



Carnegie Mellon University
Master of
Software Engineering

17-604 Communications for Software Leaders II

Spring 2026, 3 units

Section A, Tuesdays, 9:30 am – 10:50 am, 3SC 265, IPE
Section B, Tuesdays, 12:30 pm – 1:50 pm, 3SC 265, IPE
Section C, Thursdays, 9:30 am – 10:50 am, 3SC 265, IPE
Section E, Thursdays, 12:30 pm – 1:50 pm, 3SC 265, IPE
Section D, Wednesdays, 7:00 pm – 8:20 pm (Pittsburgh local time), REMOTE

Instructor Information

Name: Dominick (Nick) Frollini
Contact Info: nfrollini@cmu.edu; 412-268-5359 (office)
Office Location: 300 S. Craig Street – Room 274
Student Drop-In Hours: By Appointment/To Be Announced

TA Information

Please see Canvas for up-to-date information on any teaching assistants assigned to support this course.

Course Description

Communications skills are fundamental to professionals in all fields, from architecture to software engineering to zoology, because they enable the exchange of ideas and the completion of organizational goals. The ability to identify an audience, to develop clear, persuasive presentations and written documents, and to handle the complex interactions that occur in the workplace make the difference between those who participate in an organization and those who lead it.

This is the second course in a two-semester sequence designed to help you build and refine your skills so that you can communicate as a leader in your professional work. Through a combination of in-class exercises, case studies, projects, presentations, and written assignments, you will assess your current skill level and build upon it.

Prior Knowledge/Prerequisites

17-603 Communications for Software Leaders I is a prerequisite to this course.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this semester, you will be able to:

1. Develop and execute strategies for communicating within an organization;
2. Develop and execute strategies for communicating outside of an organization;
3. Understand the role that emotional intelligence plays in communication;
4. Enhance your skills at listening;
5. Build skills to manage intercultural communications issues;
6. Manage teams and team meetings effectively;
7. Engage effectively in negotiations;
8. Give presentations with increasing confidence; and
9. Refine your understanding of the role that ethics plays in communication.

Learning Resources

We will use one **required textbook** this semester; this textbook was also used during the fall semester for 17-603 Communications for Software Managers I:

Leadership Communication 4th Edition

By Deborah Barrett

ISBN-13: 978-0073403205

ISBN-10: 0073403202

Used copies of this edition of the textbook are also fine.

You may obtain this book from any source that you wish, but please be sure to obtain the 4th Edition as many assignments will be taken directly from the textbook. You should have this book available for all class sessions as we will refer to it from time-to-time.

The following **book** is also **required** for this semester.

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In 3rd Revised Edition

By Roger Fisher, William L. Ury, and Bruce Patton

ISBN-13: 978-0143118756

ISBN-10: 1844131467

You may obtain this book from the campus bookstore or any online source that you wish.

*Note: This course participates in Carnegie Mellon's First Day Access program. This program is designed to provide Day One access to the required books for all students at an affordable price. The required textbooks will be delivered to you automatically by enrolling in this course unless you choose to opt-out. By participating in this program, the University Store will bill your Student Billing account, and you will see a charge appear under this Term along with Tuition and Fees after the Add/Drop period for the term. If you have already purchased the fall textbook via this program, your student account should not be charged a second time for it. Opting out is available through Canvas in your course where you access your book. If you choose to procure your material using another format and do not want to be charged for this material, you **must** opt out via Canvas before the Add/Drop date even if you did so for 17-603 in the fall.*

We will use four **required case studies** from the Dispute Resolution Research Center at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University this semester:

Alpha Beta

SHARC

Mouse

Motorola Droid 2: The Product Manager's Dilemma

You will receive an electronic invoice from Kellogg for these cases (approximate cost \$20) and access to your specific portion of each case later this semester. These cases must be purchased directly from the DRRC due to licensing issues.

Please be sure to add noreply@teachwithkellogg.com to your contact list to avoid mail delivery issues.

We will maintain an active course website on Canvas where you may access various materials and submit assignments.

