

## Syllabus

Computing Seminar - COMP 439

7:00 am Science 113

Fall 2009

**Instructor:** Dr. Frank McCown  
**Contact:** 501-279-4826, HU Box 10764, fmccown@harding.edu  
**Home Page:** <http://www.harding.edu/fmccown/classes/comp439-f09/> (Syllabus, useful links)  
**Office Hours:** Science 208: 3 – 5 MW F and 11 – 12, 4 – 5 TR or by appointment

**Required text:** *A Gift of Fire (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)* by Sara Baase (2008)

Goals of this class:

1. For students to become familiar with ethics in computing and to equip students to make wise ethical decisions in the future.
2. For students to gain experience in independent research and technical writing.
3. To provide a forum in which students practice communicating technical information to a large audience.

## Grading

The final grade assigned in this class is based on the following:

1. **Attendance** - 35% This is your attendance record over four semesters. Your attendance is required at every student-led seminar. Seminars that are given by non-student speakers are not required but may substitute for missed student seminars. You are allowed two cuts per semester without penalty. You may not earn more than 100% attendance.  
  
Attendance grade = Total seminars *attended* in 4 semesters / (Total student-led seminars *offered* in 4 semesters – 8)
2. **Ethics Text** - 10% You will be required to attend two different sessions where the Ethics Text is discussed. You will be required to sign a form stating how much of the text you read before class; your grade will be based on how much you read and your participation in class discussions.
3. **Paper** - 20% This is a 12-17 page term paper on the same topic as your seminar presentation. The paper is due one week prior to your seminar (at 5pm). See the accompanying sheet for grading criteria.
4. **Trial Run** - 15% This is a complete oral presentation of your seminar given to the instructor alone for critiquing. It is given three days prior to your seminar. All visuals, handouts, etc. should be prepared at this time. The only changes after this will be in delivery. Grading will be according to the accompanying sheet.
5. **Seminar** - 20% This is the final oral presentation to your peers and department faculty. Grading will be according to the accompanying sheet.

The grading scale is 90% and above = A, 80% and above = B, etc. There will be no rounding (89.9% is a B).

## Class Readings

These are the assigned readings: Chapters 1, 2 (skip sections 2.4 and 2.5), and 3 for Sept 4; Chapters 4 (skip section 4.7), 5 (skip section 5.6), and 8 for Sept 11. You must complete the readings *before* we discuss them in class. Suggested reading (not required): ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (<http://www.acm.org/about/code-of-ethics>)

## Seminar Topics

When choosing a topic, try to find something that interests you and will be interesting to most CS majors. Your topic should be software-related although hardware-related topics may also be acceptable. A link to a list of possible topics can be found on the class website. You may also find a good topic by (1) looking in current magazines such as Communications of the ACM, PC Magazine, Popular Science, or Technology Review; (2) visiting websites of major research labs such as [web.mit.edu/research/](http://web.mit.edu/research/), [www.lanl.gov](http://www.lanl.gov), [www.research.ibm.com](http://www.research.ibm.com), or [www.sandia.gov](http://www.sandia.gov); (3) visiting websites that offer technical news like [news.cnet.com](http://news.cnet.com) or [technews.acm.org](http://technews.acm.org); (4) looking in your textbooks for chapters that were not covered in class; (5) talking to your professors.

You cannot use a topic that was presented in any seminar from the previous four semesters, so you should scan the seminar schedules of the past few semesters to see what is off-limits.

You need to **choose a topic no later than 5pm on Monday, Sept 7** and get me to sign-off on it.

Ideally you should create original research. This means you learn a new language or technology and use it to create something new. For example, you could write a networking program in ABC or create a dynamic website using XYZ. Or you could investigate how something works. For example, you could show how to unlock an encrypted file using a new security attack. It's also a good idea to find a research paper that someone has done and see if you can reproduce their work. Often you'll find that you have new insights into how the problem could be solved more efficiently or show weaknesses in the original work.

