Policy on Academic Integrity and Collaboration

This document outlines the course policy on academic integrity and collaborations on homeworks and labs. It is posted on the course web site for your reference. You **must** read this document at the beginning of the course and follow it for all your assignments. If you are uncertain as to how to comply with this policy, please ask me.

1 Collaboration with Other Students

In general, verbal discussion of ideas, general approaches, etc. with other students is permitted. Theory courses aren't much fun if you can't talk about your ideas! However, each student's written work is expected to be entirely his or her own. The following rules try to balance everyone's desire for free discussion with my need to assess each student's individual capability.

1. Please keep group discussions of the homework problems to no more than three people, all of whom are participating. In larger groups, there is an unavoidable tendency for some people to "lurk" and pick up hints on the problems, without actually contributing to their own or anyone else's understanding of the material.

2. If you discuss an assignment with another student, neither party may carry any written material or code away from the discussion. In particular, you may not collaboratively write homeworks. This rule also means that you can't save email from a discussion to refer to later while writing your solutions.

3. You may not share your previously written material as part of a discussion. In particular, you may not read someone else's written solutions or code or give your own solutions or code to someone else to read unless both of you have already turned in your assignments.

4. *The "Iron Chef" Rule*: if you discuss a problem with another student, you must then go do something completely unrelated for at least **one hour** before writing any part of your own solution. For example, go watch an episode of *Ryori no Tetsujin*, a.k.a. *Iron Chef* (Allez cuisine!). In my experience, this rule is really helpful for differentiating what you actually understand from what you've merely cached in your short-term memory.

   In the interests of full disclosure, I should say that I borrowed this rule from a former professor of mine, who called it the "Gilligan's Island" Rule.

5. Using the Piazza forums to discuss and post questions about assignments is fine (even in a group of more than three), subject to the above rules about not sharing materials. In particular, **do not** use these forums to share proposed solutions with other students. You may post proposed solutions *only* if the post's visibility is restricted to the instructor and TAs.

I ask that you please honor the spirit as well as the letter of these rules. Please try to do as much of the assignments as you can on your own before seeking help from your peers. Don't just tell other students how to solve a problem, or lead them to the solution via "hints;" instead, look at the practice problems together to explain the principles of how to solve the problem. If you ever feel uncomfortable discussing your work,

or you don't see how to help someone without simply giving away answers, please refer them to the TAs or to myself rather than trying to sort things out on your own.

Keep in mind that your performance on exams constitutes more than half your course grade, so it ultimately does you no good to let other people do your assignments for you without learning the material. Conversely, you're not doing your fellow students a favor by helping them do their assignments without learning the material.

Finally, I'd like to add that people have in the past gotten themselves in trouble by copying down from memory code or partial solutions shown to them by a friend. The graders will see everyone's assignments and so will catch this sort of thing. Moreover, *we will perform automated checks on labs, and possibly on homeworks as well, to catch instances of solution copying.* The rules about not sharing written work, as well as the Iron Chef Rule, are supposed to prevent such (often unintended) copying, so please follow them!

2 Acknowledging Sources of Assistance

Each time you turn in a homework, you are required to list any sources of assistance you received in solving the problems. Please specify where you got help and what kind of help you received. There is a comment field associated with the turn-in page for each homework problem that you can use to record this information.

For labs, please include information equivalent to the above in the lab's README file. Note that, in addition to reading your code, we may use automated methods to compare labs in order to detect instances of copying.

In general, you may use your course text, the TAs, myself, any written materials we provide, and the class's Piazza boards to help you with your assignments. You may *not* use any of the following sources:

- previous years' solutions to homeworks or exams;

- solutions, code, or worked examples from other written sources (e.g. web sites) that solve a problem equivalent or highly similar to one appearing on an assignment;

- Blogs, newsgroups, or other assemblages of "experts."

As an exception to the above rules, you can use whatever reference material you want to answer general questions about discrete math and proof techniques.

Discussions with friends who aren't currently taking the course, other faculty, your mother, Don Knuth, the NSA, etc. are subject to the rules and guidelines outlined in the previous section. You must tell the other person in advance that the discussion pertains to a current course assignment, and you must report the help received.

3 Sanctions

In cases where a student is found to have violated the course collaboration policy, the minimum penalty is loss of credit equal to 200% of the assignment on which the violation occurred. For example, if an assignment is worth 10% of your grade, you will receive no credit for the assignment *and* an additional 10% off your final grade.

At the instructor's discretion, more severe penalties may be given for particularly egregious or repeated violations, including failure of the course and such other disciplinary actions as are warranted and allowed by Washington University. Incidents of known or suspected cheating are also recorded permanently by the CSE Department and may affect your ability to graduate.

Note that claiming that you "forgot" to attribute a source is not a mitigating circumstance. It is your responsibility to describe where you got help in doing your homework.