CS Prelim
Requirements / Procedures

Vern Paxson

CS Chair of Grad Study/Prelim Committee
September 9, 2015

vern@berkeley.edu
Goals of Prelim Requirements

• Develop the tools to do your research
  – Combination of course work and prelim exam

• Ensure exposure to solid breadth of concepts for your graduate student career (and beyond)
  – Both for your area of focus and the wider world of CS
  – Along with minor requirements, provides foundation for deep work & opportunities for serendipity
CS Prelim Breadth Requirement

- Courses (≥ B+, by 6th semester) in 3 areas:
  - **Theory**: 270, 271, 273, 274, 276, 278
  - **AI**: 280, 281A, 281B, 287, 288, 289
  - **Graphics/HCI**: 260B, 283
  - **Programming**: 263, 264, 265, 267; EE219C
  - **Systems**: 261, 261N, 262A, 262B, 268, 286B
  - **Computer Arch./Eng.**: 250, 252, 258

- One “above the line” and one “below the line”:
  - 260B, 263, 219C don’t satisfy above/below the line
CS Prelim Exam

- Oral examination with 2 profs
  - Test your knowledge of your topic area (14 of these)
  - Examiners ask questions, you answer on whiteboard
- Required to take by 3rd semester
  - Often a good amount of first Summer is spent studying
  - Often helpful to have senior students give mock exams
- Exams happen at “beginning” of the term
  - Must sign up at end of previous term
- Styles differ somewhat across areas
  - Ask around, including how to interpret syllabi
- Need to pass by 2nd attempt
For Your CS Questions

- Talk to Audrey Sillers
  - 367 Soda Hall
  - She can give you details about procedure, your status, who to talk to about problems/issues

- Graduate Student Handbook:
  - http://www.eecs.berkeley.edu/Gradnotes

- There’s a petition process for exceptions …
  - … but it’s not a given

- Pursue two-way feedback with your advisor
  - Formally, once a semester …
  - … and ideally in a frequent on-going fashion