

# CS 161: A Discussion of Academic Honesty<sup>1</sup>

## Academic Honesty Policy

For all assignments, any code submitted must represent the work of you (and your partner if relevant) only. Accordingly, you should never read or copy another student's code, exchange computer files, share your code or solutions, use code from the internet or past students or, in general, hand in work done by someone else under your own name(s). Most instances of academic dishonesty are clear cut and students know when they have violated the rules.

One confusing situation for students is knowing if it's okay to ask another student for help. Students may give or receive help for specific problems with software or computer programs. When someone asks you for help, you become a *student mentor* and as such should follow these rules:

- Do not simply tell the student you are helping the solution (e.g. "Oh, just type this...").
- Never show another student your code. Instead, you should look at their code and only with the intention of helping. In general, no student should look at another student's code for their own benefit.
- Ask helpful questions, e.g. "Why are you doing this?" or "What does this section of code do?" or "Have you thought about doing this?"

Any help given must be limited to the immediate problem. Two students sitting side-by-side and working through a program step-by-step together will certainly produce work that will be considered illegal collaboration.

Failure to abide by these rules is considered plagiarism. The first offense typically results in failure in the course. Please read the University of Puget Sound's Academic Integrity policy (<http://www.pugetsound.edu/student-life/personal-safety/student-handbook/academic-handbook/academic-integrity/>) for further information.

*Please do not put us, yourself, or anyone else in this unpleasant situation!*

## Vignettes: What Constitutes Academic Dishonesty?

Below are 3 short vignettes (stories) of students in a fictitious CS161 class. These vignettes may, or may not, describe instances of academic dishonesty. Read through each vignette and decide whether you think the actions of one or both of the students involved constitutes a violation of the academic honesty policy.

### Good friends

John and Travis are good friends and they are both taking CS161 together. Travis is taking a heavy course load and, as a result, he never seems to have enough time to do the reading or completely finish the homework assignments. The night before homework 6 is due, both John and Travis are working next to each other in Thompson 409. John can tell that Travis is stressed: his code keeps crashing and he's spent hours trying to figure out why. John finishes and submits his assignment and when he's about to leave the lab Travis pulls him aside and asks if he can see John's code. He won't copy anything, he just wants to see how John set up his while loop. That's all. John is deeply hesitant but he doesn't know how to say "no" and Travis is desperate – the assignment is due in an hour! John reluctantly agrees. He emails his code to Travis and begs him not to copy it.

<sup>1</sup>This policy is an adaptation of the academic honesty policy used in the CS department at Pomona College

### **To no avail**

Brianna and Zoe are housemates taking CS161 together. They often work on their assignments together in their living room. One night, as they're working on a homework assignment, they realize they're both stuck on the same thing: how to get the random number generator to work properly. They spend a few minutes talking about what number to pass to the `nextInt` method. Brianna is able to get her code to work but Zoe is still stuck so she asks Brianna for help. Brianna looks at Zoe's code and realizes that Zoe is not saving the return value in a variable. She tries to lead Zoe to the solution by asking "helpful" questions but to no avail – Zoe doesn't get what Brianna is trying to tell her. Eventually, Brianna just tells Zoe that she needs to use a variable. Zoe realizes her mistake and fixes her code. They continue working on their respective assignments.

### **It happened so fast**

Alexandra and Tom happened to sit next to each other in class. After a few weeks, they've become friends. They both enjoy the class and when homework 7 is assigned, they're excited to get started. Unfortunately, Tom's week turns out to be hectic: he has two papers he needs to finish by Sunday and he forgot his parents were visiting this weekend. He really needs to get this assignment done as soon as possible. One night, as Alexandra and Tom are working in the lab, Tom reaches his breaking point. His code isn't working and he's feeling stressed. This is the last thing he needs to go wrong! When Alexandra decides to take a break and go get some dinner, Tom stays behind to keep working. He notices that Alexandra didn't log out of her computer. He's tempted to take a quick look at her code – if he could just take a quick look he knows he could figure out his problem. After awhile, the temptation is too much! In a hurry, Tom grabs Alexandra's mouse and emails himself a copy of her code. It all happened so fast. Alexandra returns from dinner never knowing what Tom did.