

CMPSC 100
Computational Expression
Fall 2019
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Additional Honor Code Information
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Department of Computer Science Honor Code Policy

It is recognized that an important part of the learning process in any course, and particularly in computer science, derives from thoughtful discussions with teachers, student assistants, and fellow students. Such dialogue is encouraged. However, it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the student who discusses the principles underlying a problem with others, and the student who produces assignments that are identical to, or merely variations on, someone else's work. It will therefore be understood that all assignments submitted to faculty of the Department of Computer Science are to be the original work of the student submitting the assignment, and should be signed in accordance with the provisions of the Honor Code. Appropriate action will be taken when assignments give evidence that they were derived from the work of others.

You are encouraged to periodically review the specifics of the Honor Code as stated in the College Catalogue, The Compass, and elsewhere.

Plagiarism

A clear case of plagiarism exists if a student submits someone else's work as their own. In computer science, it is considered plagiarism if you take a program or a part of a program, which was written by another person, and present it as your own work. Examples of such behavior include (but are not limited to) the following:

- A student making cosmetic alterations to another's work and then submitting it as their own.
- A student having another person complete an assignment and then submitting it as their own.
- A student submitting (as their own) a solution to an assignment found online performed by someone else.

These are all cases of indisputable plagiarism and are characterized by the submission of work, performed by another, under one's own name. However, there is a gray area when looking at the difference between the plagiarism and encouraged collaboration in computer science.

The differences between the plagiarism and encouraged collaboration are those of **originality** and **acknowledgement**. You are encouraged to seek out solutions on your own on line, we want you to learn how to learn! In general, any work submitted without acknowledgement, which is not the original work of the indicated author, constitutes plagiarism. It should also be noted that anyone (knowingly or through negligence) contributing to someone else's academic misconduct is also guilty of plagiarism. Some examples of the differences between academic misconduct and collaboration are shown below. Please note that while some of the examples do not constitute academic misconduct, they may be of questionable academic value.

- It is acceptable to use solution proposals presented by the instructor or teaching assistant. The acknowledgement is implicit. Explicit acknowledgement is not usually required.

- It is not acceptable to use publicly available work, which is not common knowledge, without acknowledgement. Acknowledgement can take a form of identifying the source in your technical writing and/or in the comment section of your program.
- It is acceptable to implement a standard solution to a problem without acknowledgement, but it is not acceptable to incorporate someone else's implementation without acknowledgement. Here, a standard solution means a commonly used data structure or an algorithm, which can be considered common knowledge.
- It is not acceptable to re-submit an assignment from another course or a previous offering of the same course without acknowledgement, regardless of authorship.
- It is not acceptable to make a solution available as an aid to others.

This set of examples helps define the bounds between encouraged collaboration and misconduct, but does not constitute an exhaustive set.

Avoiding Plagiarism in Programming

Almost all computer programs contain many ideas borrowed from elsewhere. Many also contain short sections of actual code copied from elsewhere. For example, writing a section of program to start a main method is often done by simply copying a line of code from an example in a programming textbook. Or, when writing programs using Java API classes or classes in the external packages, you usually start by looking at the given examples in the API and copying a few lines of code from those examples, either with or without a few minor changes. This is normally regarded as fair use and typically requires no acknowledgement.

Any more significant copying of code from elsewhere should be acknowledged, however. The acknowledgement can be put in comments within the program itself. Obviously, it is not possible to put sections of code in quotation marks to indicate that they have been taken directly from elsewhere. Instead, the comments should make it clear which sections of code have been copied from elsewhere. Additionally, the comments should make it clear when the basic method has been copied from elsewhere, but changes made to the details.

A common example of Honor Code violation in Computer Science (borrowed from the University of Missouri): The instructor identifies that the programs submitted by Brad and Jane have large portions that are virtually identical. Brad insists that he does not know Jane and never collaborated with her. Jane insists that she doesn't know Brad and never collaborated with him. It turns out that Brad and Jane independently did a Google search on the topic of the assignment and found a program that is similar to what was needed for the assignment. Brad and Jane each argue that there was no collaboration. Unfortunately, the bottom line is that the programs submitted by each person did not reflect their individual efforts and no acknowledgement was included of the outside source. Brad argues that "in the real world" programmers are encouraged to make use of existing code rather than trying to reinvent the wheel. The professor agrees but points out to Brad that the context makes all the difference. If a prospective employer asks an applicant for an example of his programming and the applicant provides a large program written by someone else, the consequence could be a charge of civil or criminal fraud if the applicant is hired on the basis of the misrepresented program.