

Symsys 200 (Symbolic Systems in Practice)
Assignment 1: Presenting a Project or Proposed Project (1/13/2012)

This assignment involves presenting a project or prospective project in Symbolic Systems (all students). *For the three unit option, the presentation must be accompanied by a 5-7 page paper.*

The project may be based on:

- a completed SSP Summer Internship,
- a practicum outside Stanford (e.g. a completed industry internship),
- work toward an honors or master's thesis (a project inquiry, proposal, or pre-honors summer work), or
- independent study with a faculty member in SSP

The project is due in three stages.

Part I (due January 27):

Describe a research question that interests you. The question may be either retrospective (i.e. the question that motivated a past project such as an internship or independent study project), current in your work (i.e. the question underlying an ongoing project in which you are engaged), or prospective (i.e. a question you would consider for a future project, such as an honors thesis or master's thesis). Come to class on January 27 prepared to state your question and to introspect about it. Think a bit ahead of time about what motivates this question in your mind, and how it can be investigated.

Part II (due Feb. 10):

Find at least two published papers/articles relating to the topic you are planning to do for your project presentation, which represent different methodological approaches to the topic according to the following taxonomy: philosophical, formal/mathematical, computational, experimental, and observational (these will be discussed in class on Feb. 3). Ideally, the papers should address closely related questions (or even the same question), and should interest you.

Read the papers, and answer the following questions about each one.

- What is the basic information about the paper (author/s, title, where published), and a brief summary of the question it addresses?
- What methodology(ies) does the paper employ, and what are the markers of this methodology?
- What research environment (e.g. university department or research laboratory name or type) is/are the author/s working in?
- How does/do the paper's methodology(ies) constrain or determine the types of questions the paper addresses?
- Imagine yourself doing the work that was involved. What aspects of the paper's methodology(ies) appeal to you and what ones do not appeal to you?
- Could the paper benefit from the perspective of another methodology? If so, how? If not, why not?

Come to the Feb. 10 session prepared to describe the two papers to the class. *If you are doing a written paper, you may include a written version of the answers to the above questions in your project paper that is due on Feb. 17.* Note that your topic for Part II need not be the same as you chose for Part I, if you change your mind about your project after Part I.

Part III (due Feb. 17):

Prepare a 10-15 minute presentation of your project or proposed project. Include the following elements:

- A project title and who you worked with or plan/hope to work with.
- A description of the basic question/s you investigated or plan to investigate, and how you operationalized it/them or plan to operationalize it/them. Explain well enough so that someone who is not familiar with the topic would have a basic idea of what you did or plan to do (e.g. define technical terms, explain background assumptions, etc.).
- An analysis of how your project relates to what you have studied or will study in the future in Symbolic Systems, e.g. How does the project apply or rely on what you learned/will learn in a particular course? Does it combine knowledge from more than one course or discipline? Do different courses/disciplines provide conflicting or complementary perspectives on the project?
- A timetable of milestones you reached on the way to completing your project, or that you have reached so far (for an ongoing project), or that you would like to reach – a chronological trajectory of how the project developed or might develop.
- A list of obstacles or challenges that need or needed to be overcome, and how you did or plan to overcome them.

Note that your project for Part III can change after you present Part II, if you change your mind about your topic, or you may stick with the same topic.

Grading:

The assignment is worth 50 points (all students). *For 3-unit students, the score will be based on both the presentation and the paper.* Points will be assigned through the following criteria:

- 5 points for a fully responsive answer to Part I
- 10 points for a fully responsive presentation of Part II (all of the questions answered adequately)
- 35 points for a fully responsive presentation of Part III (thorough presentation of each of the above elements)