17-657 Communication for Software Engineers Spring 2007

Sec. A  Fridays 12:30–2:00 Wean 4623
Sec. B  Wednesdays 3:00–4:30 Craig Street

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office hours by appointment  office hours by appointment

Textbooks


Other resources:


*Technical Writing and Professional Communication 2nd edition*, Olsen and Huckin. Available in the MSE library and on reserve at the SEI library. Along with several other books in the MSE library, this book has information for non-native speakers.

Intercultural Communication Center <http://www.cmu.edu/icc/> for non-native speakers.

Objectives

1. You are a better and more confident communicator at the end of the course than you were at the beginning.
2. You realize that technical communication is rhetorical; that is, that writing and speaking are done in a context that affects the communicator’s choices.
3. You appreciate the importance of analysis, planning, testing, and revision in the writing process.
4. You are able to apply knowledge of the elements of effective communication to critique your own writing and that of your peers.

More specifically, by the end of the 2-semester course, you will know how to

1. Plan, write, and revise documents that achieve their purpose and meet the needs of your readers
2. Write clear, concise prose that is easy for readers to understand
3. Use linguistic principles when developing, evaluating, and revising your work
4. Produce documents and other forms of communication that conform to standard conventions for format and correctness
5. Participate effectively in a peer review and respond effectively to a peer review of your own work
6. Participate effectively in a collaborative writing situation
7. Give oral presentations that are interesting and clear
8. Use visual aids effectively in oral presentations and documents
9. Identify strategies you use to plan and develop communication pieces, and informally evaluate their effectiveness
10. Explain your rationale for revision and determine when it is appropriate to stop revising
Grading
Grading is pass-fail. Assignments will be graded as √+, √, √-.

To earn a passing grade, you must
- submit all assignments
- submit assignments on time
- meet quality standards of √+ or √ (in other words, average 2-3 points)
- actively participate in class discussions and activities

Equivalents
√+ 3 points outstanding (exceptionally high quality)
√ 2 points satisfactory (expected quality)
√- 1 point poor quality
no credit -1 point not done

Ground rules

Handing in homework
You must provide both electronic and printed copies of each assignment.
- Send assignments in email to lhp@cert.org and tkeating@cs.cmu.edu so that we receive them 15 minutes before class time (on Wednesday by 2:45, on Friday by 12:15). We encourage you to send your assignment well ahead of time.
- Bring a printed copy to hand in during class.
- Your grade will be lowered one level for each day an assignment is late. The “next day” starts one minute after the due date and time.
- If you miss a class, your homework assignment is due no later than the day of the next class meeting. Absentees can’t make up in-class activities, including writing and speaking activities.

Proofreading
If we find a typo, missing word, or other indication that you didn’t spell check and proofread, you will get an automatic √-.

Doing an assignment over
We reserve the option to offer a student the opportunity to “do over” an assignment, with a deadline. The grade on the “do over” will replace the original grade. If you are offered a “do over” and miss the deadline, we will not grade the “do over” and the original grade will stand.

How the course works
Class sessions will be a mix of mini-lectures, discussions, and “workshop” activities. Occasionally you will be asked to write or speak during class with little advance warning, giving you experience in performing under pressure. We might give a few short quizzes to encourage you to read the textbook assignments.

Class participation is essential.

You can check Blackboard for homework assignments and general course information.