

Homework Assignment #1

Due Date: Tuesday, April 05, before 10:00pm

Tasks:

1. Familiarize yourself with the purpose of doing reflective essays (attached).
2. Reflect on the following topic:

Critique the Surgical Team model proposed by Brooks in “The Mythical Man-Month” as an organization for your GizmoBall project. First describe how you would adapt the model to a team of size 6-8, and then evaluate how appropriate that would be as a team organization.

Formatting:

- Use at most 1 page of text for your essay. Non-textual artifacts (e.g., images), if you have any, are limited to 1 additional page; include them as part of the same document.
- Format your document to be single-spaced, using font size 11 or larger.
- Save your work preferably in rich text format (RTF or DOC). We cannot edit (and add comments to) PDF without copying the contents over.

Things to remember:

- Write your name on top of the pages in your essay.
- The name of the file that contains your essay should at least include your last name. Example: a good filename is “Notkin-cse403-essay-1.rtf”, while a bad filename is “403-essay.doc”.

Submission: via UW Catalyst’s eSubmit tool:

<https://catalyst.washington.edu/webtools/secure/esubmit/turnin.cgi?owner=vrazmov&id=3015>

Follow-up: As part of our feedback on your reflective essay, we will pose a follow-up question or two, based on what you wrote. You will be expected to answer that in writing too, though we anticipate that the answer will take you less time to produce than the original essay does.

Reflective Essays

The goal of reflective essays is (a) to get you to think more deeply about certain aspects of the course, and (b) to practice the skill of reflecting.

Reflecting upon your experience deepens your understanding of the domain, shows it in a different light, and helps you to generate new ideas and possibilities. Practicing reflection is important, since reflecting is critical for becoming an expert in *any* domain – only by reflecting upon what happened can one extract lessons from successes and mistakes.

Good essays have solid content, clear style, are grounded in factual assertions, and communicate well. Good code, by the way, has exactly the same characteristics, so excellent software developers tend to also be excellent writers. In the end, writing code and writing a good essay are both about communicating effectively – an indispensable skill no matter what your domain of expertise is.

In our experience, good essays often include one or more of the following aspects:

- Analyze things using tools learned in this course, and discuss how well those tools worked for you.
- Discuss a situation from multiple perspectives.
- Illuminate important distinctions and tradeoffs.
- Provide vivid examples from your experience.
- Discuss how you have used or are using lessons from this course in other parts of your life, or vice versa.
- Illustrate how this course is (or is not) changing your beliefs and ideas of what is, or is not, possible for you.
- Demonstrate how lessons from the course enabled you to do something that you were not able to do before. This may include noticing things that you had not noticed before.