

Reading, Commenting, and Class Participation

CS 229r Fall 2020

You are expected to read and comment on some readings prior to attending class. The assigned readings can be found on the course schedule.

Commenting

We will use an online forum called [Perusall](#) for posting your comments. You should always post at least one comment, ideally more. Your comments should be posted by 9am Eastern time on the day of lecture. The instructions I post on Perusall (by text or video) will indicate what I'd like you to focus on as you do your reading. For example, I might indicate that you read some parts closely and only skim other parts. Here are some examples of things to think about when reading and commenting:

- What would you like us to spend more time on in our class meetings?
- What points did you find most interesting? most confusing?
- What are the key notions and concepts introduced (in both high-level and technical terms)? Why are particular choices made in the definitions? What would happen if things were defined differently?
- What are the main results? How would you describe the conceptual messages underlying the formal mathematical statements?
- Why are the results interesting (or not)? How could they possibly be improved?
- What are the possible connections or relevance to anything else you have seen (outside this course)?
- If we ask you to understand a theorem statement or a proof, do you understand it at both a high level and technical level? How would you explain it at both levels?
- What interesting questions does the material bring to mind (not just the explicitly stated open problems)?
- How would you draw a picture to illustrate what's happening in a particular construction?

Note that Perusall allows you to post comments anonymously, meaning that other students in the class won't see your name attached to the comment (but the teaching staff will). If you don't feel comfortable making a particular comment on Perusall at all, you can also post on Piazza as a private message to the course staff.

Class Participation

The point of having you read and comment in advance is to make our class meetings as effective and interactive as possible. We can avoid spending time on material that is easier for you all to learn on your own, and focus our attention on the aspects that you all found more confusing and/or interesting. In addition, rather than always lecturing, I will often ask one of you to recall a concept, definition, or proof idea, and ask questions like those listed above. The goal is for class to feel like a collaborative effort to understand and explore the material, so expressing your confusions is just as important a contribution as giving a correct explanation. I hope that everyone will become an active and comfortable participant and by the end of the course, you will all feel well-equipped to learn a subject like this on your own.