CSE 303, Winter 2006, Short Paper
Due: 10 March, 9:00AM

Last update: 6 February

Note: The last homework will probably have the same due date.

Overview: You will write a *short* paper on a societal-implications topic brought up in class. Anything related is great; it does not have to be from a class handout. The purpose is to demonstrate critical thinking and coherent writing about the connection of a computer-science topic to society.

Requirements:

- 2–3 typed, single-spaced pages. (Exact length is not critical, but do not write less than a page or more than four. Do not play with margins.)

- Do *NOT* plagiarize.

  - Ask if you have questions.
  - Cite sources; do not quote or paraphrase the arguments of others.
  - Do not read papers from students who have done a similar assignment in previous quarters. (Know your instructor still has these papers.)

- Use 0–5 cited sources.

- Use about half your paper to *describe* an issue and half your paper to present an informed, rational *opinion*. Have a clear thesis and make it, though it is desirable to discuss counter-arguments also.

Other Information and Optional Help:

- You may show your instructor a draft.

- Your instructor will provide an example at some point. (Remind him if he forgets.)

- There are writing resources on campus. For example, see
  http://www.uwtc.washington.edu/research/ewc/.

Example topics: These are just a few topics of the hundreds possible from just our first two discussions.

- Should one be able to patent an algorithm?

- Should Google be responsible for the data it stores on its computers?

- How can an international web-site deal with different laws regarding illegal content?

- How can a consumer ensure they are buying quality software?

- Should anyone be allowed to sell software?

- Should web users read web-site privacy policies?

- Should there be a "default" web privacy policy?

Assesement:

- Hopefully everyone will receive a very good grade.

- (Of course), it does not matter whether the instructor agrees with you.

- You should agree with you; write something you care aoubt.

- Have a point and make it.

- Make every sentence count.

- Use *crisp*, *dense*, *rational* language. Writing computer-science text has similarities with writing code.

Writing Example:
Terrible:

There are a lot of issues related to web-site usage policies and whether you can expect someone to read them. I will discuss some of these issues. For example, one issue is whether the policy is really long with the unusual parts hidden in the middle or if the policy is short and easy to read. Another issue is whether a web user can get in trouble for doing something that the policy says they should not do.

Good:

If we expect users to read and be responsible for web-site usage policies, we must consider how concise and unsurprising the policy is. We should also consider what penalties are reasonable for policy violation.