

Carnegie Mellon University

Dietrich College
Information Systems

67-202 – The Softer Side of Software

Spring Semester, Mini A3, 2018

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Meetings: Tuesday & Thursday, 3:00PM - 4:20PM
Scaife Hall 219

Instructor: Brian Gray
Senior Consultant, CSM | CGI
Performer, Teacher, New Artist Ambassador | Arcade Comedy Theater

Office Hours: IS Conference Room, Porter Hall 222
Tuesdays, 1:30 - 2:30 pm or by appointment on Tuesday or Thursday
Email and phone meetings also available

Email: bmgray@andrew.cmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Even the best technologist has to rely on soft skills in their lives and jobs—whether they want a team member to take their constructive feedback or an angel investor to understand why their product is better than the competition. Classes will cover delivering engaging presentations, writing emails co-workers want to read, conducting meetings and workshops, delivering criticism and more.

This mini course requires students to participate in a combination of readings, discussions, in-class simulations, theater exercises, individual and group projects to practice soft skills. This course has some space available to students outside of the Information Systems program.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have achieved the following learning objectives:

- Communicate ideas effectively in a formal setting, e.g. presentation or workshop.
- Communicate ideas effectively one-on-one or in small groups.
- Synthesize learning from readings, discussion, skill building exercises and role plays and apply it in a professional context.
- Assess their own abilities on soft skills as they learn and practice them.
- Develop approaches to improve their abilities for a given soft skill.

ASSESSMENTS

In order to successfully complete the course, students will be expected to complete the activities listed below. Additional details about each activity will be provided in class and provided on the Canvas site. Weights indicate the contribution to the final course grade. Assignments are due to the Canvas assignment system or other location specified by 3pm on their due dates.

A note about soft skills evaluation: students will enter class with various levels of soft skills aptitude. Soft skills projects evaluation will not be assessed against an absolute measure, but depend on factors such as a student's ability to accurately self-assess their aptitude at the skill, ability to take feedback and so forth. These assessments will be graded by rubric and made clear for each assessment.

Attendance (5%)

Because participation and discussion is such a key component of class, regular and punctual attendance is required. Each class will have a sign-in sheet for you to sign-in when you arrive. At 3pm, I will switch to a late sign-in sheet. See course policies for more details.

In-Class Activities and Discussions (15%)

Each week will include in-class exercises or discussion. Active class participation in in-class activities and contribution to class discussion is expected from each individual. I will make an effort to ensure that there are many ways to engage in these activities and air time is not only given to the loudest or most extroverted students. In-class activities cannot be made up for unexcused absences.

Weekly Reflection Journal (40%)

Throughout the class, students will keep a journal to document reflections on readings, challenges, in-class exercises and personal progress. Entries will be turned in most Thursdays and evaluated according to a rubric.

Lightning Talk Presentation (10%)

Prepare a "lightning talk" (4 minutes or less) on any topic you are passionate about. It may or may not be technical. Use the tools discussed in class to effectively persuade or inform the class. More information will be provided closer to the due date.

Email Revision (10%)

Choose an email that is 150 words or more to revise. The email should be important, have essential information to convey and require a reply. Revise the email according to the guidelines discussed in class. Include the original and revised email with subjects for both.

Retrospective Facilitation (20%)

During the final class, small teams will facilitate a retrospective workshop intended to elicit feedback about the class from fellow students. This will make use of many of the soft skills presented during the course: workshop facilitation, teamwork, public speaking, confidence, empathy. Evaluation includes a written assessment of the group process.

The final course grade will be calculated using the following categories:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Interpretation
A	90.0-100.0	Excellent, exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course work and goes well beyond the basics.
B	80.0-89.9	Above average, fully meets average understanding as evidenced in coursework and fully understands the basics and can deal with concepts somewhat beyond that level.
C	70.0-79.9	Average, meets minimum expectations and satisfies course requirements.
D	60.0-69.9	Below average, meets many minimum expectations and satisfies all or most course requirements.
R	0.0-59.9	Fails to meet minimum expectations in understanding and coursework as evidenced by performance and submission of graded elements/

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Attendance and Preparation for Class: You are expected to attend all class sessions and be prepared to participate in discussion. Anything listed in “Required media and readings” or “Prep” is to be completed prior to class.

Absences: Absence from class hurts your ability to achieve the course outcomes and makes it impossible for me to evaluate your participation in discussions and in-class activities. As such, good attendance will improve your grade in class. You will receive 1 point for every class you attend and 1/2 point for every class you attend on time. At the end of class, your Attendance score is your total out of a possible 20 points:

$$14 \text{ classes} \times 1 \text{ point each} - 1 \text{ free class} + (14 \text{ classes} \times 1/2 \text{ timeliness point}) = 20$$

In the event you have an excused absence, you must contact me ahead of time. An excused absence includes a job interview, religious holiday, medical emergency, university-related travel, and so forth. In these situations, get a “classroom buddy” who can fill you in on what you missed.

Assignments and Late Policy: Assignments are due promptly by 3:00 PM (the beginning of class) on the dates indicated. All assignments must be submitted to the assignment boxes on Canvas, or otherwise, as instructed.

Most assignments are cumulative or presented in class on the day they are due, therefore late assignments will not receive credit. It is expected that all work will be submitted on time. The exceptions are the Reflection Journals and the Email Revisions, which will be reduced by one letter grade each day it is late up to 3 days. No credit will be given beyond 3 days late. Computer or equipment failure is not an acceptable reason for turning in an assignment late.

Academic Integrity: It is expected that the work you do for this course is your own. It is your ethical responsibility to identify and properly attribute the conceptual sources of work submitted. Failure to do so is dishonest and is the basis for various actions including a charge of violations of academic integrity. More information at: [Policies on Academic Integrity](#).