You may also choose a topic that investigates what others are doing or on a general CS-related topic and report on how it impacts us as computer scientists. For example, you could report on new types of phishing attacks or discuss copyright issues in regards to software.

## Paper Requirements

Your paper must adhere to the following requirements:

- The paper should be 12-17 pages typewritten, double spaced, single column, in 10pt Times New Roman font with 1" margins on all sides. A Word 2007 template is available on the class web page.
- It should include a title page listing the title, author, date, and abstract (abstract not to exceed 250 words).
- References (works cited) should be formatted using the APA format. References should be ordered alphabetically by the first author's last name or title if the author's name is not available (Word 2007 will produce the correct for you automatically if you use Word's Source Manager). You must cite *at least* 10 references.
- You may not cite Wikipedia as an authoritative source, but it may be helpful in finding good references to cite.
- All pages should be numbered (bottom-right) except the title page. (All pages, including the title page is included in the 12-17 page requirement.)
- All papers should start with an Introduction section and end with Conclusions and References sections.
- All sections should be numbered according to the Word template (e.g., 1. Introduction).
- All tables and figures should be numbered and have appropriate captions. You should make an explicit reference to every table and figure in the body of the paper.
- Use the third-person (preferred) or first-person narrative when writing. Avoid using "you" and "I".

Please read *Technical Writing Made Easier* by Bernhard Spuida and *Clarity in Technical Reporting* by S. Katzoff before writing your paper (links to both are on the class website). These guides will give you excellent advice about technical writing.

Keep in mind that you are not writing a tutorial. You should avoid using "you" in your paper. Instead of writing, "First, you must set the variable to...", you should write, "First, the variable must be set to..." Instead of writing, "You would be surprised to learn...", you should write, "Many individuals are surprised to learn..."

At the same time you submit a paper copy to me for grading, you should also submit an electronic copy to TurnItIn.com. This web service is one method which is used to check the originality of your work. If you already have used this site before, you can join the Computing Seminar using the class ID number **2781096** and the password **bison**. If you have not used this site before, just visit the website and click on New Users in the upper-right side of the screen. You will then create an account and then join the Computing Seminar class where you can submit your paper.

The paper will be graded according to the criteria given on the grading sheet which will be given to you.

## Presentation Requirements

Your seminar presentation should include a well thought-out set of slides using PowerPoint or other presentation software. There are several things to keep in mind when developing your slides. Please read *PowerPoint Presentations: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* and *Oral Presentation Advice* (links on class website) for excellent advice on preparing for your seminar. I'll summarize a few points:

- Speak clearly and audibly; look your audience in the eye.
- Don't put too much text on your slides, and do not read your slides to the audience.
- You should have approximately 1 slide or less per minute.
- Use screen-shots, diagrams, and pictures liberally (a picture is worth 1000 words).
- Do not switch back and forth between your slides and websites unless absolutely necessary. It's better to include screenshots in your slides because it's less distracting, and if the website goes down or changes, you won't be publicly embarrassed when you try to access it during your presentation.
- If at all possible, prepare a nice demo which demonstrates your topic. Make sure you practice it over and over so it goes smoothly during your presentation.
- Avoid using the whiteboard since the lighting will be dark, and it's difficult for everyone to hear you talking when you are facing the whiteboard.

Your presentations (the trial run and final) will be graded according to the accompanying grading sheet.

## Students with Disabilities

It is the policy for Harding University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Therefore, any student with a *documented disability* condition (e.g. physical, learning, psychological, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations, must contact the instructor and the Disabilities Office at the *beginning* of each semester. (If the diagnosis of the disability occurs during the academic year, the student must self-identify with the Disabilities Director *as soon as possible* in order to get academic accommodations in place for the remainder of the semester.) The Disabilities Office is located in Room 102 of the Lee Academic Center, telephone, (501) 279-4019.

"Whatever you do... do all to the glory of God." - 1 Corinthians 10:31