

Open Source: Contributing to Free Culture

Luke Faraone <lfaraone>

Tyler Hallada <thallada>

Jacob Hurwitz <jhurwitz>

Class overview

The class will be divided up into three sections:

1. **Lecture on history of free software / open source.**

We'll try not to bore you.
No promises.

2. **Independent review of existing projects**

There will be presentations.
You'll do fine.

3. **Skills practice for contribution to open source**

You will not be quizzed on this material.
I think.

A note on terminology

"Free" has a lot of meanings. In this course, we'll try to be more specific.

gratis is used to mean "for no cost", or colloquially "free as in beer"

libre is used to mean "with rights", as in "free as in speech" or "free as in freedom".

When we talk about Free Software, we mean the latter.

Freely shared source, 1950s-1970s

Most software produced by academics

Software often came gratis with hardware, rarely sold separately but often developed as part of contracts.

Rise of UNIX, 1970s-1990

AT&T's Bell Labs created an operating system that is the basis for what many people use today, called UNIX.

It was initially offered for zero-cost with shared-source to government and academic entities, but the model later changed.

The GNU project was formed to develop a free operating system in response to this and other issues.

FSF, 1990s

The FSF through their "GNU" project succeeded in recreating most of UNIX.

They introduced a license, called the GNU General Public License, which enforced certain freedoms they wanted to protect.

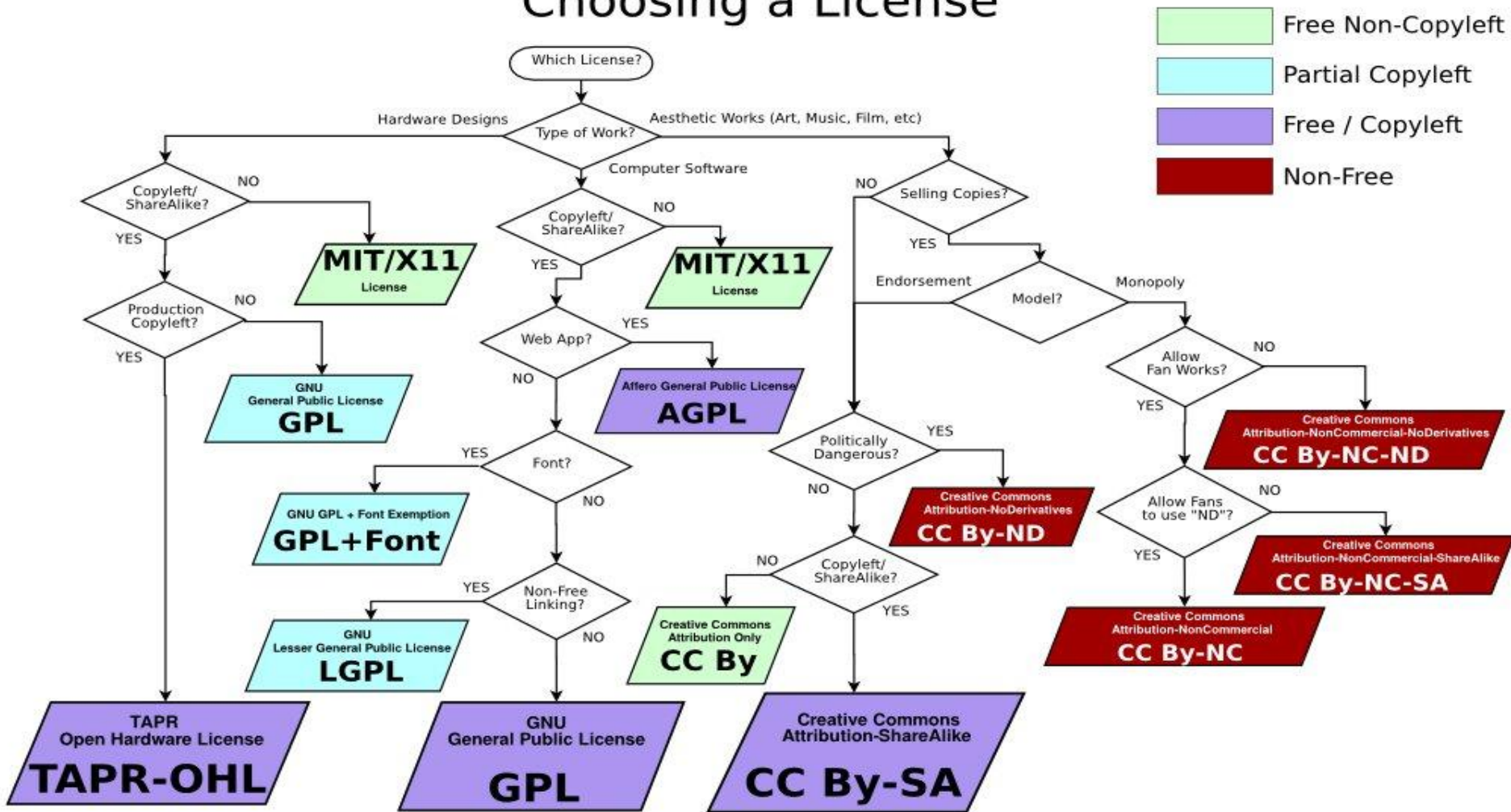
Their project was almost complete, missing just one component...

But first, a bit about licensing

Software by default has no license.

