CPS 296.1 Spring 2002
Course Project

Important Dates

Proposal Meetings: By Thursday, February 28
Proposal Due: Friday, March 1
Progress Meetings: Thursday, April 4 to Thursday, April 11
Final Presentation: Thursday, May 2
Final Report Due: Thursday, May 2

The goal of the course project is to provide an opportunity for you to conduct research in a database-related area. You can work alone or in teams of two or three. Collaboration is strongly encouraged. The depth and scope of your project may vary, but I urge you to aim high and think of it as a conference-quality paper. You need to pose a question, design a framework in which to answer the question, survey previous and related work, conduct the research, and present your results and experience in an oral presentation and a written report.

With respect to grading, we will work together on your proposal and ensure that your project meets the minimum requirements of depth and scope. Once your proposal is accepted, your project grade will depend on whether you meet the deadlines and how much you finally deliver with respect to your proposal. You are encouraged to tackle problems of significant depth and scope, and you will be rewarded with extra credits to offset your risk. Because of limited time, it is important to stay focused and ensure that certain pieces of your project are completely done; it is difficult to judge a project where nothing works.

The following milestones will guide the progress of your project:

Proposal Meetings: By Thursday, February 28
Proposal Due: Friday, March 1

> By February 28, all project teams should be formed. Your team must schedule at least one 30-minute meeting with me before February 28, to discuss your project proposal. This meeting is intended as a "brainstorm" session rather than a formal presentation. You can consult with me for possible project ideas, or you may come up with your own.

> The project proposal, due on March 1 at midnight, should have two to five pages with the following information (not necessarily in this order):
> - A list of your team members.
> - A description of the problem.
> - Why the problem is important, interesting, and/or useful.
> - Survey of previous work. Discuss how they related to your problem and identify their limitations and/or flaws. It does not need to be an exhaustive literature search at this point, but make sure you have covered the recent literature and that you are duplicating previous work.
> - Initial thoughts on how to approach the problem.
> - Format of the conclusion that you wish to draw at the end of this project. Although you obviously do not know the results yet, you should have some idea about the

format of the results, e.g., "for typical so-and-so query loads, we will show that our approach outperforms the previous ones by so-and-so in terms of the number of I/O's." Think of it this way: What would you write in your abstract and conclusion to get the attention of program committee members? Having a clear goal helps you stay focused.

Progress Meetings: Thursday, April 4 to Thursday, April 11

Between April 4 and April 11, your team should schedule a 30-minute meeting with me to discuss the progress of your project. For the meeting, you should prepare an informal progress report with the following information:
- Changes to your original proposal (if any).
- Summary of results obtained and/or tasks completed so far.
- Tasks to be completed before the final due date.
- Any major obstacles that you have encountered and wish to talk to me about.

Final Presentation: Thursday, May 2
Final Report Due: Thursday, May 2

In lieu of the final exam, we will hold a mini-conference at the time scheduled for the final exam. Each team will give a 25-minute presentation, followed by 5 minutes of questions from the rest of the class.

The final report is due on May 2 at midnight. It should be eight to twenty pages long. Its format should be that of a conference paper, complete with abstract and references. Be honest about the weaknesses in your work, and turn them into something positive—such as a "future work" section. I hope we will be able to produce some conference-quality reports from this class, and I will be happy to work with you to turn them into real submissions.