Assignment #1

Due: Tuesday, January 11, 2011

There are three assignments here really, though the first one is very short.

1. Install LaTeX on your personal computer and write/compile a "Hello, world!" file. (**Make sure your name is in the file!**) I have a document on Sakai to help guide you with this installation. Send me the relevant `.dvi` (or `.pdf`) file through the Sakai Drop Box.
   Note: If you do not have a personal computer on campus, please let me know and ignore this part of the assignment.

2. Reproduce the document appearing on the last page of this packet (handed out in class). I want your name where [Your name here] is, but everything else should be identical. Make a `.pdf` file and send it to me through the Sakai Drop Box.

3. The purpose of this assignment is simply to get you thinking about the aesthetics of technical writing. That is, what elements of an article, paper, or book can affect your perception of it? Aside from the *content*, what might influence whether or not an article is pleasant to read?

   Your assignment is to explore the library and to pick out one article or book that looks attractive and one article or book that looks unattractive. Please feel free to explore a subject area that is interesting to you, whether it is mathematics, chemistry, physics, or something else. The articles (or books) you choose must have some technical writing in them. (That is, there should be some formulas, equations, or complex figures.) You don't need to understand the content of the articles you choose.

   For this assignment, you must turn in three things to me:

   (a) a photocopy of your "attractive" article or book; I'm not looking for a *complete* photocopy, in fact I do <u>not</u> want a complete photocopy. Just copy a representative sample of the pages that you wish to comment on. Two to three pages should suffice.

   (b) a photocopy of your "unattractive" article or book; see above for the amount of pages I need.

   (c) a 1–2 page typed commentary which describes why you think your "attractive" article is attractive and why your "unattractive" article is unattractive. You don't need to be technical here, but you do need to have specific reasons. I want you to think a bit about why your "gut" reaction to some articles is more positive than others. You may type up this commentary using either LaTeX or Microsoft Word. (Enjoy, because this will be the last chance you have to use Word in our class!)

   You may find it helpful to annotate the photocopies of your attractive and unattractive articles. This will make it easy to discuss particular points in your commentary. For example, if you particularly like the way a diagram looks and you wish to discuss this in your commentary, you might write a number 1 on the photocopy. Then in your paper you can refer to this number 1 without describing the figure all the time. This annotation is optional, and merely a suggestion, but it may save you some time.

   Note #1: You are not allowed to choose your "unattractive" article simply because it is old. Most old manuscripts were typed on a typewriter, and usually computer-generated articles will look better than typewriter-generated ones. However, I want you to think deeper than this.

You may choose an old article or book for your "unattractive" article, but there must be more reasons for this than just the older technology.

Note #2: You are welcome to explore the library and discuss your articles with other students from our class. However, you must choose your own distinct articles or books on which you wish to comment.

We are learning how to use the LaTeX typesetting system in our Math 233 Intersession class. There is quite a steep learning curve, but our professor—Dr. Higginbottom—said we should be able to pick it up with a little bit of dedication. That's one nice thing about W&J's Intersession: we can focus on one topic and spend more time on it than during the semester.

LaTeX can do everything from A to Z. Maybe we should write a slogan for it: "the Swiss-army knife of software." One other nice thing about LaTeX is that it costs exactly \$0. We're going to be working with this program during the dates of January 6–28.

[Your name here]