Assessments and Grading

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

6 small assignments [S] @ 5% each	30%
5 medium assignments [M] @ 10% each	50%
1 large assignment [L] @ 15%	15%
participation/attendance	5%
Total	100%

A specific list of assignments can be found in the course schedule, below.

Assignments will be scored on the following four-point scale:

Score	Description	% Translation	Grade Translation
0	Unacceptable	0%	R
1.5	Needs Improvement	50%	C+
2	Proficient	66%	B
3	Advanced	100%	A+

Fractional scores are possible.

In general terms, these scores mean:

0 – Unacceptable – The work submitted does not meet the basic goals of the assignment and does not demonstrate that the student has attempted to master the learning objectives involved. In a “real world” context, this is roughly equivalent of submitting a report that is incomplete to a supervisor in a manner that demonstrates it was done at the last minute and with no effort.

1.5 – Needs Improvement – The work submitted meets some of the basic goals of the assignment and, while the student has not yet mastered the learning objectives involved, has begun to internalize them. In a “real world” context, this is roughly equivalent to submitting a report to a supervisor that is complete, but fundamentally lacking or flawed in one or more areas.

2 – Proficient – The work submitted meets the basic goals of the assignment and demonstrates that the student has internalized the learning objectives involved. In a “real world” context, this is roughly equivalent to submitting a report to a supervisor that is complete and lacking in any significant flaws.

3 – Advanced – The work submitted exceeds the basic goals of the assignment and demonstrates that the student has mastered the learning objectives involved to a very high degree of proficiency. In a “real world” context, this is roughly equivalent to submitting a report to a supervisor that is complete, exceptionally structured, and which is noted in your annual performance appraisal as exceeding all reasonable expectations.

Most assignments will be accompanied by a grading rubric to help you understand the expectations of the assignment and the manner in which you will be graded.

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You will be assigned the following final letter grades, based on calculations coming from the course assessments as scored above:

Score	Letter Grade
33 or below	R
34 - 41	C-
42 - 49	C
50 - 57	C+
58 - 65	B-
66 - 73	B
74 - 81	B+
82 - 89	A-
90 - 97	A
98 - 100	A+

Grading Policies

- **Late-work policy:** Deadlines in the professional world are often inflexible; failure to complete a project on-time can result in serious consequences for employees and their organizations. Accordingly, the expectation is that you will turn in your work by the stated deadline for the assignment, in the absence of extenuating circumstances (e.g., a medical emergency). However, we realize that life happens and you may turn in one assignment late during the semester without a documented reason – this assignment will be penalized by one point (that is, if it would've received a score of "3", it will receive a score of "2"). Unexcused assignments after the first will receive a score of "0".
- **Make-up work policy:** If you become ill during the semester (as documented by either an external medical professional or University Health Services), you will be permitted to make up any work that you have missed and to turn in assignments late without the normal penalty. Please endeavor to inform me at least 24-hours prior to the due date of any given assignment if at all possible.
- **Re-grade policy:** If you believe that your score on any assignment is incorrect, you may ask me to review the work for a possible re-grade. *You must submit this request, in writing, within three business days of the score being given to you.* Please note that (1) you may submit no more than one such request during the semester, and (2) a request for a review of your work does not guarantee that the score will increase. Your score will *never* decrease as a result of a re-grade request.
- **"Redemption" policy:** We recognize that sometimes assignments do not go as planned, for many reasons. While the real world rarely has an "undo" feature, in the interest of allowing you to build your skills we will allow you to re-attempt one (and only one) *individual* assignment during the semester on which you initially achieve a score less than 2. (Group assignments, in-class simulations, and similar types of work may not be re-attempted). *You must contact the instructor within 24 hours of your grade being posted to request a re-attempt. You will then have 72 hours to complete and submit a new version of the assignment in question.* The maximum score you can achieve on this resubmission is the lesser of 2.0 or twice your initial score. For the avoidance of doubt, this means that if your initial score on the assignment was a 1.5, the maximum you can obtain with the re-attempt is 2.0; and that if your initial score on the assignment was a 0.7, the maximum that you can obtain with the re-attempt is 1.4.

