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
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• Office Hours: 2:00-3:30PM Tue & Thu or by appointment
• Course Homepage: http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~cse300

• Today hand back graded 2nd draft overview to 5+ page paper 3.
• Graded memo2 back next Tuesday, New Computer.
• Paper 3 Code Update Documentation due next Tuesday. Revise carefully.
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.
Anybody/Any body  *Anybody* means “any person.” *Any body* means “any corpse” or “any human form” or “any group.” Similarly write *everybody, nobody, and somebody* as single words in normal usage.

Anyone/Any one  *Anyone* means “anybody.” *Any one* means “any single person or thing.”

As good or better than  Avoid by rewriting the sentence.

My opinion is as good or better than his.

My opinion is as good as his, or better.

As to whether  *Whether* is sufficient.

As yet  *Yet* nearly always is as good, if not better.

No verdict has been reached as yet.

No verdict has yet been reached.
Being

*Being* is not proper after *regard.. as.*

He is regarded as being

He is regarded as the best programmer.

But

*But* is unneeded after *doubt* and *help.*

I have no doubt but that …

I have no doubt that …

He could not help but see it.

He could not help seeing it.

Can/May

*Can* means “is able.”

*Can* is not a substitute for *may,* meaning “has permission.”

Can I play now?

May I play now?

Care less

The dismissive “I couldn’t care less” is often erroneously shortened to “I could care less”, destroying the meaning.

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Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words
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Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Case  
*Case* is often not needed.
- In many cases, the rooms lacked air conditioning.
- It has rarely been the case that any mistake has been made.

Certainly  
*Certainly* is used indiscriminately by some speakers to intensify every statement. This mannerism is bad in speech and worse in writing.

Character  
Character is often used from a mere habit of wordiness.
- acts of a hostile character  
  *hostile acts*

Claim (verb)  
With an object, *claim* means “lay claim to.” *Claim* is not a substitute for *declare, maintain, or charge*.
- He claimed that he knew how.  
  *He declared that he knew how.*
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Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Clever  *Clever* has a special meaning when applied to horses. A *clever* person is ingenious; a *clever* horse is good-natured.

Compare with/to  *To compare to* is to point out resemblances in highly different objects; *to compare with* is to point out differences in highly similar objects. Life has been *compared to* a drama. Congress may be *compared with* the British Parliament.

Comprise/Constitute  *Comprise* literally means “embrace” or “hold.” *Constitute* literally means “stand together.” A zoo comprises mammals, reptiles and birds. Animals constitute a zoo.

Consider/Consider as  *Consider*, meaning “believe to be,” is not followed by *as*. *Consider*, meaning “examine” or “discuss,” uses *as*. I consider him as competent.  *I consider him competent.*

The lecturer considered Eisenhower first as a solder and second as a manager.
Contact  As a transitive verb, *contact* is vague. Do not *contact* people; get in touch with them, look them up, meet them, or phone them.

Cope with  *Cope* is an intransitive verb always used with *with*.  
I knew they’d cope.  
I knew they would cope with the problem.

Currently  Used to mean *now*, *currently* is usually redundant; emphasis is better achieved by a more precise reference to time.  
We are currently reviewing your application.  
At this moment, we are reviewing your application.

Data  Like *media*, *phenomena*, and *strata*, *data* is plural and is best used with a plural verb.  
The data is misleading.  
These data are misleading.
Different from/than  Since one thing differs from another, the correct usage is different from. Avoid different than. Substitutes for different from include other than and unlike.
Her dog is different than mine. Her dog is different from mine. Her dog is unlike mine.

Disinterested/uninterested  Disinterested means “impartial.” It is not a substitute for uninterested, which means “not interested in.”
Let a disinterested person judge our dispute.
This person is clearly uninterested in our dispute.

Divided into / Composed of  A quartered apple is divided into sections, but it is composed of skin, flesh, and seeds. Composed literally means “placed together.” A play is divided into acts, but a poem is composed of stanzas.
Due to  *Due to* should not be used for *through*, *because of*, or *owing to* in adverbial phrases. Due to means “attributable to” and is used in adjectival phrases.

He lost the game due to carelessness.

The accident was due to bad weather. Losses due to brush fires cost California more than $1 billion last year.

Each and every one  Advertising jargon that should be avoided.

It should be a lesson to each and every one of us.

It should be a lesson to every one of us.

It should be a lesson to us all.

Effect/Affect  As a noun, *effect* means “result”; as a verb, it means “to bring about” or “to accomplish.” The verb *affect* means “to influence.” The noun effect is overused in vague writing about the arts: “subtle effects”, “very delicate effects.”
Enormity Use *enormity* only to mean “monstrous wickedness.” It is misleading, if not wrong, when used to mean only “bigness.”

Enthuse Avoid this verb created from the noun *enthusiasm*.

She was enthused about her new car.

She enthused about her new car.

She was enthusiastic about her new car.

She talked enthusiastically about her new car.

Etc. *Et cetera* literally means “and other things,” but is used improperly to mean “and other persons.” It is equivalent to “and so forth” and should not be used if the reader would be left in doubt about any important items. In formal writing, avoid *etc*.

Fact Use *fact* only for matters that can be directly verified, but not for matters of opinion. The melting point of lead is a fact, but that California has a wonderful climate is only an opinion.
Facility  
*Facility* is overused for hospitals, jails, and prisons.  
He has been appointed warden of the new facility.

Factor  
*Factor* is a hackneyed word; its expressions usually can be replaced by wording that is shorter and clearer.  
Her superior training was the great factor in her winning.

Farther/Further  
Although commonly interchanged, there is a subtle distinction between *farther* and *further*. *Farther* serves best for physical distances; *further* is best for quantities or time.  
You can chase a ball farther than another player; you pursue a subject further.
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 had more time to work on it? Why would they have improved it?

What special advice do you give anyone changing the code?