CS1951a - Data Science

Collaboration Policy

Spring 2020

1 Instructions

Please read this document closely. Failure to thoroughly understand and abide by this policy will result in disciplinary action, and nobody wants that.

2 Our Policy

Most courses at Brown allow little cooperation or discussion between students. We feel that these policies actually stifle the learning process to some extend, and have spoken out in favor of a more liberal and honor-system-based policy that depends on the maturity of students to know what work should be their own and what they can share with their peers. So we're doing things a little differently in CS1951A, loosening up the policies in the hope of stimulating a better learning environment. Without going outside of the basic **Academic Code** (see: "Basic Policy"), we are providing the following set of guidelines.

The basic premise is that you should do your own thinking, your own design, and your own coding. You are allowed to talk to other students about the content of the lectures and about high-level concepts in general. You may answer questions from other students about packages used for assignments (i.e. scikit-learn, numpy, etc.), as long as the problem is a narrow one and not one that helps in the problem-solving process at large. Finally, you may assist another student with debugging if they are stuck with a specific low-level problem that has been impeding progress on the work. On a general level, what is not allowed is that you let yourself be led by another student to the extent that your task becomes significantly less challenging because of your discussion with them. More specifically, you should do your own problem solving, program design, decomposition, and design your own data structures. In conversation with other students, be sure not to venture into design and coding specifics and, especially, never sit down to discuss an assignment with someone else before you've analyzed the problem in depth on your own.

To be blunt, the most blatant violation that can occur is code-copying, and this absolutely will not be tolerated. **We reserve the right to do a "wire-pull test" asking you to explain your program.** In addition, we will use highly reliable tools to compare your code to that of other students (including assignments from years past) for violations. In a similar vein, make sure that all of your coursework on the file system has file permissions set so that other students cannot view and potentially copy your work. See chmod(1) or ask a consultant for help if you don't know how to go about this. Failure to do this can potentially be viewed as a violation of the academic code.

Similar guidelines hold for written portions of the assignments. You may work in groups in the process of understanding the issues involved in the problems, but the solution (the creative part) should be yours. Of course, copying or paraphrasing someone else's work is not allowed. You must completely understand the answers you give, and we reserve the same "wire pull" test as on programs.

We believe that this policy is explicit enough to guide your judgment and that we have not left you many gray areas. If you are ever in doubt about the validity of your actions, be sure to clear them with any of the professors or TAs, even if only after the event has occurred. When we confront a student with a case of suspected violation, claiming ignorance of policy is not a defense and will be met with no sympathy.

TA hours are intended for students to use as a resource for getting help with assignments and the project. It is expected that, before coming to a TA for help, you have made a significant attempt on your own to resolve your problems. For assignments and labs, this means that you have thoroughly read the handout, considered the question and possible solutions and are, perhaps uncertain as to the nature of the question or some of the concepts involved. For the project, in order to in order to receive help, you must have made a serious attempt to trace your bug to its source, or at least isolate its occurrence to a few specific scenarios. Simply stating "I have a bug" will result in no help whatsoever from your TA other than the friendly suggestion that you try using a debugger. If you think you have found a bug in any of the TA-supplied code, don't just go crying wolf. Please isolate the bug and provide the TAs with a few explicit scenarios in which it occurs so that we can reproduce and subsequently fix the problem.

Please do not ask a TA for help outside of hours. They are students too, and have their own work to do.

Finally, remember that students are responsible for maintaining appropriate permissions on their course directories. No one should be allowed to read your course directory, not even the TAs for that course. If you have any questions about how to set your permissions correctly, talk to a consultant in the Sunlab.

Signing and Submitting this Form

When you feel that you fully understand what is expected of you, please submit the collaboration policy electronically **here**.