

17-656 Communication for Software Engineers – Fall 2018

Mondays from 5:00 – 6:20

SCR 265

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Learning Objectives

The main objective is to make you a more confident and capable communicator. By the end of this course, you will:

- Recognize the importance of situational analysis, planning, and revision
- Improve your ability to:
 - Write documents that are clear and concise, that achieve your goals and meet the needs of your readers, and that conform to conventions for format and correctness
 - Give oral presentations that are interesting and clear, and that achieve your goals and those of your audience
 - Collaborate with a team to produce high-quality presentations, documents, and other work products
 - Apply the principles of effective communication to improve your own writing and presentations and to give helpful feedback to your peers
 - Work well within a team on an interpersonal level

How the course works

To accomplish the course objectives, we will focus on the following major themes:

- Foundations of communication
- Public speaking
- Communicating technical information
- Interpersonal and team communication

Figure 1: Major themes and general class topics

Readings, classroom activities, and assignments will align with one or more of these themes (Fig. 1); often they will apply to more than one theme.

Class sessions are a mix of mini-lectures, discussions, and workshop activities. With your input, we will adjust the class to meet your needs. Thus, we keep the seminar flexible. The schedule attached to this syllabus is subject to change depending on students' needs.

During the academic year, an expert in software engineering may join us to discuss his or her views on an aspect of software engineering. The remainder of the time will be devoted to informal discussion. After each visit, you will reflect on the guest's visit in writing. If the visit occurs during the spring semester, each Studio team may be required to present its elevator pitch to the guest expert.

Occasionally, we will ask you to write or speak during class with little advance warning, giving you experience in performing under pressure. We might give some short quizzes to encourage you to read the homework.

Required Prior Knowledge

This course assumes you have fluency in English and are capable of reading, writing, speaking, and listening in that language. The course also requires you to have an open mind and a willingness to try new approaches.

Required textbooks

We have two required textbooks for this course:

- *The Ideal Team Player: How to Recognize and Cultivate The Three Essential Virtues*, 1st Edition, 2016, Patrick Lencioni (Jossey-Bass). ISBN-10: 1119209595; ISBN-13: 978-1119209591
- *Technical Communication, 12th Edition 2017*, Mike Markel (MacMillan Learning | Bedford St. Martin's). ISBN-10: 1319058612; ISBN-13: 978-1319058616

You can purchase both in the campus bookstore. It's fine to buy a used copy, but make sure you have the right edition.

Grading

To pass this course, you must have a B- or higher. **Your grade is your responsibility, so make sure you are monitoring your progress.**

What counts toward your grade?	<p>Homework and assignments</p> <p>Class attendance and participation</p> <p>Class work, including presentations, writing exercises, and quizzes</p> <p>When a reading is assigned and class discussion or activities are planned around that reading, you will be graded on your preparedness and your participation for that specific class period</p>
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Grading scale	Letter Grade	Percentage
	A+	95 - 100
	A	90-94
	A-	85-89
	B+	80-84
	B	75-79
	B-	70-74
	C+	65-69
	C	60-64
	C-	50-59
	R	50 or below

Homework and assignments are meant to help you improve your writing and presenting skills. They can vary based on the specific needs you have in your other MSE courses this semester. Homework and assignments include readings, writing exercises, presentations, and longer papers.

We will distribute (via email and/or on Canvas) detailed information about each assignment as the semester progresses.

Handing in homework and assignments

- Unless otherwise noted, your homework should be in a Word document so that we can add comments to it. Do not simply write a response using Canvas's native text tool or submit a PDF.
- Upload your homework or assignment to the corresponding Canvas assignment. If you need help, let us know and we can cover it in class.
- Name your files *YourLastNameFirstName_AssignmentName* (for example, KolenichPeter_GladwellResponse).
- Put a heading at the top of every document. This should include your name at the very least. Other common information would be the date and assignment name.
- Late submissions will receive a zero (R).
 - An exception may be made one (1) time if you contact both instructors **before** the due date to let us know and if your assignment is submitted **no later than 3 days** past the original date.
 - If you have special circumstances that require more than a 3-day extension, please contact us immediately.
- Your grade will drop one level if there are careless errors (see *Proofreading*, below).

