In order to complement the lecture slides with more thorough lecture notes, we have created a set of lecture notes scribed by students taking the class over the past few years and edited by the staff. We have accordingly reduced the number of problem sets and created a scribing requirement, which will also help you understand a topic of your choice in greater depth.

This year’s scribes will get the exciting opportunity to take part in the creation of a course textbook. The course has a rich set of material consisting of lecture slides, video and audio of lectures from Fall 2010, scribe notes from the last few years, and additional resources, all available online at http://compbio.mit.edu/teaching.html#compbioF10.

These online resources are being compiled into a comprehensive textbook reference with each lecture forming a chapter. All scribing assignments will involve working with the staff and scribe coordinator to improve (or create) a draft of the compiled lecture notes that will be distributed to the class.

The course notes will be viewed and edited using the NB pdf annotation tool (nb.mit.edu), which allows users to write comments and questions on pdf documents, and share these comments with all other viewers of the notes. If you have registered for the course you will receive an email instructing you on how to create an NB account. The tool is straightforward to use and offers an online tutorial for new users.

Each student taking the course for credit must sign up to scribe one lecture. Given the size of the class, two or more students will end up scribing for some lectures, directed to work together on the lectures that require the most work, in which case you should collaborate to submit one set of scribe notes. Scribe notes should be submitted electronically via email to the course staff, and begin with the latex source of the lecture notes from the compiled document. These will be sent to the students right before their scribing assignment by the course staff.

Please sign up at the course wiki: http://6047.wikispaces.com/Scribing or simply e-mail your preferences to 6047-tas@mit.edu.

As much as possible we will limit assigning more than one scribe to only lectures with new material or only limited existing notes from previous years. These lectures are marked with a “*” on the wiki signup page.

Guidelines for scribe notes

Aims

The scribe should strive to compile the lecture slides, old scribe notes, and audio into a self-contained narrative of each lecture. This means that the scribe notes can cite, copy, reuse or modify the slides as needed, and should include key figures presented in the lecture slides. The scribe will work with the staff and scribe coordinator to help create the course notes for each lecture that will eventually become a complete textbook chapter.

Some aspects of the lecture are not displayed in the existing material and will need to be added or modified after the lecture takes place. You should pay particular attention to issues that the slides and existing notes don’t convey well. For example, questions to think about are:

- What is the background and motivation for the problem we are studying?
- Is there an intuitive explanation for the complicated equation on the slide or a better way to explain it than how the scribe notes do?
- Are there particular caveats, assumptions or exceptions to a statement that are not made clear in the notes?
- What were some particularly insightful questions and answers that we discussed?
- Were there any common misunderstandings or points of confusion?
- Did we stumble upon any good ideas for a final project?

Of course, the course staff will be available to discuss or clarify each point.

Because of the important resource that lectures from previous years provide, we expect you to further improve on the lecture notes you’re scribing if they have already been scribed the previous year. You should read the slides and notes from last year to compile a draft set of notes in advance of lecture, and find places that were unclear or lacked detail. The staff may also provide a set of some specific topics that they feel need additional emphasis or detail. You can then expand on previous notes based on the information from this year and complete them with additional examples that were given in class.

Please note that you must attend the recitation after the lecture you are scribing. Each recitation will roughly correspond to two lectures. After recitation we will provide the latex source for the recitation notes, which will indicate which sections should be incorporated into which lectures.

The goal is to work towards a more complete set of notes that can help everyone in the class when studying for the midterm, and serve as a resource when taking on final projects. (Just like you can benefit from the course notes in previous years, the ones you produce will benefit the students in future years of the course.)
Using NB

NB will allow students and staff to interactively discuss the material in the course notes. During the first week of class we will post a draft of the course notes for the entire semester. You are encouraged to read ahead and mark places in the notes where you have comments or questions or notice problems in the notes that need to be addressed.

The scribe will be responsible for creating a draft of the course notes for the assigned lecture by the morning of the preceding lecture (see the timeline below). This draft should incorporate comments made in NB, as well as address the specific task items provided by the staff. If you are unsure how to address specific questions, you can always ask the course staff.

The scribe’s first draft will be posted the day of the preceding lecture at which point you should read through them. After the lecture, you should read through the notes thoroughly and post comments and questions that are not adequately addressed.

Participation in the NB course notes annotation is required. We expect you to make a reasonable effort in editing and generating discussion about the notes, in addition to scribing your assigned lecture. While we have no required number of comments, we must see more than a few comments from you. The more insightful comments you make, the more you and the rest of the class will benefit. Note that comments and questions are posted anonymously, and the author of a comment is only visible to the course staff.

While NB currently offers only one type of comment, we ask that you label your comment type by starting it with one of the following key words:

- **COMMENT** - provide an additional insight, reference, alternate explanation, or other comment on the topic
- **QUESTION** - specific question about exactly what you did not immediately understand, and that other students may also have trouble with. You can ask questions to the staff or your peers, and also answer your peer’s questions
- **TYPO** - minor correction needed - annotate as precisely as possible
- **FIX** - larger mistake that needs to be remedied - be specific!

Using the latex template

The scribe will make the course notes using the provided latex template. A week before your first draft is due, the course staff will email you a path on athena to where you can find the template as well as images and references to accompany that lecture. This template will contain a draft of the notes compiled from previous years, as well as tasks that you should complete. Specific instructions for using this template are included in the “Using the scribe latex template” document on the Materials page on the stellar site.

Timeline

- **The afternoon of the day of the lecture**: The staff will send you the path to the template and images for the existing draft of that lecture’s notes, and the powerpoint document of the lecture notes so you can extract the remaining figures needed to complete the lecture notes. You will have access to the audio and video file from this and/or last year’s lecture that will become your source for completing the corresponding chapter.

- **The day of the lecture**: Submit a plan of how you intend to spend your time working on the scribe notes. This will help you and us point you to the sections that need the most work and that are most important.

- **10pm 1 week after the day of the lecture**: final version due. You must submit this using the git instructions, posted in a separate handout.

- **Turn in answers to the scribe assignment listed under the homework section on stellar**: you can either email these to us, upload them on stellar, or put them in the git repository.

If either of the above deadlines falls on the same day another assignment is due, then you receive an automatic two-day extension on the scribe notes deadline.

**Final draft**: The final draft should present the lecture material in essay format and using the textbook chapter template provided. Instructions for using this template are included in a separate document. It should address both the comments made on NB by students and staff, as well as the task list provided in the latex template. These notes can be used (in conjunction with the slides) as a mostly self-contained reference by you and your classmates for the midterm, final project, and future research.
Grading

You will be graded out of 20 points as follows:

- Clarity of the outline: 4 points
- Flow of the text: 4 points
- Completeness of the figures: 4 points
- Completeness of the text: 8 points

FAQ

Q: The 2010 course notes have a lot of small typos. Should I mark all of these and clutter up the course notes document?
A: Don’t fix minor typos as you read ahead. It should be the scribe’s responsibility to clean these up. If a chapter seems to have tons of typos, you can add a general note to the scribe such as “There are lots of typos in this section...”. You should, however, mark typos once the scribe’s first draft is released for commenting.

Q: What do I do if something in the notes was not covered in lecture?
A: Read through existing material (this year’s slides, previous years’ lectures, etc.). Try to understand what’s there and present the material in a way that will be understandable to a new reader. Don’t hesitate to ask the course staff with questions on this material.

Q: How do I edit the latex source?
A: See the document “Using the scribe latex template” on stellar.

Q: What if I cannot attend the recitation after the lecture I am scribing?
A: You are still responsible for incorporating this material. Find a friend that takes good notes.