

# MAS450 policy on collaboration and the use of "bibles"

Scientists and engineers work by collaborating with others and by referring to existing materials. On the other hand, scientists are expected not to take credit for work they didn't do, and not to claim ideas not their own. In light of these somewhat conflicting goals, we impose the following guidelines for collaboration and the use of previous year's course material ("bibles").

If you collaborate with someone else on a problem set or project, you must clearly disclose the collaboration. (Consider the collaboration between you, your lab partners, and your final project partners to be pre-disclosed.) Since the point of problem sets is to guide your intuition, it is expected that everyone who takes part in a collaboration will, at its completion, be able to approach the problem individually. The results of such a collaboration must be transcribed individually by all collaborators (i.e., no photocopying a single copy of a problem set question).

Some problems may declare themselves to be for individual work only. For these problems, collaboration is not allowed. If you have a question about such a declaration, please ask your TA or an instructor.

Good problem set questions are difficult to make up. Sometimes questions get re-used from year to year, if only because a particular problem works very well at getting a particular concept across. The use of a bible to find the exact solution to such a problem defeats the very purpose of the exercise and, to a smaller extent, of taking the course at all. Bibles do, however, provide some insight into how other people approach solving problems; this property is certainly valuable.

The policy on bibles follows the collaboration policy. If you use a bible (or any other reference source, for that matter), you must disclose its use, including the author and date of the information used. You are expected to respect a "no bibles" declaration on a problem set or other question. You are also expected to use a bible only as a reference tool, not merely as a source of answers to problems. You should be able to approach the problem without the use of a bible after consulting one. Verbatim transcription of material from a bible is not permitted.

Be forewarned that the course structure and material has changed significantly compared to past years; bibles may have the same literal value as they had at other times.

The use of any material, published or unpublished, without credit is a failure of your obligation as a scientist, academic, MIT student, and reasonable human being. We trust that these expectations and your desire to excel as scientists, academics, MIT students, and reasonable human beings will be enough to preclude unseemly behavior. In the exceptional and unlikely event it is not, infractions will be dealt with harshly. Again, we use the "real world" as a guide: plagiarism can be a career-ending offense in many professional fields.