Proofreading

Get into the habit of proofreading carefully so that your documents make a good impression on readers. If we find a typo, missing word, or other indication that you did not spell check *and* proofread, we will lower your grade regardless of the quality of the content.

Re-doing an assignment

At times, you might be asked to redo an assignment to potentially improve your grade. This opportunity is available by invitation only *and* when both of these criteria are met:

- the instructors see a strong effort in your original assignment
- there is an identified skill you can improve by redoing the assignment

If you are invited to redo an assignment, the redo is due in one week. You can decline the opportunity.

Conflicts

If you have a conflict between a homework deadline and a religious holiday, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can resolve the issue according to university guidelines.

Class attendance and participation

This class is most effective when you actively participate in discussions, group work, and class exercises. In order to participate, you must attend class.

If you must miss a class, contact Jennifer and Peter (in advance if possible). Absentees cannot make up in-class activities or get credit for class participation.

When we calculate your final grade, we will take into account your attendance and participation.

Use the GCC for help with writing

For assistance with the written or oral communication assignments in this class, visit the Global Communication Center (GCC). GCC tutors can provide instruction on a range of communication topics and can help you improve your papers and presentations. The GCC is a free service, open to all students, and located in Hunt Library. You can make tutoring appointments directly on the GCC website: <http://www.cmu.edu/gcc>. You may also visit the GCC website to find out about communication workshops offered throughout the academic year.

Academic Integrity

Other than while participating in group projects, you are expected to complete your own writing. For additional information, see Carnegie Mellon's Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism at <http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html>.

Bottom line: do not cheat, plagiarize, or otherwise copy the work of others! If you have questions on whether you can use a specific phrase, term, figure, or anything else – please contact us prior to turning in your assignment. Cheating is cause for failing the class.

Accommodations

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, we encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with us (an all your teachers) as early in the semester as possible. We will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from

accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, we encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

Student Wellness

Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to friends, faculty, or family members you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal or in danger of self-harm, call someone immediately, day or night:

CaPS: 412-268-2922

Re:solve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226

If the situation is life threatening, call the police

On campus: CMU Police: 412-268-2323

Off campus: 911

If you have questions about this or your coursework, please let us know. Thank you, and have a great semester!

Weekly Schedule: Readings and Assignments

Important: Pay attention to due dates. Some assignments are due by the start of class. Others are due later. We do not accept late work, so we recommend making a calendar to help remind you of each assignment's due date. If a due date conflicts with a religious holiday, please let us know so we can work around the conflict.

Date	Class Agenda	Assigned (see Canvas for details)

