Exercise Set 6

CPSC 499: Computers & Society

Name: ________________________________

Please answer the questions below as fully and completely as you can. Turn in your written answers in class during the next class meeting. As part of this exercise set, you must read the following.

- Ch. 4.5, A Gift of Fire: Intellectual Policy

1. Find two software patents (www.google.com/patents) and give a brief summary of the inventions and the general claims of each. Some famous examples of software patents: Amazon One-click (US 5960411), Browser Plug-ins (US 5838906), Yahoo! Search marketing (US 6269361), Progress bars (US 5301348), RSA (US 4405829).
2. Use Google’s patent search to find a patent related to your senior design project. Briefly summarize the idea of the invention and the claims.
3. According to many experts and also emphasized in the reading, there are a number of issues in applying patent law to software. Of major concern is whether software patents ultimately help or hurt software innovation, and then secondarily, whether they are ultimately fair. Assume you have been asked to develop a set of rules for software patents (e.g., what constitutes a patent, how long patents last, and how patents are applied, etc.) to help increase innovation and create a more fair system. What rules would you institute and why?