

Oregon Master of Software Engineering

Fall 2006

**OMSE 513: Professional Communication Skills For Software Engineers
(Date TBD), 6-8:50 p.m.**

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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 your in-class presentations.

In every class meeting, you can expect to discuss communication topics, interact with each other during in-class activities, 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

Books TBD – I am looking for some good texts on communication that cover the face-to-face and online media.

Recommended Web References

www.bedfordstmartins.com/alred

Companion website for Handbook of Technical Writing and Business Writers Handbook. Includes examples, case studies, and tools.

www.mhhe.com/business/buscom/lesikar/student/resources.htm

Contains information on writing and oral communication.

www.presentations.com/

Articles on giving presentations.

www.ou.edu/idc/Res_Intercultural.htm

List of intercultural communication web resources.

Graded Requirements

Participation in activities and discussions	10%
Written memo	10%
Presentation outline & visuals - draft	10%
Presentation final & delivery	20%
Team proposal	20%
Team presentation	20%
Self-evaluation paper	10%

Academic Integrity

You are encouraged to exchange ideas and discuss concepts in individual and group projects. However, appropriate attribution for quotations or paraphrased information from someone else's work must be given. Failure to do so is considered irresponsible and in violation of "OMSE Policy on Cheating and Academic Integrity." You will receive a copy of this policy in the first class.

Graded Assignments

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class sessions provide opportunities to practice specific communication skills and competencies. Discussion in class is also important. You should come prepared to give examples and ask questions of both the instructor and other class members. Discussion and activities are not graded, but count toward your participation grade. If you miss a class, contact the instructor in advance to determine how and if an assignment can be made up. Grade points will be deducted from assignments turned in late. You are responsible for all material covered in any missed class. Videotapes of class sessions will be available to you to obtain content information.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

You will submit examples of business communications. The goal is to compose communications that are reader-focused, well organized, and concisely written.

Persuasive Document/Email. You will write a persuasive memo to a manager or department member that proposes a new idea (service, product, project) or proposes a change in policy or workflow. **Email to my WebCT mailbox by beginning of (date TBD) class.**

INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS

Informative Presentation draft. 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 in front of the class when it is finalized. **Topic proposal due (date TBD), draft outline and visuals (date TBD) – Email to my WebCT mailbox by beginning of class on specified dates.** Instructor feedback will be provided by (date TBD).

Informative Presentation final. You will update your outline/visuals based on instructor feedback and deliver your presentation for the class audience. There are several class meetings available for this presentation. Once you've signed up for a specific class meeting, you will be scheduled to deliver your presentation on that evening. Your presentation will be videotaped for your personal use when completing your communication self-evaluation paper at the end of the term. (See the instructor if you have a scheduling conflict, as this is a course requirement.) **Presentations will be delivered in class on (date TBD). Final outlines/visuals due upon delivery of presentation.**

Self-Evaluation Paper. 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. **Action plan due to WebCT email box by (date TBD). Self evaluation due one week after presentation delivery – no later than beginning of class on (date TBD) in order to be included in grade.**

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. There will be available for work on the team proposal and presentation. Everyone on the team is expected to participate. If you miss a team meeting, you will need to make sure to engage with your teammates either face-to-face, by phone, or online to ensure that you are contributing to the team. Feedback from team members on participation will be solicited at the end of this assignment.

Team Proposal. 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. The assignment requirements and schedule for completion will be presented in class. **Deliver to instructor in printed form at beginning of (date TBD) class.**

Team Proposal Presentation. In accordance with each team’s proposal, team members will give a 15- to 20-minute presentation. 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 evening of the presentation, each team will provide the instructor with an outline of the presentation and hardcopy of the visuals. Each team will also prepare a one-page presentation agenda for class members. **All Team Presentations will be held on the last class date (date TBD).**

Team Evaluation. 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. **Team evaluations will be due via email to my WebCT mailbox by 5:00 PM on (date TBD).**

Course Outline / Schedule of Activities & Assignments

Week 1	<p>Course Overview</p> <p>Discussion: The Communication Process Assessing your Skills Action Planning</p> <p>Activity: <i>Introductions</i></p>	
Week 2	<p>Written Communication</p> <p>Discussion: Selecting your Medium The Power of Language</p> <p>Activities: <i>Edit and Connect</i> <i>Language Softeners</i></p>	
Week 3	<p>Presentations</p> <p>Discussion: Informative Presentations: Audience Analysis Organization and Content</p> <p>Activity: <i>One-Minute Messages</i></p> <p><i>Team meeting</i></p>	

Week 4	<p>Presentations</p> <p>Discussion: Informative Presentations Overcoming Anxiety Delivering the message Designing and Using Visuals</p>	
Week 5	<p>Influence Skills</p> <p>Discussion: Influence techniques What is Collaboration? Team evaluation process</p> <p>Activity: <i>Assess your Influence Skills</i> <i>Team formation/planning</i></p>	
Week 6	<p>Meetings</p> <p>Discussion: Discussion: Meeting Guide</p> <p>Team meetings on your own</p>	
Week 7	<p>Activity: Informative Presentations <i>(videotaped)</i></p>	
Week 8	<p>Feedback</p> <p>Discussion: Giving constructive feedback</p> <p>Team meetings on your own</p>	
Week 9	<p>Happy Thanksgiving!!!</p>	
Week 10	<p>Informative Presentations <i>(videotaped)</i></p>	
Exam Week	<p>Team Proposal Presentations <i>(videotaped)</i></p>	