

SPRING 2012: **COT 6936** TOPICS IN ALGORITHMS

[HOMEWORK GUIDELINES AND COLLABORATION POLICIES]

Since people tend to scribble on handwritten homeworks, you are required to type up your assignment and print it out. You may write/draw by hand any figures, etc. Problems are labeled as: (**Exercise**) – turn in, but will not be graded; (**Regular**) – turn in and will be graded; or (**Extra Credit**) – if turned in, they will be graded but extra credit will be given only if it is completely correct. (**Extra Credit**) scores will be used **only** if your grade is on the borderline between two grades.

For every algorithmic question, clearly indicate its **Input** and its **Output**. Your pseudocode must contain line numbers (like in the text) and must be properly indented. While pseudocode is generally preferred, you may write formal code using a programming language such as C++ or Java (less desirable). Variable names must be meaningful. If a section of the pseudocode is complicated, it must be commented.

Pay careful attention to the final written solution. Reread your written solutions and look for typographical and logical errors. A well-written solution shows clarity of thought and is likely to receive better grades. Not all problems will be graded and not all graded problems will have equal score. If more than one correct algorithm can solve a problem, then a more efficient solution will fetch more credit. Draw pictures whenever possible.

Collaboration Policy (January 30, 2012): Solving an algorithmic problem is a creative process. When presented with a new problem, it is your task to “take it apart” and reach your own understanding. This is a painstaking and time-consuming process. There is much to be learned from the process of thinking out solutions to the assigned homework problems. Getting help from elsewhere destroys this process. However, discussing with others after you have spent some time with a problem can help the process and bring other aspects of the problem to light. You may discuss homework problems with me or with other students in your class, after you have given it sufficient thought. But when the time comes to write up your solution, it **MUST** be your own work, and it **MUST** be in your own words. If after working on a problem yourself, you have been unable to solve it satisfactorily, then you may get help from other people, textbooks, or the internet. If you received help from any other source, it is necessary to *cite* your source at the appropriate location in the homework, i.e., write down the URL or the name of the person or the author of the text from which your solution was acquired. **GIVE EVEN THE DEVIL IT’S DUE!** Note that each problem may have a different source. After getting help from some source, make an attempt to write down the solution in your own words. If you discussed with a classmate or friend and came up with a solution together, then both of you should indicate this in your homeworks. If you are helping someone or providing your solution to someone, tell them that you will be mentioning this in your homework and that they should do the same, i.e., they should put your name down as the source of the solution. If you do not write down where you got help from, it would be considered as cheating. Any evidence of cheating (without citing the source) will result in severe penalization of all parties involved. If this policy gets refined over the course of this semester, this will be posted on the course webpage.