

# FALL 2001: COT 5420: Theory of Computation I

Refined Policy on Collaboration (September 4, 2001)

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Following some comments from a concerned student, I have refined the policy on collaboration, although it is still similar in “spirit” to the previous one. This note also contains some of my thinking behind this policy as well as some general advice on solving homeworks and on complying with the collaboration policy.

In general, my goal is to have a policy that would encourage people to absorb the material in an optimal way and that would be “reasonably enforceable”. The policy is not “set in stone” and may be modified in minor ways so that these general goals can be achieved. At the end of the course, a competent student in the class should have understood the course material and be able to create solutions for new problems.

Solving a theoretical problem is a creative process. When presented with a new problem, it is your task to “take it apart” and reach your own understanding. This is often a painstaking and time-consuming process. Immediately getting help from others destroys this process. After you have spent sufficient time with a problem, you may consult other sources for help in solving homework problems. Discussing the problem with me or with other people can help the process and bring other aspects of the problem to light. You may talk to me about any of the problems (after you have spent some amount of time on them). Or you may browse through related books, texts, and websites.

In general, pay careful attention to the final written solution. Reread your written solutions. Before presenting a proof, give a brief summary of the **basic idea** behind your proof. A well-written solution shows clarity of thought and is likely to receive a better grade.

Homework assignments include three kinds of problems. Turn in the solutions for problems marked **R** (regular) or **Ex** (exercises). Only those marked **R** will be graded. Problems marked **EC** may be solved for extra credit; for these, only fully correct solutions will get credit.

## Collaboration Policy

The written solution that you submit must be your own work, and it must be paraphrased in your own words. Copying solutions from other people or from the internet is not acceptable. The above restrictions do not apply to the *Exercises* or the *Extra Credit* problems. I encourage you to work together on *Extra Credit* problems. In all cases MENTION THE MAIN SOURCE(S) that helped you to produce your final written solution.

Any clear violations of my rules will be dealt with severely. The information may be put in your department and university folders for future reference. Remember that allowing someone to copy your solution will also be considered as a violation.