<p>Week 1 Aug 28</p>	<p>Required preparation None</p> <p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class introduction • Intro to technical communication <p>In-class activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction/ice breaker 	<p>Homework 1a: Due by Sept. 4 Class Start</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Markel Chapter 10, pp. 213-228 <p>Homework 1b: Due by Sept. 6 EOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Handley Chapter 55, "Cite as You Write" (3 pages) • Review Markel text Appendix Part A and Part B on paraphrasing, quoting, and documenting sources. • Journal 1: How did you get here, and where are you going?
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<p>Week 2 Sept 4</p>	<p>Required preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read Markel pages 213-228 ● Bring your Markel books to class <p>Topic Writing workshop: grammar and readability</p> <p>In-class activity Can you fix this writing?</p>	<p>Homework 2a: Due by Sept 11 class start</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read Markel Chapter 10, pp. 228 - 241 <p>Homework 2b: Due EOD Sept 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learn about the GCC ● Read “Strong Body Paragraphs” ● Read Markel Chapter 9, “Emphasizing Important Information.”
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<p>Week 3 Sept 11</p>	<p>Required preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Markel pages 228 - 241 • Bring your Markel books to class <p>Topic Writing workshop: grammar and readability</p> <p>In-class activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you fix this writing? • Collaborative memo 	<p>Homework 3a: Due by Sept 18 Class Start</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish collaborative memo draft started in class • Read “Humanizing Peer Reviews, pp 1-3 and page 5 <p>Homework 3b: Due by EOD Sept 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Markel Chapter 4, “Writing Collaboratively” pp 61 - 72 • Reading quiz: Collaborative writing and peer reviews • Optional: Read Wolfe Chapter 6, “Revising with Others”
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<p>Week 4 Sept 18</p>	<p>Required preparation Each team: Bring 2 hard copies of your collaborative memo draft to class</p> <p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Writing & Peer Reviews • Active listening <p>In-class activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer review of collaborative memo 	<p>Homework 4a due EOD Sept 27:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit final version of collaborative memo <p>Homework 4b: Due Oct 9 class start and EOD Oct 12 (note this is a Friday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Mackin, "Cultural Understanding" • Read Gladwell excerpt & write response (you will have a draft due by the Oct 9 class)
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<p>Week 5 Sept 25</p>	<p>Required preparation None</p> <p>Topic Listening</p> <p>In-class activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room 703 game • Listening game (if time) • Start on 703 response (if time) 	<p>Homework 5a: Due by Oct 2 class start:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Ideal Team Player” to page 40 and post to class discussion board <p>Homework 5b: Due EOD Oct 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Chen, “The Dullest, Most Vital Skill...” and apply to your Room 703 response • Finish Room 703 response
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<p>Week 6 Oct 2</p>	<p>Required preparation Read "Ideal Team Player" to page 40 and post to class discussion board</p> <p>Topic Being a team player What it means to be a team</p> <p>In-class activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sweet stories• Discuss Lencioni reading	<p>Homework 6a: Due by Oct 9 class start</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read "Ideal Team Player" pages 41 - 54• Refresh your memories on Markel Chapter 9 - "Writing Clear, Informative Paragraphs"• Continue working on your Gladwell draft <p>Homework 6b: Due by EOD Oct 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading Response: The Ideal Team Player
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<p>Week 7 Oct 9</p>	<p>Required preparation Read "Ideal Team Player" pages 41 - 62 Bring your Gladwell draft response to class</p> <p>Topics Strong body paragraphs Team player discussion</p> <p>In-class activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paragraph workshop• Pair and share: "Ideal Team Player" discussion questions	<p>Homework 7: Due by EOD Oct 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read "Ideal Team Player" pages 55- 88 and post to team discussion board.
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<p>Week 8 Oct 16</p>	<p>Required preparation Bring your Gladwell drafts and the peer feedback you got during last class.</p> <p>Topic Citations/plagiarism</p> <p>Feedback on peer reviews</p> <p>In-class activities TBD</p>	<p>Homework 8 due by Oct 23 class start:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read “Ideal Team Player” pages 89 - 134. ● Read NPR article ● Read Markel Chapter 5, “Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose” ● <p>TEAM PRESENTATION: Due by EOD Nov 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborative presentations
<p>Week 9 Oct 23</p>	<p>Required preparation TBD</p> <p>Topics Audience and purpose</p> <p>In-class activities Discussion: Final Project</p>	<p>Homework 9: Due by Oct 30 class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read “Ideal Team Player” pages 135 - 152. ● Read Markel Chapter 12 pages 294 - 296, page 300. Skim pages 307 - 326 and refer to them when creating graphics.

<p>Week 10 Oct 30</p>	<p>Required preparation Required reading Topics Graphics In-class activities TBD</p>	<p>Homework 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Ideal Team Player” pages 153 - 161 and respond to questions on discussion board. • Sign up for impromptu speeches
<p>Week 11 Nov 6</p>	<p>Required preparation None Topics Impromptu speeches In-class activities: Imprromptu speeches</p>	<p>Homework 11: Due EOD Nov 15th</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Ideal Team Player” pages 162 - 173. • Journal: Apply a category to yourself

<p>Week 12 Nov 13</p>	<p>Required preparation Your presentation and memos must be uploaded to Canvas</p> <p>In-class activities Presentations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Week 13 Nov 20</p>	<p>In-class activities Presentations</p>	<p>Homework 13: Due: EOD Nov 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Ideal Team Player” pages 174-211. • Reflect on your recent teamwork (Collaborative Presentation assignment), using the survey on pages 192-193
<p>Week 14 Nov 27</p>	<p>In-class activities Presentations</p>	<p>Final Project: Due Dec 12 EOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self assessment of project (individual) • Peer assessment of project (team)

Week 15 Dec 4	In-class activities Presentations	
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Navigate to the **MODULES** page to access each week's assignment.