Mehran Sahami
CS 106A

Handout #1
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CS 106A — General Information

Based on a handout by Eric Roberts

Professor: Mehran Sahami

Head TA: Ben Newman

Discussion sections

In addition to lecture, you must also sign up for a weekly 50-minute section. In order to take CS 106A, you must sign up for a section between 5:00P.M. Thursday, September 27th and 5:00P.M. Sunday, September 30th.

Special note on discussion sections for SCPD students

If you are an SCPD student, you are automatically enrolled in the SCPD discussion section which meets on Fridays from 1:15-2:05 P.M. in Skilling Auditorium (if you would like to come to campus) and is broadcast live on SITN channel E2 (for remote viewing).

Section leaders and course helpers

CS106A provides extensive assistance for students. Section Leaders and Course Helpers are available from Sunday through Thursday evenings each week in Tresidder LaIR to help with assignments.

Units

If you are an undergraduate, you are required to take CS 106A for 5 units of credit. If you are a graduate student, you may enroll in CS 106A for 3 units if it is necessary for you to reduce your units for administrative reasons. Taking the course for reduced units does not imply any change in the course requirements.

Texts and handouts

There are two required texts for this class, both of which are available from the Stanford Bookstore. The first is a course reader entitled *Karel the Robot Learns Java*—a 35-page tutorial that introduces the major concepts in programming in the context of an extremely simple robot world. The second is the textbook *The Art and Science of Java* by Eric Roberts. In addition to these texts, we will also distribute additional material in the form of class handouts. After class, any extra copies of the handouts will be placed in the handout bins in the entryway to the Gates B-wing. The handouts are also available in PDF® format on the CS 106 web site. If you miss a handout in class, you can print your own copy from the web.

Programming assignments

As you can see from the syllabus, there will be seven assignments (Assignment 1 – Assignment 7). The assignments will become slightly more difficult and require more time as the quarter progresses. Thus, the later assignments will be weighed slightly more than the earlier ones. Except for Assignment #7 (which is due at the very end of the quarter), each assignment is graded during an interactive, one-on-one session with your section leader, who rates it according to the following scale:

++ An absolutely fantastic submission of the sort that will only come along a few times during the quarter. To ensure that this score is given only rarely, any grade of ++ must be approved by the instructor and TA. Since your section leader would almost certainly want to show off any assignment worthy of a ++, this review process should not be too cumbersome.

\+ A submission that exceeds our standard expectation for the assignment. The program must reflect additional work beyond the requirements or get the job done in a particularly elegant way.

✓+ A submission that satisfies all the requirements for the assignment—a job well done.

✓ A submission that meets the requirements for the assignment, possibly with a few small problems.

✓– A submission that has problems serious enough to fall short of the requirements for the assignment.

– A submission that has extremely serious problems, but nonetheless shows some effort and understanding.

–– A submission that shows little effort and does not represent passing work.

From past experience, we expect most grades to be ✓+ and ✓. Dividing the grades into categories means that your section leader can spend more time talking about what you

need to learn from the assignment and not have to worry about justifying each point. The overall goal is to maximize the learning experience in doing the assignments, and we have found the "bucket" grading system to work much better for programming assignments than assigning numeric grades from a pedagogical perspective over many quarters of experience.

For each assignment, you must make an appointment with your section leader for an interactive-grading session. Your section leader will explain in section how to schedule these sessions and go over the grading process in more detail.

Late policy

Each of the assignments is due at ***the start of class*** on the dates specified in the syllabus. Most assignments require both electronic and printed submissions. The printed copies may be handed in during class or turned in to the box outside Ben's office (Gates 160); the corresponding program code must be submitted electronically as described in a separate handout. All assignments are due at 3:15P.M. sharp on the dates indicated on the assignment handout. Anything that comes in after 3:15P.M. will be considered late.

Because each of you will probably come upon some time during the quarter where so much work piles up that you need a little extra time, every student begins the quarter with two free "late days." "Late days" are class days, not actual days (i.e. from Monday to Wednesday is one late day). After the late days are exhausted, programs that come in late (up to a maximum of three class days) will be assessed a late penalty of one grade "bucket" per day (e.g., a ✓+ turns into a ✓, and so forth). Assignments received later than three class days following the due date will not be graded. The interactive-grading session with your section leader must be scheduled within two weeks of the due date. Note that late days may **not** be used on the last assignment (#7) and no assignments will be accepted after the last day of classes (December 7th).

You should think of these free "late days" as extensions you have been granted ahead of time, and use them when you might have otherwise tried to ask for an extension. As a result, getting an extension beyond the two free "late days" will generally not be granted. In *very special* circumstances (primarily extended medical problems or other emergencies), extensions may be granted beyond the late days. All extension requests must be directed to the head TA, Ben Newman, no later than 24 hours before the program is due. Only Ben will be able to approve extensions. In particular, do not ask your section leader.

Examinations

The midterm examination will be will be a ninety-minute test administered **outside of class from 7:00-8:30pm on Tuesday, October 30th**. If you have a conflict with this time, and absolutely cannot make the regularly scheduled midterm, you must send a request by electronic mail to me by 5:00pm on Monday, October 22nd to arrange an alternate exam time. The final examination is scheduled for **Thursday, December 13th from 12:15-3:15pm**.

All examinations are open-book (class course reader and testbook only), and you may use any notes, handouts, or materials from the class, but you cannot use electronic devices of any type (i.e. portable computers, PDAs, etc).

Grading

Final grades for the course will be determined using the following weights:

45% Programming assignments (weighted toward the later assignments)
30% Final examination
15% Midterm examination
10% Section participation

Computer facilities

As in any programming course, the assignments in CS 106A require extensive hands-on use of a computer. The preferred platform for doing the work is the Eclipse development environment which runs under both Mac OS X and Microsoft Windows (Vista and XP). Instructions on obtaining and using the Eclipse environment—which is an open-source software project and therefore free to download—will be distributed in a separate class handout.