Course Policies

- **Attendance and participation policy:** You will be expected to attend all class sessions (unless otherwise discussed with the instructor); the instructor or TA will record attendance. Additionally, you will be expected to participate fully in all in-class discussions, exercises, and case studies. This may initially be uncomfortable or challenging, but part of becoming a more effective communicator is learning how to participate in group meeting; our class sessions are excellent practice for your future professional

interactions. However, you should not feel obligated to speak during every class session (unless we are doing a simulation or case study). Make meaningful contributions when and where you can. We will discuss this in more detail at our initial session. Please note that I expect that you will abide by all behaviors indicated in [The Word](#), including any timely updates based on current conditions.

- **Academic integrity and collaboration:** Honesty and transparency are important to good scholarship. Plagiarism and cheating, however, are serious academic offenses with serious consequences. If you are discovered engaging in either behavior in this course, you will earn a failing grade on the assignment in question (via the assessment of negative points on said assignment), a referral will be made to the Office of Community Responsibility, and further disciplinary action may be taken.

Regarding generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools: Tools that make use of artificial intelligence (AI), large language models (LLMs), and similar technological advancements are becoming increasingly commonplace. While they are powerful assistants for research, ideation, and organization, I believe that they are still unreliable for producing clear and effective communication. Moreover, unless we have an intuitive understanding of effective communication gained through study and practice, we will be unable to determine if the output produced by one of these tools is an effective artifact or an ineffective hallucination. While you are welcome to use these kinds of tools to help you understand the material we cover in the classroom, to generate images to use in presentations and documents, and for research purposes, you are *expressly prohibited* from using such tools to create or edit any other content that you submit in this course. For example, you may use a tool such as ChatGPT to help you understand an assignment or to generate images to use as part of that assignment, but you may not ask the tool to generate other content for you, to edit work you have produced, or otherwise modify your original work. Use of these kinds of tools in an unauthorized manner will be treated as noted above, that is, you will earn a failing grade on the assignment in question (via the assessment of negative points on said assignment), a referral will be made to the Office of Community Responsibility, and further disciplinary action may be taken. The above explanation of permitted and prohibited uses of these kinds of tools is not intended to be comprehensive; please contact me with questions if and when they arise.

Please note that a second academic integrity violation of any kind in this course will result in an automatic penalty of course failure in addition to the other penalties noted above.

For a clear description of what counts as plagiarism, cheating, and/or the use of unauthorized sources, please see the University's Policy on Academic Integrity here: <https://www.cmu.edu/policies/student-and-student-life/academic-integrity.html>.

If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, cheating, or the use of generative AI tools, please ask me as soon as possible to avoid any misunderstandings. For more information about Carnegie Mellon's standards with respect to academic integrity, you can also check out the Office of Community Standards & Integrity website: <https://www.cmu.edu/student-affairs/ocsi/students/avoiding/index.html>.

- **Use of translation software and tools:** While this course is taught in English, I understand that many of my students may be nonnative speakers of English. I believe that immersion is one of the best ways to improve language mastery and, as such, I encourage nonnative speakers to write in English as much as possible. Nevertheless, I know that nonnative speakers can have varying levels of proficiency in speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Towards that end, while I do not encourage the use of translation software, students are permitted to use such tools to enable them to prepare written assignments in the language that they are most comfortable with.

If you choose to use such tools, you must not enable any artificial intelligence (AI) features. Additionally, when you submit a written assignment prepared with such tools, you must also:

- Upload into Canvas your original version of the assignment written in your preferred language;
- Upload into Canvas the raw output from the translation tool, even if it differs only slightly from the final, edited version that you submitted; and
- Provide, as either an additional upload or a comment on Canvas, information on the tool or tools that you used.

Failure to document the use of these tools will be treated as an academic integrity violation and handled pursuant to the course policy on academic integrity and collaboration.

