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Introduction to Developer Documentation - Syllabus

2008 Session 1 Dates

Monday, March 3, 2008, through Wednesday, April 23, 2008.

Instructors

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- Viki Maki, vmaki@bitzone.com, viki.maki@gmail.com, 510.234.4046.

Textbook and Other Instructional Materials

- *Documenting APIs: Writing Developer Documentation for Java APIs and SDKs* by Bisso and Maki.
- Course study guide, which you receive prior to the start of the course. The course study guide is comprised of six lessons, including exercises and two quizzes.
- Four sample code projects, which you download from the Bitzone web site.
- An online discussion forum for each of the lessons.
- Three 90-minute phone seminars with the instructors, scheduled once the students have signed up.
- Directions for logging in are provided via email prior to the start of the course and included here. Prior to the start of the course, you also receive a course goals worksheet, which you complete and email back.

Logging in to the Discussion Forums

To log in:

1. Type <http://janus.bitzone.com/> into a web browser (IE or Firefox, a recent version).
2. Press Enter.
3. Click the Login link in the upper left-hand corner of the window.
4. Enter your user name and password from the "Documenting APIs" book (inside front cover).

About the Lessons

Each week you complete a new lesson. The lesson starts on Monday and ends on Sunday, with assignments for that particular lesson due the following Monday, at 9 A.M. Pacific Time, unless otherwise stated.

Each lesson has assigned reading in the text and course study guide, one or more online discussion forums, and assigned work. During the course, assigned work includes two quizzes as well as a critique of a reference guide and a programmer's guide (see the weekly assignments starting on page 2).

Three phone conferences are scheduled to coincide with lesson 1, lesson 3, and lesson 5 and cover, respectively:

- Understanding plug-in APIs vs. class library APIs
- An overview of the four sample code projects and how to use them
- Using the TAFT project to maximize your study of developer documentation

In addition, the phone conferences allow the students to ask questions and interact more closely with the instructors.

Lesson Topics at a Glance

- Lesson 1. An Introduction to the Course and Understanding Interfaces
- Lesson 2. An Introduction to Developer Documentation
- Lesson 3. Setting Up Your Environment and Using Javadoc
- Lesson 4. Research and Analysis: Preparing to Write
- Lesson 5. The Initial Interview with the SME
- Lesson 6. Writing the Guides

Assignments

Lesson 1 - 3/03 to 3/09	All assignments are due 3/10 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time
Reading in Text	Chapter 1.
Lecture in Course Study Guide	Lecture 1: "Documenting APIs: A Developmental Process."
Review	Review Lesson 1 material in the course study guide.
Lesson 1 Discussion Forums 1 and 2	Post an introduction to Discussion Forum 1, "Introductions." Post to Discussion Forum 2, "Understanding Plug-in APIs vs. Class Library APIs."
Assignments	Complete the exercises at the end of Chapter 1 in your text. Complete Quiz #1.
Phone Seminar	"Understanding Plug-in APIs vs. Class Library APIs." Scheduled at a time most convenient to the students in the course. See email from Viki.
Submit to Viki	Email Quiz #1 to Viki. Self-grade exercises at the end of Chapter 1.
Lesson 2 - 3/10 to 3/16	All assignments are due 3/17 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time
Reading in Text	Chapter 2.
Lecture	"An Introduction to Developer Documentation."
Review	The URLs for examples of online reference guides at the end of the lecture in Lesson 2. Review Lesson 2 material in the course study guide.
Lesson 2 Discussion Forum 1	Post to Discussion Forum 1, "Comparing Three Reference Guides."
Assignments	At the end of the lecture in Lesson 2 are URLs for examples of reference guides. Choose one example from these URLs or a document of your choice and critique it per the sample critique. Complete Quiz #2.
Submit to Viki	Email Quiz #2 and reference guide critique to Viki.
Lesson 3 - 3/17 to 3/30	All assignments are due 3/31 Monday 9 A.M. PT (Lesson 3 spans two weeks to set up the environment.)
Reading in Text	Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.
Lecture	"Setting Up Your Environment and Understanding the Workflow."
Review	Review Lesson 3 material in the course study guide.

