

Homework Assignment #3

Due Date: Wednesday, Feb 09, before 10:00pm

Tasks:

1.) Familiarize yourself with the purpose of doing reflective essays (attached). Then, reflect on each of the following topics:

– Thinking back over your team and project experiences in this class to date, list two things you would like to sustain (i.e., keep doing) and two things you would like to improve (i.e., do better) in the future. Include specific examples for each item and discuss the reasons why you want to sustain or improve that item, respectively.

– What do you consider to be the most useful thing you have learned about software engineering from the readings assigned so far? What made the lesson stand out for you? Describe how that learning has helped your team on the project and what you personally have learned from the experience of using it.

Format: Use at most 1 page of text total for both of your essays. Format your document to be single-spaced, using font size 10 or above, though margins can be wide if you wish. Non-textual artifacts (e.g., images), if any, are limited to 1 additional page. Be sure to use only common file formats (PDF, DOC, JPG, etc.) when you submit your work.

Submission: via UW Catalyst's eSubmit tool; link to be announced soon.

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.

2.) Familiarize yourself with the purpose of doing peer reviews (attached). Then, follow the link below to our peer reviewing tool in order to provide ratings and constructive feedback for every student on your team (at least). You will be able to return and edit your feedback and/or ratings at any time before the deadline; the students you provide reviews for will see only your latest feedback and ratings. Other specific instructions are provided in the tool itself.

Submission: http://abstract.cs.washington.edu/~valentin/peer_eval.cgi

Note: Once everyone has submitted their peer reviews, we will announce how you may (a) see what others said for your work and (b) indicate whether you found their comments to be useful or not. The link for this follow-on part will be different.

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 you learn from successes and mistakes.

Here are some techniques that will help you get the most from your reflections:

- Write in the first person about what happened to *you*, not to some abstract person.
- Write about things that are meaningful to *you* or happened to *you*. You will have more energy to dig into those topics.

Consider the following questions as you reflect upon your experience:

- What stood out for you?
- What insights did it give you?
- What is *one* thing you will do differently as a result of what you learned?
- Use facts to ground your assertions.
- Do not confuse opinions with facts.

We are looking for stories about issues meaningful to you, communicated in a way that makes them meaningful to the reader (i.e., us).

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:

- 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.
- Illustrate how this course is (or is not) changing your beliefs and ideas of what is, or is not, possible for you.
- Discuss how you have used lessons from this course in other parts of your life, or vice versa.
- Analyze things using tools learned in this course, and discuss how well those tools worked for you.
- Discuss a situation from multiple perspectives.

Peer Reviews

Peer reviews are a way of giving and receiving feedback about job-related performance. They are common in the technology industry today, typically performed at least once every 12 months.

Giving peer reviews forces you to assess how well your team is functioning, and may raise issues that need to be addressed by you and/or by your team. Receiving peer review results helps you to see how your peers assess your work, which may illuminate areas you need to improve upon and/or areas where you are doing better than you thought.

There will be 2-3 peer reviews in this class, typically one after each milestone.

For each peer review, you need to rate the work of every student on your team (the rating scale is explained in the reviewing tool itself) and also to provide *constructive feedback* to them. You are welcome to rate and/or give feedback to anyone else in the class though this is not a required part. Your feedback will be anonymous to all students, but not to instructors. Also, you will only be able to see the ratings and feedback given for you, but not for other students in the class. (Note that we can ensure that your name is never displayed alongside with ratings and comments you provide, but your writing style may still give away who you are.)

After seeing the results of the review, you will have a chance to provide quick feedback to your reviewers on whether you found their feedback and/or ratings to be useful. This would allow everyone, by the end of the quarter, to learn to better gauge what constitutes useful feedback.