CSE/ISE 300 Writing  F08

- Time: Tue 12:50-1:45PM
- Location: Room 154  Light Engineering
- Required Books: The Elements of Style, 4th edition (2000), Authors: Strunk and White $10 (or $4 2007 reprint by Coyote)
- Online Technical Writing, Author: David A. McMurrey
  http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/
- Instructor: Professor Larry Wittie
- Office: CS Building, Room 1308
- Phone: 631-632-8750 (not 2-8456)
- Email: lw@ic.sunysb.edu
- Office Hours: 2:00-3:30PM Tue & Thu or by appointment
- Course Homepage: http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~cse300

- Next Tuesday, hand back graded draft 1st overview to 5+ page paper 3.
- Graded memo2 back Tuesday, 18 November, New Computer.
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Strunk and White: Writing Style Rules

Rules (for all English writing, not just technical writing):

17. Do not inject your opinions, unless needed and clearly identified as yours.

18. Use figures of speech sparingly. Too many confuse readers, especially if you mix metaphors. A object called an hourglass in one sentence should not become a swordfish in the next sentence.

19. Do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity. Novice writers of computer papers use too many acronyms and abbreviations known only to specialists in their subfield. Remember that many people do not know the short phrases in the jargon of your profession. Even people long in the computing field may not know the argot of your subspeciality or of your age group. Expand acronyms where first used - double data rate random access memory (DDR RAM).

20. Avoid words and phrases from foreign languages, especially if you are using them to show off your knowledge. They will just irritate some readers.
Aggravate/Irritate  
*Aggravate* means “to add to” or “to make worse” a bad situation. *Irritate* means “to annoy” or “to chafe.”

Don’t aggravate me!  
Don’t irritate me!

All right  
Idiomatic in casual speech as a phrase meaning “O.K.” “Do we have a deal?” “All right.”

Allude/elude/refer  
You *allude* to a book; you *elude* a pursuer. An *allusion* is an indirect mention; a *reference* is a specific mention.

Allusion/illusion  
An *allusion* means “an indirect mention”; an *illusion* means “a false impression” or “an unreal image.”

Alternate/Alternative  
*Alternate* means “every other one in a series.” *Alternative* means “one of two possibilities” and always connotes a choice. *Alternate* can mean “a substitute” where there is no choice. *The flooded road left them no alternative; they took the alternate way.*
Among/Between  

Among is normally used if more than two persons or things are involved. Between is used when each of two or more is considered individually. You and I will split the work between us. The money was split among the four players. There is an agreement between the six heirs.

And/or  

And/or is a confusing shortcut that should be avoided. Would an honor system cut down on the amount of stealing and/or cheating? Would an honor system reduce the incidence of stealing or cheating or both?

Anticipate/expect  

Use expect to mean “believe in advance.” Use anticipate to connote actions other than simple belief. I anticipated that he would look older. I expected that he would look older. My aunt anticipated the upturn in the market by buying stock.
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Paper 3 Code Documentation

The final and major paper for this course will be due 25 Nov. It counts for 55% of the cumulative grade, which will determine the final course grade of A, B, C, or F. A passing grade is mandatory for graduation. (Talk to me about alternatives to a code paper.)

Your paper 3 must be five to six prose text pages of effective final documentation for a significantly large program that you have written. The code should be 100 to 600 lines that you personally have written and must be included as an appendix to your paper. All the rules for what counts as text in the first two papers apply for paper 3. The code in the appendix and any code quoted in the body of your paper do not count in the minimum of five pages.

Your prose must be interesting to read but must explain your code carefully enough that another professional can take responsibility for it and easily make changes to maintain and improve it.
Suggestions for Paper 3 Contents

In grading paper3, I expect to see a number of factual details that will help whatever programmer has to modify your code:

What are the code’s major function, its inputs, and its results?

Who wrote the code, for what initial purpose, and when?

How thoroughly was the code tested and with what input data (an appendix should list one or more complete test sets)?

Tersely, what are the major algorithms and data structures? (Do not enumerate every module, like every tree in a forest.)

What are the major limitations of the code, its internal data structures, and any data structures assumed for its inputs?

What code parts do not yet work? What is needed to fix them?

What portions of the code are particularly tricky and may cause undesired side effects if changed hastily?

What changes would you have made to the code if you had more time to work on it? Why would they have improved it?

What special advice do you give anyone changing the code?