

Oregon Master of Software Engineering

OMSE 513: Professional Communication Skills For Software Engineers

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Course Description

The success of a software project hinges on the people involved and how well they communicate. This course teaches the principles and practice of effective oral and written communication for technical and general audiences. Oral communication emphasis is on giving individual and team presentations, leading and participating in teams, and running effective meetings. The focus of technical writing is on composing clear and concise business communication. You will receive instructor and peer critiques of your written and spoken messages as well as view videotapes of presentations you make during the course of the 10 weeks.

Each week, you can expect to discuss communication topics, interact with each other in class, and deliver short presentations. Given this interactive format, it is imperative that you read the corresponding material prior to each class meeting so that you are prepared to practice relevant communication strategies.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to

- Apply principles of effective communication in daily professional and personal interactions.
- Write clear and concise business communications.
- Participate effectively in meetings and on teams.
- Present well-designed and delivered individual and team presentations.
- Prepare effective visuals for written and oral presentations.
- Give constructive feedback to others.
- Set, monitor, and assess goals for self-improvement.

Required Course Materials

Presenting to Win: The Art of Telling Your Story by Jerry Weissman, 2006 ISBN 0131875108

Improving Business Communication Skills by Deborah Roebuck, 4th Edition
ISBN 0131184598

Handouts and links as assigned by instructor

Graded Requirements

Participation in online discussions	20%
Presentation outline & visuals – draft	10%
Presentation final & delivery	10%
Team proposal	20%
Team presentation	20%
Team evaluation	10%
Self-evaluation paper	10%

Academic Integrity

You are encouraged to discuss the course material and the assignments with other students, but all assigned work must be done individually unless the course professor explicitly tells you otherwise. You are expected to read and review a document detailing the policy on academic integrity. Please contact the professor if you have any doubts about the propriety of your course activities.

Graded Assignments

PARTICIPATION – 20%

Class discussions provide opportunities to practice specific communication skills and competencies. You should be prepared to give examples and ask questions of both the instructor and other class members. Substantive participation in class discussions counts toward 20% of your total grade. Your verbal communication skills will also be assessed via the discussions, and individual feedback provided by the instructor as appropriate.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentation Outline and Visuals draft – 10%. You will develop an informative technical presentation on a topic of your choice. The topic should be carefully selected so that it is relevant to the members of this class. The presentation must have an introduction, body, and conclusion, and demonstrate understanding of the information presented in class regarding use of visuals. This draft will be updated based on instructor feedback, and used to support your oral presentation when it is finalized.

Presentation final and delivery – 10%. You will update your outline/visuals based on instructor feedback and deliver your presentation for the class.

PARTICIPATING IN AND LEADING MEETINGS and ACTIVITIES

You will participate as a team in the development of a team proposal and presentation. This team work will be supported by activities aimed at practicing problem solving, negotiation, and collaboration skills. You will rotate leading the in-class team meetings. Your participation in these team activities will be included in your class participation grade.

TEAM PROJECT

Team Meetings / Participation. You will be expected to work on a team project with a small group of students in our course. At least one of the team meetings will be scheduled and conducted outside of class, and the minutes of those meetings submitted to the instructor. Feedback from team members on participation will be solicited at the end of this assignment.

Team Proposal – 20%. You will work in teams to select a software engineering-related topic that can be developed into a formal proposal. Once the topic has been approved, team members can proceed to research and develop a professionally written proposal.

Team Proposal Presentation – 20%. In accordance with each team's proposal, team members will hold a 15- to 20-minute discussion of their submitted proposal with the instructor. The presentation should demonstrate the principles of effective organization and delivery of technical information and should not simply follow the format of the written proposal. Divide the presentation parts among the members. Each team's presentation will be evaluated primarily on how well the presentation was designed for a particular audience, the clarity of its purpose (thesis) and main points, effectiveness of visuals, coordination among team members, and overall management of group dynamics. On the date of the presentation, each team will provide the instructor with an outline of the presentation and electronic copy of the visuals.

Team Evaluation – 10%. You will be expected to provide feedback to the instructor on the process and effectiveness of your team throughout the proposal development, research, and presentation process. A format for this evaluation will be provided.

ACTION PLANNING & SELF ASSESSMENT

Self-Evaluation – 10%. You will develop a personal action communication plan during the first week of class. At the end of the term you will assess your attainment of your goals. Based on feedback from instructor, peers, and videotape of an oral presentation, you will write a self-evaluation document that evaluates your communication strengths, areas where you improved during the course, and opportunities for continued improvement.

Course Outline / Schedule of Topics

Week 1	<p>Course Overview</p> <p>Written Communication</p> <p>Organization, Audience, Editing and Polish</p> <p>Reading: Improving Business Communication Skills pp. 1-63 (Chapters 1 and 2)</p> <p>Assignment: Personal Action Planning</p>
Week 2	<p>Presentations</p> <p>Organization, Audience, Content and Impact</p> <p>Reading: Presenting to Win: The Art of Telling your Story pp. 3-107 (Chapters 1-5)</p> <p>Due: Personal Action Plan</p>
Week 3	<p>Presentations</p> <p>Overcoming Anxiety, Delivering the message, Designing and Using Visuals</p> <p>Reading: Presenting to Win: The Art of Telling your Story pp. 109-213 (Chapters 6-10)</p>
Week 4	<p>Influence Skills</p> <p>Self Assessment and Influence techniques</p> <p>Reading: Presenting to Win: The Art of Telling your Story pp. 189-213 (Chapter 10)</p> <p>Reading: Influence Tactics article</p>
Week 5	<p>Meetings</p> <p>Meeting Guidelines and the Challenge of Virtual Teams</p> <p>Reading: Improving Business Communication Skills, pp. 267-313 (Chapters 10 and 11)</p> <p>Individual Presentations</p>
Week 6	<p>Formal Proposals</p> <p>Writing & Delivery of Reports, Business Plans and Proposals</p> <p>Reading: Improving Business Communication Skills, pp. 176-214 (Chapter 8)</p> <p>Presenting to Win: The Art of Telling your Story, pp. 215-235</p>

	(Chapters 11 and 12)
Week 7	<p>Team Project work week</p> <p>Work in teams on team projects</p> <p>Handouts: Team Project and Team Evaluation documents</p> <p>Individual Presentations</p>
Week 8	<p>Team Project work week</p> <p>Work in teams on team projects</p> <p>Handouts: Team Project and Team Evaluation documents</p> <p>Individual Presentations</p>
Week 9	<p>Feedback</p> <p>Work in teams on team projects</p> <p>Individual Presentations</p>
Week 10	<p>Final Presentations</p> <p>Due: Team Proposal, Self Assessment & Team Evaluation</p>