

Labs and Group Assignments
CE 3500
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Spring 2011

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the point of the lab hour?

A: To get some experience in design problems similar to those a transportation engineer might face in their career. Of course, you aren't full-time engineers, so the problems will be smaller and simpler than those actually faced by practicing transportation engineers — but it should still give you an idea of the practical challenges faced.

Q: Why is this tied in with group assignments?

A: No engineer works alone on any real project. Instead, they have to cooperate with others (whom they may or may not have chosen to work with) to develop an effective design. This is simply a reality given the size and complexity of engineering projects, and the ideal place to learn these types of skills is in practical design exercises such as the labs.

Q: How many group assignments will there be?

A: Three, over the course of the semester. One for each major component of the course: planning, operations, and design.

Q: OK, so what will actually happen during the labs?

A: As seen in the syllabus, the lab typically meets only every other week. In one week, you will learn how to use software to apply concepts learned during the regular lectures, which can then be used during the group assignments. The next week is an “off week” which groups can use as time to meet or work on the group assignments. (You may need to meet outside of the lab hour as well.)

Q: What if I don't like my group members? What if so-and-so is lazy, or doesn't let anyone else contribute, or micromanages everyone, or...

A: The best way to prevent such problems is good communication among group members about what is expected of each person. Some groups prefer to have people individually brainstorm ideas, then meet to discuss them as a group. Others prefer to brainstorm together. What is often perceived as laziness is often just a difference in expectations. If there *is* a problem with someone not doing enough (or being too controlling, or anything else), the best time to address this is *early*, by talking with that person directly. Don't wait until the end of the semester when there's no time to fix the problem. If this doesn't work, speak to me.

Q: Will group members have to grade each other?

A: No. If there is a serious problem in your group with someone not contributing, and talking directly with that person did not solve the problem, then come and talk to me. I'll get all sides of the story and adjust points on a case-by-case basis.

Q: What is the role of the contact person?

A: Each group will have one designated "contact person." For the most part, I'll communicate with that person regarding grades on the group assignment or other questions which may arise. This does not mean that nobody else can email me, and does not mean that the contact person is necessarily the "leader" of the group. It's simply for convenience and shouldn't be interpreted as anything more.

Q: In the syllabus, the last week is designed as "project presentations." What is that?

A: During the last week of the semester, each group will pick one of their group assignments to present to the class. (Think of this as a small-scale practice for senior design next year!) I'll give you more information on this as the end of the semester gets closer, but keep this in mind as you work through your group assignments.

Q: What is each group supposed to do today?

A: Meet with each other, exchange emails and phone numbers, designate a contact person, and come up with a team name. (Pretend you are a small design firm.) Turn in a piece of paper with the contact person and team name to me.

Groups and Members

Group 1

Randall Peterson
Abram Pearce
Jan Vorel

Group 2

Loren Ruttinger
Brandt Pickett
Mick Farrell

Group 3

David Cummings
Sarah Sawin
Salim Cisse

Group 4

Peter Dimler
Jesse Frisbee
Faris Alqahtani

Group 5

Sean Gossner
Zach Henrichs
Chase Keller

Group 6

Brittney Harakal
Zach St. John
Tim Johnson

Group 7

Nathan Landry
Jacob Wilson
Luke Ruff

Group 8

Philip Mann
Craig Walsh
Lee Debrouse

Group 9

Con Deniz
Christine de Juan
Nathan Evans

Group 10

Ryan Cates
Molly Cook
Debit Karki

Group 11

Derek Richins
Andrew Hooten