

Final Project Instructions

6.8410: Shape Analysis (Fall 2026)

Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, MIT

Your main assignment for the semester in 6.8410 is an open-ended research project. It is worth 40% of your grade; all parts must be completed to pass the class.

THE BASICS:

- You are welcome to explore any topic related to the lectures in 6.8410. The expectation is that you will not only implement a state-of-the-art technique of your choosing but also that you will extend it in some way, e.g. by considering a new application, proposing a variation or improvement, proving a new theoretical result, or systematically comparing multiple techniques for the same problem.
- Projects can be completed individually or in teams of two. Grading standards are the same regardless of whether you work in a team or individually.
- All parts of the project should be submitted by 8pm on the listed due dates. **Late days cannot be used for the project.** Late work will not receive credit, except in extenuating circumstances with approval by course staff in advance of the deadline and/or after consulting with S³ (undergraduate students) or the Office of Graduate Education (OGE; graduate students).

REQUIRED MILESTONES:

- **Proposal (5 points, due 8pm on October 13, 2026):** Submit a proposal of 500 words or less describing your plan. Cite at least one paper you plan to implement, either for comparison or extension, and indicate what your *new* idea will be beyond implementing existing work. The proposal also has an oral component: on **Tuesday, October 13, 2026**, each team will give a 3-minute presentation of its proposal followed by 4 minutes of Q&A. Presentations will take place during class or, if they do not all fit in the class period, at an additional time on the same day. All team members are expected to attend in person.
- **Checkpoint (5 points, due 8pm on November 10, 2026):** Submit a writeup of ≤ 2 pages describing your progress. Include at least one figure or table with an experiment using your current implementation, as well as a “related work” section citing and describing relevant literature.
- **First draft (10 points, due 8pm on November 24, 2026):** Submit a first draft of your final paper of ≥ 5 pages in the provided L^AT_EX template. This draft should include near-complete version of the introduction and related work sections, as well as reasonable progress on the other sections (see below).
- **Presentation (50 points, on December 9, 2026):** Give a 5–7 minute talk (including a few slides) summarizing your project’s motivation, approach, and results, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A. Presentations will be given in person during class.

- **Final paper (30 points, due 8pm on December 10, 2026):** Submit a writeup of 6–10 pages (including figures, citations) describing your full project and results in the provided L^AT_EX template. This writeup minimally should include the following elements:
 - *Introduction:* A few paragraphs with an intuitive/accessible description of the motivation for your project. What is new? What are the applications?
 - *Related work:* Descriptions of and citations to academic research papers and/or existing software products related to your work.
 - *Technical approach:* A description in words, equations, algorithm listings, and/or flow charts describing your approach.
 - *Results:* Figures/tables illustrating the results of your work, as well as text interpreting these results.
 - *Contributions:* A short description (one paragraph) of the team members' individual contributions to the project. If AI tools were used, this section must also acknowledge that use and describe exactly how the tools were used (see the AI policy below).

Additional sections or adjustments to this basic layout are permitted, so long as the content above is contained in your writeup somewhere. For example, a common approach for academic papers is to separate the mathematical approach from implementation details. If you choose to do a purely theoretical project, you may adjust the sections above as needed. You may reuse text from your proposal/checkpoint.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Consult with Prof. Solomon and/or other members of the staff or Geometric Data Processing group as you work your way through the project. We can provide guidance regarding potential topics, related work, interpreting papers, debugging, theoretical ideas, relevant numerical/optimization techniques, and so on.
- Graduate students and UROPs are welcome to choose projects linked to their ongoing work. But, please make clear in your proposal how the project is separate/independent from contributions to a larger research group effort.
- Any programming language is acceptable. Your project will be evaluated by the results rather than by looking at code; please do *not* include code in your writeup (pseudocode is acceptable for explaining an algorithm). Students are welcome to share their project code online after it is complete.
- If the project is not working out after the proposal or checkpoint, you may switch topics but must send a new proposal to Prof. Solomon.
- Your grade will be determined by technical content (75%) and writeup/presentation quality (25%). If you wish, you can bring drafts to office hours for review/editing.

AI POLICY:

- AI tools may be used on the course project.
- Any use of AI tools must be acknowledged in the relevant writeup (proposal, checkpoint, first draft, and/or final paper), with details on exactly how the tools were used.
- Projects that use AI tools will be judged on the *human* contributions to the project, which should be articulated clearly in the writeup.