

**Symsys 200 (Symbolic Systems in Practice)**  
**Assignment 2: Researching Symbolic Systems Career Paths (2/10/2012)**

This assignment involves making contact with and interviewing Symbolic Systems alumni about their career paths since graduating from SSP, and creating Web-shareable content based on these interviews.

Alumni chosen should be based on student interests. Ideally, though, the set of alumni interviewed by the class should represent a diversity among the following categories of career paths:

- academic careers and graduate school;
- industry careers;
- public service – NGOs, teaching, government; and
- professional schools and practice – medicine, law, teaching, journalism, and business

The project should take place in the following stages. The aim to interview one alum per student in the class, but you may form groups and interview more than one alum together (e.g. a group of three might interview three alums) representing a theme.

**Part I** (due Monday, February 15 by 5 pm):

Send a message to Todd (davies at stanford.edu) describing either a specific alum you would like to interview, or the general career path you are interested in investigating.

**Part II** (February 17, in class – 20 minutes):

Group process for deciding who will interview whom, and which students will work together in groups. You may plan to interview more than one alum in a way that involves these different alums interacting with each other. The only constraint on groups is that they should have a theme – alums to be interviewed should share a common characteristic for comparison across different alums.

**Part III** (finish by February 24):

Develop a list of questions you want to ask your alum(s), for example:

- What was your concentration/graduation year/etc.?
- How did you decide to study Symbolic Systems?
- What did you do right after you graduated?
- How similar is what you are doing now to what you did right after you graduated?
- How related is what you have done to your Symbolic Systems education?
- What are you most glad you did during your time at Stanford?
- What do you wish you had done or not done during your time at Stanford?
- What do you do in your work each day?
- How much do you enjoy it?
- Would you rather be doing something different? If so, what?
- What are your plans for the future?
- What advice would you give to current students interested in your career path?

The list above is just a set of suggestions. You should develop your own set of questions.

Contact your alum(s) and let them know you want to interview them, describing the class and the purpose of the interview(s). Schedule the interview(s), and share your questions with alum(s) in advance. Interviews may be conducted in any modality/medium (e.g. voice, video, text).

***Part IV*** (finish by March 9):

Review your interview material and develop your own reactions to it. If you like, you may reconnect with your interviewee(s) and ask follow-up questions. You should definitely thank your interviewee(s). Put your material into a shareable form. Share the material with your interviewee(s) first, and get their reactions. Note these, and include them in your final presentation.

***Part V*** (due March 16):

Put everything together in a presentation for the class on March 16. You can project your shared material on the screen. Everything you prepare for the class should be based on your interview (though it may include remarks and lessons that you do not plan to put on the Web), and take at most 10 minutes to present (per student in the group), allowing 5 minutes per presenting student for discussion with the class, for 15 minutes total per student.

***Part VI*** (due March 23):

Upload a presentation of your interview(s) to the Web, at <http://symsys.stanfordpathways.com>. You will need to create an account there. Your material may include a transcript and/or video or audio.

### **Grading:**

The assignment is worth 50 points (all students). Group projects will generate one score given to each group member. Points will be assigned through the following criteria:

- 30 points for interview/discussion with alum(s)
- 10 points for Web presentation
- 10 points for discussion in class