

# CMPT 105W: Overview of Assignments and Exams

## 1 Applied Science Research Topic (65%)

Throughout CMPT 105W, you will be researching a computing science/engineering/technical/scientific topic that has a significant social, environmental, or ethical dimension. You will write an informative paper, a persuasive paper, and you will create a PowerPoint presentation regarding this issue. Selecting an appropriate topic is paramount because you will keep using the same material throughout the semester.

The research topic and the related assignments are worth 65% of your final grade. Below is a description of the various components of the assignment along with the mark distribution.

### 1.1 Research Question and Audience Identification (5%)

*Due: 11:59pm on September 24<sup>th</sup>*

This assignment is designed to help you determine an appropriate topic and audience for your papers. You must keep in mind that you will eventually be writing a persuasive paper on the applied science issue you select. Therefore, the topic you select must have an area of controversy associated with it.

For this assignment, you must complete the following:

- 1) Pick an informative topic related to computing, engineering, science, or technology that has a significant social, environmental, or ethical dimension.
- 2) Briefly explain why you are choosing this topic.
- 3) List at least five authoritative sources (not Wikipedia) and explain why these are useful for your papers.
- 4) Pick a title for your persuasive paper and explain why the area of controversy is important.
- 5) Define your audience; i.e., whom are you trying to convince?
- 6) State your position on this issue.

As an example, you could choose to write about the internet; however, this topic is quite broad, so you may want to focus on a particular technology enabled by the internet; for example, Facebook. For your informative paper, you would research how Facebook works from a technology standpoint, the history of the company, comparisons to other similar sites, etc. When you write your persuasive paper you will need to use the

information in the informative paper, but you will need to address the matter persuasively. In this case, one possibility would be to write about the privacy implications of Facebook use.

The key for the persuasive paper is identifying an appropriate audience. You are not writing to the instructor or the TA. Instead, you are writing to a “real” audience. For this topic, a potential audience could be a member of parliament.

When selecting a topic, be sure that you can write a persuasive paper on the issue. A poor choice of topic for the informative paper would be a database language like SQL. Although the area is technical and you could write an informative paper on the subject, you will encounter problems when you try to write a persuasive paper.

More information will be provided throughout the semester regarding this assignment. Your first concern is to pick a topic that interests you. Spend a lot of time defining your topic to make sure:

- you like it,
- you can find material related to it, and
- that the topic has a persuasive element.

## 1.2 Informative Paper (20%)

*Due: 11:59pm on October 27<sup>th</sup>*

Using the topic you picked in the previous assignment, you will write a 1500 word paper that describes the important aspects of the technology. For this assignment, you may assume that the intended audience is another one of your classmates. As such, you may assume some technical knowledge, but you should still adequately describe terms and concepts that you think will be unfamiliar to your audience.

Besides the introduction, conclusion, and reference list, no standard sections are required.

You are to determine the best layout for your topic. However, I suggest considering the following: brief history, current state of the technology, current trends/research initiative, future outlook, sources of controversy.

Going back to the Facebook example, I would explain the following:

- 1) History of Facebook.
- 2) Current state of the technology. Comparisons to other similar sites.
- 3) Technology that Facebook is built upon, along with important design choices made.
- 4) Future trends.
- 5) Issues associated with the technology, such as privacy and any others you discover.

In this paper, you are not trying to convince anyone that the technology is the best choice. You are simply writing an informative paper that gives a brief description of the technology's fundamental aspects. However, because you will eventually write a persuasive paper, I would expect to see a section that discusses social, environmental, or ethical issues associated with the technology.

A grading rubric will be provided later in the semester outlining the marking criteria that will be used to evaluate your paper.

### **1.3 Persuasive Paper (30%)**

*Due: First draft, beginning of class November 28<sup>th</sup>*

*Due: Final version, 11:59pm on December 2<sup>nd</sup>*

NOTE: The PowerPoint presentation is due before the persuasive paper (see description below)

For this part of the course, you will take your informative paper and transform it into a persuasive paper. In the first assignment, you will have determined your audience, your persuasive topic, and your position on the issue. In 2000 words, you will write a paper to your intended audience that convinces them of your position on the controversial issue. Make sure that you are writing to your target audience (not the same audience as the informative paper). You may have to add additional information or delete certain sections depending on your audience's expertise.

Note that the first draft is due April 4<sup>th</sup>. During the class, you will peer edit another classmate's paper. Peer editing will be counted as part of your participation mark.

I will provide more information during lectures regarding how to transition from an informative to a persuasive paper.

### **1.4 PowerPoint Presentation (10%)**

*Due: 11:59pm on November 14<sup>th</sup>*

You will create a PowerPoint (or equivalent) presentation for a 10-minute oral presentation geared towards the audience you selected for your persuasive paper. You will submit an electronic copy of your presentation on the due date.

This assignment will not only allow you to apply the material you will learn about oral presentations and PowerPoint, but it will also help you transition from your informative paper to your persuasive paper.

## **2 Final Exam (25%)**

The last portion of your mark for CMPT 105W comes from the final exam worth 25% of your final mark. The final will be designed to test your understanding of the material presented in class and in the course reading material. The exact material covered will be outlined towards the end of the semester.

The final exam will be during the official exam period, with the exact date and time determined by the Registrar's office. They will let us know the exact schedule about halfway through the semester.