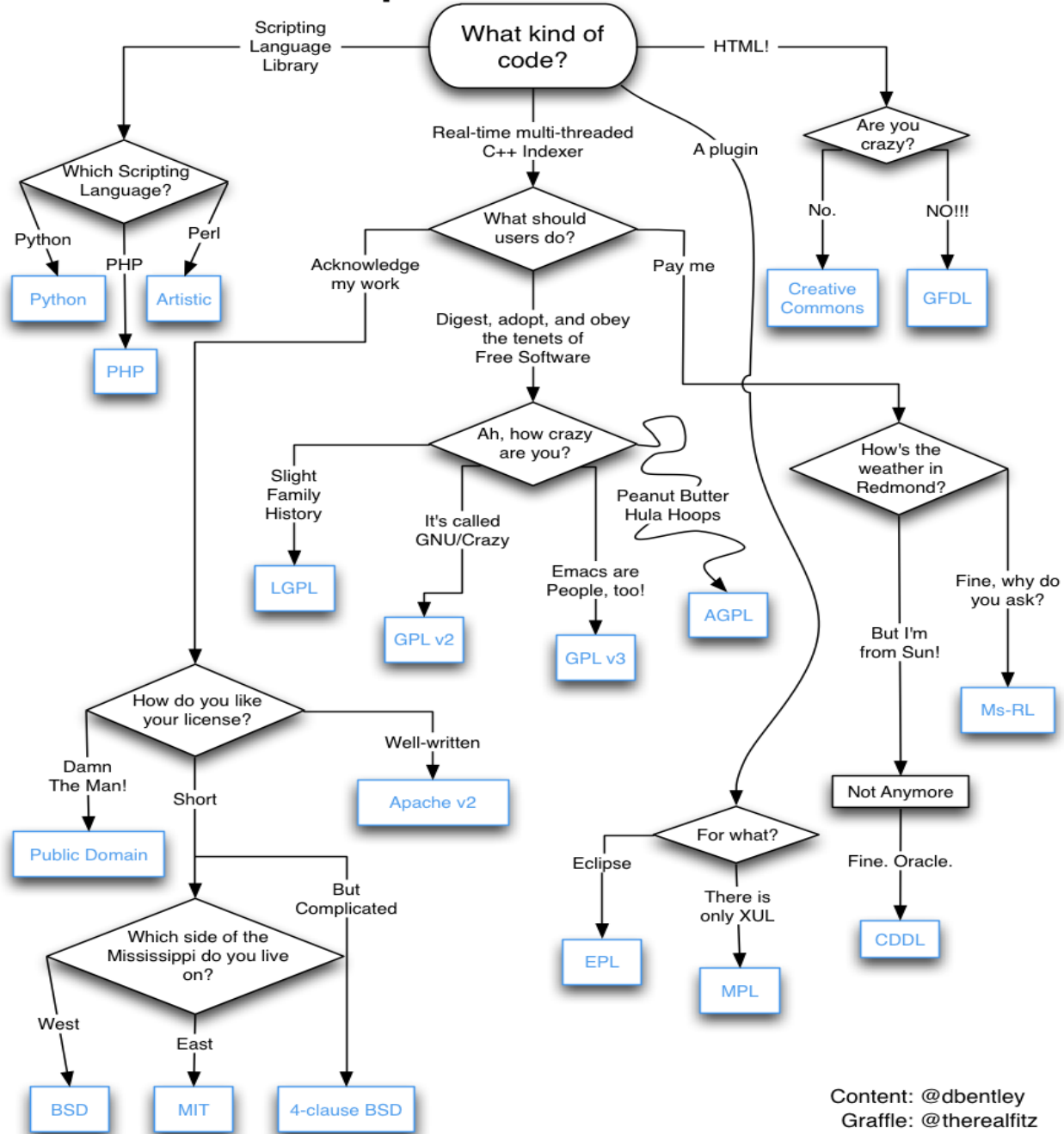
The author can change that, by specifying permissions and setting requirements.

A "Best Practices" Flowchart for Choosing a License



This *will* be on the final.

Which Open Source License?



Oh gosh. That was a lot.

Licenses are really diverse, but they all guarantee fundamental freedoms.

- To run the program for any purpose.
- To study how the program works, and change it to make it do what you wish.
- To redistribute copies
- To improve the program, and release your improvements (and modified versions in general) to the public, so that the whole community benefits.

Linux and the distributions, 1990s- Today

A graduate student at the University of Helsinki developed a Kernel, the core part of an OS, and released it to the world.

This was sort of popular.

A [bunch of organizations](#) were created to manage Linux and other systems.



debian



Open source today

Even without making conscious decisions to use free/open source software, you almost certainly use one of these systems

Google



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

facebook



Open source today, cont.

There are thousands of open source projects out there, using a variety of models.

On most, discussion happens on mailing lists or messaging boards on the project's site.

They often have a "bug tracker" to track issues.

Regular releases happen as a part of a healthy project.

Open source today, example

One such project is OpenOffice.org.

Originally a proprietary program, open-sourced by Sun in 2000.

It became a standard part of most Linux systems.

Contributions were handled centrally, discussion via open mailing lists.

Questions?

You probably have at *least* one.

Open source information project

Choose a project from this list:

<http://goo.gl/zSsVs>

Then, over the next 15 minutes, get the following:

- Why it was started?
- What's the target audience?
- How long ago was it created?
- Where does discussion about the project take place?
- Who is behind the project?

Presentation time...

Time flies when you're doing research.

What did you come up with?

OpenHatch

Getting involved is hard, let's practice first.

Check out:

<https://openhatch.org/>

Then do:

<https://openhatch.org/missions/>

Btw, these slides are at <http://bit.ly/spark13-freeculture>

Thanks for playing.

You've been a wonderful audience.

Tip your waitresses. Email your presenters:

Luke Faraone, Tyler Hallada, Jacob Hurwitz

firstInitial + lastName + @mit.edu

Or all of us at spark-freeculture-staff@mit.edu.