apparent. In more detail, the blue background colour for the left navigation bar and the header did not occupy the entire length of the page and entire width of the header respectively. Aesthetically, this inconsistency made the website look incomplete or unfinished. The second issue with Bretscher's website is that it was slightly inconvenient to use from a student user's perspective. Opening links in the same tab means accessing a particular resource (Markus, Piazza, etc.) at the expense of having access to the course website itself. When using the website as user, it is likely that the student would want access to multiple resources at a time and since the website acts a hub for these resources, it would be in the student's best interest to leave it open and access links in a new tab. Mashiat's website was more stylish than Bretscher's site but had a faulty link - the feedback link in the primary navigation directed the user to the footer and not to a feedback form page.

After familiarizing ourselves with the aforementioned course websites, we decided to use key features characteristic of a course website like having a navigation bar for resources and displaying all critical course information on the main page. We also set out to rectify the mistakes made in Bretscher and Mashiat's websites. For convenience, we ensured that when appropriate, a page would be accessed in a new tab by using the "target=_blank" attribute in the <a href> tags containing links. For continuity, we opted for a simple background colour and chose to make the navigation bar a series of buttons with drop-down menus as opposed to Bretscher's short navigation bar background which did not occupy the negative space of the

site effectively. Lastly, we tested each of the links in the html to make sure they worked and led to the appropriate section or webpage.

The main challenge we faced in developing this website as a team was working concurrently with a great amount of code. Initially, we opted for a pair programming approach to the assignment wherein one partner actively wrote code while the other reviewed it as it was being typed. While this proved to be efficient at minimizing small syntax error, it also proved to be an inefficient use of our time considering our scheduling conflicts. Thus, we stored our assignment repository on GitHub and used subversion (tortoiseSVN) to work concurrently. Using subversion helped us to work on different aspects of the website independently and establishing certain rules like always updating the repository before and after making changes enabled us to minimize conflicts between our code.

From a technical point of view, our greatest challenge was making a footer that stuck to the bottom of the page and was only visible once the user scrolled to the bottom of the page. When we used the <footer> tag in html and set its position to "fixed" in CSS, it was always in view at the bottom of the screen which did not meet the footer requirements. After some trial and error with position, we settled on making it's position "absolute" and setting bottom to 0. This allowed us to keep the footer at the bottom of the page and let it only be visible once the user scrolls to the bottom.

In conclusion, drawing from Bretscher and Mashiat's website design and keeping the student user in mind led us to make a few key stylistic design choices to make the site easy to use. We used a reactive drop down menu as a way to make the site more aesthetically pleasing while compacting a lot of material in one hub to most effectively use the space of a web page and serve the needs of the students of CSCB20.