Assignment 13: About Software Licenses

1   Overview

This is a short assignment whose purpose is to make sure that you know the basics about software licenses. As a developer or contributor to a project, whether a student or a professional, sooner or later you might be tempted to "borrow" code that someone else has written. The other side of this coin is that when code you have developed is ready to be made available to other people, you need to know how to "protect" it. Both of these prospects raise some questions:

- What are the rules that pertain to the sharing of code?

- Can you rightfully copy someones code and use it in your program?

- What protection would you have if you made your code available on-line?

This is where software licenses enter the picture. The goal of reading this material is to understand how to choose a license and how to know what is possible with software that you have downloaded or otherwise acquired given its license.

2   Readings

The best summary of licenses that I have found so far is from the Free Software Foundation's articles about them at https://www.gnu.org/licenses/ and https://www.gnu.org/licenses/license-list.html. Please read all of the first page; it is not very long. On the second page, read the Introduction and then read the summaries of the GNU Public Licenses, the Apache License, CC0, the Mozilla Public License, and the Public Domain. Then look at a few of the licenses in the next section that describes licenses that are not compatible with the GNU GPL. Lastly, read about the Creative Commons licenses described in the next section.

3   Your Weekly Blog

In your blog, explain how the GNU Public Licenses differ from each other and what distinguishes the GPLs, Apache and Mozilla licenses. Also explain what copyleft is, what permissive means, and why the Creative Commons licenses are not ideal for use with software. You should post to `2018-12-12-week13.md`.