An Invitation to Students with Learning Disabilities: If you wish to request an accommodation due to a documented disability, please inform your instructor and contact: Office of Disability Resources, 412.268.6121, or email Ms. Catherine Getchell at: getchell@cmu.edu. Additional resources for students with disabilities can be found at this site:

<https://www.cmu.edu/student-affairs/orientation/orientation/disabilities.html>

Health and wellness

Carnegie Mellon University and I believe in hard work but a balanced lifestyle. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. 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 often 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 a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

Contacting the Instructor: The easiest and most reliable way to get in touch with me is by email. Feel free to send me email if you have a question related to the course. I will respond as soon as I can but not always instantaneously. You can also stop by my office during office hours.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change depending on time and class flow.

Week / Date	Coverage, Readings and Assignments
1 – Tues Jan 16	TOPICS: Introduction, Course Overview & Making Space
2 – Thurs Jan 18	TOPICS: Active Listening <i>DUE: Weekly Journal</i>
3 – Tues Jan 23	TOPICS: Being Confident Guest Facilitator: Kristy Nolen, Creative Director, Arcade Comedy Theater REQUIRED MEDIA AND READINGS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kouzes and Posner, <i>The Leadership Challenge</i>. The Five Practices and Ten Commitments of Leadership, pp. 14 - 26.
4 – Thurs Jan 25	TOPICS: Leading <i>DUE: Weekly Journal</i>
5 – Tues Jan 30	TOPICS: Presenting Ideas, Preparing Eberly Center: Student Surveys administered at the beginning of class. PREP: Bring an existing presentation or presentation topic REQUIRED MEDIA AND READINGS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Communication Center, Designing PowerPoint Slides. https://www.cmu.edu/gcc/handouts/powerpoint-handout-pdf - Global Communication Center, Presentation Strategies. https://www.cmu.edu/gcc/handouts/handouts-new/presentation-strategies.pdf - TED's secret to great public speaking: https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_anderson_teds_secret_to_great_public_speaking
6 – Thurs Feb 1	TOPICS: Presenting Ideas, Delivering Each student will present their Lightning Talk. <i>DUE: Lightning Talk Presentation</i>
7 – Tues Feb 6	TOPICS: Writing Clearly, Emails PREP: Bring an email to revise that is 150 words or more REQUIRED MEDIA AND READINGS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Communication Center, Concision Strategies: https://www.cmu.edu/gcc/handouts/concision-strategies-pdf

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Communication Center, Known-New Contract: https://www.cmu.edu/gcc/handouts/old-new-handout-pdf - Spolsky, Joel. <i>Painless Functional Specifications - Part 4: Tips</i>. https://www.joelonsoftware.com/2000/10/15/painless-functional-specifications-part-4-tips/ <p>OPTIONAL READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Williams, Joseph. <i>Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace</i>. Actions, Characters, Cohesion and Coherence, Concision - Spolsky, Joel. <i>Painless Functional Specifications - Parts 1-3</i>. https://www.joelonsoftware.com/2000/10/02/painless-functional-specifications-part-1-why-bother/
8 – Thurs Feb 8	<p>TOPICS: Writing Clearly, Documentation</p> <p><i>DUE: Email Revision</i></p>
9 – Tues Feb 13	<p>TOPICS: Handling Conflict Part 1, Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guest Facilitator: Aaron Erb, Restorative Justice Coordinator, Center for Victims <p>REQUIRED MEDIA AND READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AORTA, <i>Tips and Tools for Addressing Systemic Power</i>. http://aorta.coop/portfolio_page/tips-and-tools-for-addressing-systemic-power/
10 – Thurs Feb 15	<p>TOPICS: Handling Conflict Part 2, Power Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guest Facilitator: Aaron Erb, Restorative Justice Coordinator, Center for Victims <p><i>DUE: Weekly Journal</i></p>
11 – Tues Feb 20	<p>TOPICS: Showing Emotional Intelligence & Empathy</p> <p>PREP: Bring role play scenario, a time in your personal, school or work life when communication was difficult.</p> <p>REQUIRED MEDIA AND READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is Emotional Intelligence? (video): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgUCyWhJf6s - Bradberry, Travis. <i>Emotional Intelligence 2.0</i>. What Emotional Intelligence Looks Like: Understanding the Four Skills, pp. 23 - 50 <p>OPTIONAL READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Dark Side of Emotional Intelligence: https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/01/the-dark-side-of-emotional-intelligence/282720/

<p>12 – Thurs Feb 22</p>	<p>TOPICS: Facilitating Productive Meetings, Planning</p> <p>REQUIRED MEDIA AND READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AORTA’s Anti-Oppressive Facilitation Guide: http://aorta.coop/portfolio_page/anti-oppressive-facilitation/ - Conference call in real life (video): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYu_bGbZiiQ <p>RESOURCES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ben Linder’s Retrospective Exercises Toolbox: https://www.benlinders.com/exercises/ - Fun Retrospectives: http://www.funretrospectives.com/ <p><i>DUE: Weekly Journal</i></p>
<p>13 – Tues Feb 27</p>	<p>TOPICS: Open Topic</p> <p>REQUIRED MEDIA AND READINGS: TBD</p>
<p>14 – Thurs Mar 1</p>	<p>TOPICS: Facilitating Productive Meetings, Running</p> <p>Each team will have 20 minutes to facilitate their retrospective workshop.</p> <p><i>DUE: Retrospective Facilitation</i></p>
<p>Finals Week</p>	<p><i>DUE: Final Weekly Journal by Tues, Feb 27 at 3pm</i></p>