ECS 154a: COMPUTER ARCHITECTURE

Supplemental Information

Fall 1996

Professor Matthew Farrens

Lecture Format

I will endeavor to create an atmosphere that will foster a free exchange of ideas and information. I feel strongly that this is the best environment for learning, and that it is extremely important for you to be involved in your own education. Many (ok, most) people are afraid to say anything in class, primarily because they don't want to appear "stupid". This is something we will work hard on overcoming as the quarter progresses. I can assure you that there are **very** few stupid questions. I can see your faces, so I know that the thing you don't understand most of the rest of the class doesn't understand either. Also keep in mind that you are paying real money for this class (and lots of it). You have the right to get your money's worth. And make sure to listen to the questions that other students ask as well. Often students think they understand some topic, until they hear the correct answer to a "stupid" question.

Homeworks/Lab Assignments

We will have a mixture of written homeworks and lab assignments, and the the deadline for turning in each assignment will be announced in class. Assignments not graded by the deadline date will get no (0%) credit. However, I understand that things happen over a 10-week period (people get sick, relatives die, etc), so each person will start with a 1 week grace period (7 days) that can be used as needed. So, for example, if an assignment is due on the 10th and you turn it in on the 13th, you will use up 3 of your 7 days and have 4 late days left for the rest of the quarter. If, in this example, you were to turn the first homework in on the 17th, you would have no late days left for the rest of the quarter.

It is up to you when to use these days, but I will warn you in advance - once they are all used up, they are gone. If you are a week late with the first homework because of a tremendous hangover, and two weeks later your grandmother dies, you may not be getting any credit for that particular assignment (because you aren't getting any more late days!)

Exams

There will be one 1-hour midterm exam, plus the final. The midterm will be worth about 30% of your grade, and the final will be worth about 40%. Exams may or may not be taken on an open-notes basis. This will be announced before the test.

This is not a course in which one learns only *techniques*; it is also a *conceptual* course. The exams are meant to test you on your understanding of these concepts, and not on how well you remember where something is in the text. My exams attempt to measure your understanding of the topic, not your ability to memorize things. Keep this in mind!

The best way to do well in this class is to think about and pay attention to the course material as the quarter progresses, **not just in a cram session the night before the exam.** The night before the exam you should be getting a good night's sleep, so you can be rested and sharp when you arrive. Keep up with the reading, and make sure you track down the answers to any questions which arise. Most importantly, THIMK! (<- Old IBM Joke there)

Although it applies to only a very small percentage of students, I must mention that I consider cheating on exams a *very* grave offense. Cheating is absolutely unacceptable to me; it is not fair to the people who work hard to prepare for the test, and it is not fair to the people who are doing the cheating. Nobody wins when cheating is involved. Anyone caught cheating will be dealt with as severely as procedures allow.

Grading

In addition to the two exams, the homeworks will count as approximately a third exam. Your course grade is determined by averaging the three grades. Remember - I have no problem giving everyone an A, if I feel it is deserved. Matter of fact, I would *love* to give a boatload of A's, because it would mean people had learned the material. And after all, that is what we are all here for, right?