Lesson 3 Discussion Forums 1 and 2	Post to Discussion Forum 1, "Generating a Javadoc Reference Guide." Post to Discussion Forum 2, "What Makes Good Developer Documentation?"
Assignments	Set up your environment. If you have any problems, email Jim for help. Generate an empty Javadoc reference guide for the Pets project and zip the files in the dist directory.
Phone Seminar	"An overview of the four sample code projects and how to use them." Scheduled at a time convenient to the students. See email from Viki.
Submit to Viki	Email the Pets zipped dist directory to Viki.
Lesson 4 - 3/31 to 4/06	All assignment are due 4/07 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time
Reading in Text	Chapter 5, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8.
Lecture	"An Overview of the Phases in Writing Developer Documentation."
Review	Review Lesson 4 in the course study guide. Review feedback on assignments.
Lesson 4 Discussion Forums 1 and 2	Post to Discussion Forum 1, "End-user vs. Developer Documentation." Post to Discussion Forum 2, "Comparing Three Programmer's Guides."
Assignments	At the end of the Online Lecture in Lesson 4 are URLs for examples of programmer's guides. Choose one example from either the list in Lesson 4 or a document of your choice and critique it per the sample critique.
Submit to Viki	Zipped Pets commented reference guide files (dist directory). Email programmer's critique to Viki.
Lesson 5 - 4/07 to 4/13	All assignments are due 4/14 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time
Reading in Text	Chapter 9.
Lecture	"Conducting the Initial Interview with the SME."
Review	Review Lesson 5 material in the course study guide. Review feedback on assignments.
Lesson 5 Discussion Forum 1	Post to Discussion Forum 1, "Coping with Uncooperative SMEs and Non-existent Resources."
Assignments	None. If you have not completed any of the previous assignments, use this week to catch up.
Phone Seminar	"Using the TAFT project to maximize your study of developer documentation." Scheduled at a time convenient to the students. See email from Viki.
Submit to Viki	Any missing assignments.
Lesson 6 - 4/14 to 4/20	All assignments are due 4/21 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time Note that access to the course ends 4/23
Reading in Text	Part 4: Chapter 11, Chapter 12, Chapter 13, and Chapter 14 (chapters are short).
Lecture	"Writing the Guides."
Review	The reference guide for TAFT in Chapter 13. Review Lesson 6 material in the course study guide.

Lesson 6 Discussion Forum 1	Post to Discussion Forum 1, "Writing Developer Documentation for a Plug-in API."
Assignments	Complete the TAFT reference guide assignment in the course study guide. Copy any of the discussion forums before access ends.
Submit to Viki	Send the TAFT zipped dist directory to Viki. Complete course evaluation Viki emailed to you. She will email your certificate of completion upon receipt of the course evaluation.

Assignment Deadlines at a Glance

Lesson 1 - 3/03 to 3/09 Due 3/10 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercises at the end of Chapter 1 in your text (self-grade) • Quiz #1
Lesson 2 - 3/10 to 3/16 Due 3/17 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz #2 • Reference guide critique
Lesson 3 - 3/17 to 3/30 Due 3/31 Monday 9 A.M. PT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zipped dist directory for the Pets project uncommented reference guide
Lesson 4 - 3/31 to 4/06 Due 4/07 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zipped dist directory for the Pets project commented reference guide • Programmer's guide critique
Lesson 5 - 4/07 to 4/13 Due 4/14 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None. If you have not completed any of the previous assignments, use this week to catch up or to get started on the TAFT assignment.
Lesson 6 - 4/14 to 4/20 Due 4/21 Monday 9 A.M. Pacific Time (Note that access to the course ends 4/23)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zipped dist directory for the edited TAFT commented reference guide