Paper Reviews

Guidelines for writing and reviewing systems papers are given in the two references from IEEE Computer and the SOSP conference. Although you are not reviewing articles for publication (they are already published), these articles give guidelines on what you should expect from papers.

In reading papers for this course (and in general) you should get in the habit of taking notes while reading, either on the paper itself or separately. These notes should be on points you agree or disagree with, or questions that arise as you read. Sometimes questions that you have will be answered later in the paper. If not answered later then these questions should be included in your review or be raised in class discussion.

After reading the paper you should prepare a bibliography entry for the article and write a review of the paper. This review should summarize the main points of the paper, focusing on the main ideas, assumptions, insights and conclusions of the paper. This summary should be at most a page. At least as important is for you to include a discussion of your thoughts and questions on the paper. As a word of caution, do not take every word in the paper as gospel. Do not be afraid to question or criticize what was done. As you become more familiar with the literature, you will have a better basis to compare the work to others' work and set the work in context. The following are questions to think about in your writeup.

1. What problem(s) is being addressed by this work?
2. What are the stated objectives of the work?
3. What is the outcome (results) of the work? What worked well and what did not work? What are the tradeoffs?
4. How would you critique the paper?
5. What questions do you have about the work or paper?
6. What additional readings were or should be consulted?

As a guideline, your review should be up to 500 words in length. This is a guideline and not a hard and fast rule.

An important point while reading the paper is to note interesting references that were cited in the paper. You should record these entries in your personal bibliography with a brief note on why the article is interesting. You may also come across articles from scanning literature. You are expected to build-up your bibliography as the course progresses.

Bibliography Format

Your bibliography should be online and be in a standard format of some type. Ideally your bibliography is in a format that is compatible with your standard text processor. The bibliography used in the syllabus is compatible with the LaTeX text processor. More information is available on this format for those that are interested.

One of the desired outcomes of this course is for you to have an annotated personal bibliography of papers related to advanced operating system topics.