

Software Engineering 3I03

Communication Skills

Fall 2004

Course Outline

Revised: 10 September 2004

Note: This course outline contains important information that may affect your grade. You should retain it throughout the semester as you will be assumed to be familiar with the rules specified in this document.

Instructor

Dr. William M. Farmer
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Course Web Site

<http://www.cas.mcmaster.ca/~wmfarmer/SE-3I03-04/>

Lecture Schedule

TRF 11:30–12:20 JHE A102

Teaching Assistants

Sabina Horton (hortonse@mcmaster.ca)

Calendar Description

“Writing technical (reference) documentation and user (introductory) software documentation; document structure, scientific writing. The language of legal contracts. Oral presentation methodologies.”

Mission

The mission of this course is to teach students the importance of effective communication and to improve their skills in writing and speaking on technical subjects. The course will discuss the challenges of documenting software and various techniques that can be used to describe and explain software products.

Required Text

D. Beer, ed., *Writing and Speaking in the Technology Professions: A Practical Guide*, Second Edition, Wiley-IEEE, 2003. ISBN: 0-471-44473-1.

Optional Texts

E. H. Fine and J. P. Josephson, *Nitty-Gritty Grammar: A Not-So-Serious Guide to Clear Communication*, Ten Speed Press, 1998. ISBN: 0-898-15966-0.

P. Sebranek, *Writers Inc: A Student Handbook for Writing and Learning*, Great Source Education Group, 1995. ISBN: 0-669-47186-0.

Work Plan

There will be lectures, individual writing and speaking exercises, a group project, a midterm test, and a final exam. The lectures will be given by the instructor during regular class sessions. The writing exercises will be done out of class, and the speaking exercises will be done in class. Pairs of students will do a group project including both written and oral presentation.

The midterm test will be held 11:30-12:20 Friday, October 29, 2004. The final exam will be 2 hours long. It will take place on the date scheduled by the University. Both the midterm test and the final exam will include writing exercises.

Log Book

Each student is expected to keep a detailed, up-to-date log book that records all the steps performed on the exercises and group project. Sources of information, consultations with instructors and fellow students, lessons learned, etc. should be recorded. The entries in the log book should be listed chronologically with dates and times.

A copy of the student's log book must be included as part of each exercise and project.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at

http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Your work must be your own. Plagiarism and copying will not be tolerated! If it is discovered that you plagiarized or copied, or that you have consulted with people not mentioned in your log book, it will be considered as academic dishonesty.

In this course we will be using the software package Turnitin which is designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students may be asked to defend their written work orally.

Other Policy Statements

1. Significant study and reading outside of class is required.
2. Regular class attendance is required. Attendance will be taken, and absences will be excused only in highly exceptional cases.
3. The student is expected to ask questions during class.
4. You may want to discuss the exercises and group project with your fellow students. *If you do that, you must record a summary of your discussions in your log book including a list of all those with whom you had discussions and a description of what information you received.* It is part of your professional responsibility to give credit to all who have contributed to your work.
5. A student may use his or her texts and notes during the midterm test and final exam.
6. Papers and oral presentations may not be done late and the midterm test may not be taken later without *prior* approval from the instructor.
7. The instructor reserves the right to require a deferred final exam to be oral.
8. The Faculty of Engineering is concerned with ensuring an environment that is free of all adverse discrimination. If there is a problem, that cannot be resolved by discussion among the persons concerned, individuals are reminded that they should contact their Department Chair and the Human Rights and Equity Services (HRES) office as soon as possible.

9. Suggestions on how to improve the course and the instructor's teaching methods are always welcomed.

Grading

The course grade will be based on the student's performance on the exercises, group project, midterm test, and final exam as follows:

Exercises	30%
Group project	30%
Midterm test	20%
Final exam	20%
Total	100%

Note: A student's final score will be reduced by one half point for each missed class (there is no penalty for the first *four* missed classes).

Syllabus

- 00 Preliminaries
- 01 Oral Presentations
- 02 Writing Technical Documents
- 03 Technical Reports
- 04 Proposals 1 lecture
- 05 Research Papers 1 lecture
- 06 Web Design 3 lectures
- 07 Software Documentation 3 lectures
- 08 Software Manuals 1 lecture
- 09 Coding Style 2 lectures