Computer Science and the Stanford Honor Code

This handout is adapted from a handout developed by Eric Roberts with modifications by Mehran Sahami, Marty Stepp, and Julie Zelenski.

Since 1921, academic conduct for students at Stanford has been governed by the Honor Code, which reads as follows:

THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE

A. The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

   (1) that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;

   (2) that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.

B. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.

C. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

The purpose of this handout is to make our expectations as clear as possible regarding the Honor Code. The basic principle under which we operate is that each of you is expected to submit your own work in this course. In particular, attempting to take credit for someone else's work by turning it in as your own constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious violation of basic academic standards.

Under the Honor Code you are obligated to follow all of the following rules in this course:

Rule 1: You must not look at solutions that are not your own.

It is an act of plagiarism to take work that is copied or derived from the work of others and submit it as your own. For example, using a solution from the Internet, a solution from another student (past or present), a solution taken from an answer set released in past quarters, or some other source, in part or in whole, that is not your own work is a violation of the Honor Code. Many Honor Code infractions we see make use of past solution sets. The best way to steer clear of this possibility is simply to not search for solutions to the assignments. Moreover, looking at someone else's solution in order to determine how to solve the problem yourself is also an infraction of the Honor Code. In essence, you should not be looking at someone else's answers in order to solve the problems in this class. This is not an appropriate way to "check your work," "get a hint," or "see alternative approaches."

Additionally, you are not allowed to solicit solutions from anyone. For example, it is a violation of the Stanford Honor Code to ask another student to share their answers with you, to ask a tutor to share other students' solutions with you, or to ask for answers on sites like Stack Overflow or Chegg.

Rule 2: You must not share your solutions with other students.

In particular, you should not ask anyone to give you a copy of their answers or, conversely, give your answers to another student who asks you for it. Similarly, you should not discuss your solution strategies to such an extent that you and your collaborators end up turning in the same answers. Moreover, you are expected to take reasonable measures to maintain the privacy of your solutions. For example, you should not leave copies of your work on public computers nor post your solutions on a public website.

Rule 3: You must indicate on your submission any assistance you received.

If you received aid while producing your solution, you must mention who you got help from (if that person is *not* a TA or the instructor) and what specifically they helped you with. A proper citation should specifically identify the source (e.g., person's name, book title, website URL, etc.) and a clear indication of how this assistance influenced your work. This includes general references like Wikipedia, websites other than the CS109 website, and textbooks other than the Ross textbook. For example, you might write "Student X mentioned the idea to combine ideas Y and Z together in part W of this solution to yield result V." If you make use of such assistance without giving proper credit – or, if you provide a misleading or inaccurate statement describing the help you received – you may be guilty of plagiarism.

It is also important to make sure that the assistance you receive consists of general advice that does not cross the boundary into having someone else write the actual solutions or show you their solutions. It is fine to discuss ideas and strategies, but you should be careful to write your solutions on your own, as indicated in Rule 1.

Rule 4: You may only reuse past work in certain, limited situations.

We tend to reuse assignments from quarter to quarter. Following the general principle that the names affixed to a submission should accurately represent its authorship, you may only resubmit work from prior quarters provided that the exact same set of people who initially turned in the assignment resubmit. This means, in particular, that if you completed an assignment with a partner in a past quarter where partners were allowed on assignments, you are not permitted to submit that work this quarter in any circumstance.

The policies above apply equally to reading, copying, or adapting solutions you submitted in previous quarters while working with a partner. For example, if in a previous quarter you worked with a partner on an assignment, you must not reread or copy anything from that previous submission in the course of redoing the assignment.

A notice for students retaking this class or resolving an incomplete from a past quarter: some instructors distribute solutions to assignment or exam questions. Referring to or copying answers from a solution set, even one distributed when you were a student in the course, is considered a violation of Rule 1. You are responsible, at the start of the quarter, for ensuring you do not have access to old solution sets or to personal notes derived from those solution sets.

Please be aware: all submissions are subject to automated plagiarism detection.

Stanford employs powerful automated plagiarism detection tools that compare assignment submissions with other submissions from the current and previous quarters. The tools also

compare submissions against a wide variety of online solutions. These tools are effective at detecting unusual resemblances in programs, which are then further examined by the course staff. The staff then make the determination as to whether submissions are deemed to be potential infractions of the Honor Code and referred to Stanford's Community Standards office.

A Final Note on Collaboration.

We have no desire to create a climate in which students feel as if they are under suspicion. The entire point of the Stanford Honor Code is that we all benefit from working in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Students who deliberately take advantage of that trust, however, poison that atmosphere for everyone.

In computer science courses, it is usually appropriate to ask others – especially the course staff – for hints or about general problem-solving strategies and how to approach the problem set questions. In fact, we strongly encourage you to seek such assistance when you need it. Discuss ideas together, but write your answers up on your own.