- **Use of laptops and mobile devices:** You will be expected to engage fully during our class sessions as you would in the professional world during a meeting; this means that mobile devices should not be utilized (except for viewing notes during a presentation) in class and that laptops should be used only for class-related activities (such as note taking). For any sections conducted online, this means that you should not be using a secondary device during class (i.e., you should not be using your cell phone to play a round of “Diablo Immortal” while we are discussing a case or listening to a presentation). Be kind to and considerate of your fellow students.
- **Accommodations for students with disabilities:** If you have a disability and require accommodations, please contact Catherine Getchell, Director of Disability Resources, 412-268-6121, getchell@cmu.edu. If you have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I 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, I encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.
- **Statement on student wellness:** As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. CMU services are available, and treatment does work. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at: <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Support is always available (24/7) from Counseling and Psychological Services: 412-268-2922. Make sure to move regularly, eat well, and reach out to your support system or me if you need to. We can all benefit from support in times of stress, and this is semester is no exception.
- **Statement on respect for diversity:** We must treat every individual with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status, or genetic information. Each of these diverse identities, along with many others not mentioned here, shape the perspectives our students, faculty, and staff bring to our campus. We, at CMU, will work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion not only because diversity fuels excellence and innovation, but because we want to pursue justice. We acknowledge our imperfections while we also fully commit to the work, inside and outside of our classrooms, of building and sustaining a campus community that increasingly embraces these core values. Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment. Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional. They contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:
 - Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion: csdi@andrew.cmu.edu, (412) 268-2150
 - Ethics Reporting Hotline: Students, faculty, and staff can anonymously file a report by calling (844) 587-0793 or visiting cmu.ethicspoint.com.
 - All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any following actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate to be more equitable and just.
- **CMU's Student Academic Success Center (SASC):** The SASC has a number of resources available to provide you with support that you may need to achieve your highest level of performance at Carnegie Mellon, including Communication Support as well as Language and Cross-Cultural Support programs. Learn more at <https://www.cmu.edu/student-success/index.html>.

- **Food Insecurity:** If you are worried about affording food or feeling insecure about food, there are resources on campus that can help. Any undergraduate or graduate student can visit the CMU Pantry and receive food for free. Follow the directions on the [CMU Pantry website](#) to schedule your visit.

For Section D: Use of Zoom in the Class

In the remote section of this course, we will be using Zoom. The link is available on Canvas. Please make sure that your Internet connection and equipment are set up to use Zoom and that you are able to share audio and video during class meetings. Let me know if there is a gap in your technology set-up via email as soon as possible, and we can see about finding solutions.

Students who are in a location that makes attending class during the scheduled time challenging should review their situation with me as soon as is possible so that arrangements can be made to accommodate their needs. Please note that while Zoom sessions will be recorded, recordings will generally only be made available via special request or to accommodate students who cannot attend due to location issues. Please note that you are not allowed to share these recordings when they are made available. This is to protect your FERPA rights and those of your fellow students.

Based on the nature of the course, being able to see one another will facilitate a better learning environment, promote more engaging discussions, and allow you to practice your own communications skills. Accordingly, our default expectation is that you will have your camera on during lectures and discussions.

During our class meetings, please keep your microphone muted unless you are sharing with the class or your breakout group. If you have a question or want to answer a question, please use the “raise hand” feature (available when the participant list is pulled up), unless otherwise directed. The TA and I will monitor this channel and will call on students to participate.

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Course Schedule

Class Session	Theme(s)/Topic(s)	Class Dates			In-Class Activities	Learning Objectives Addressed	Assignment(s)	Assignment Due Dates		
		Sections A & B	Section D	Sections C & E				Sections A & B	Section D	Sections C & E
		Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday				Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
1	Course Overview, Emotional Intelligence, Listening Skills	13-Jan	14-Jan	15-Jan	Presentation and In-Class Exercises	3, 4	Read chapters 8 and 9 (including application 9.1); complete Assignment 1 [S]; select team for final presentation assignment (Assignment 11)	18-Jan	20-Jan* (due to MLK Jr Holiday)	20-Jan
2	Diversity and Intercultural Communications	20-Jan	21-Jan	22-Jan	Presentation and In-Class Exercise	1, 5	Read chapter 10; complete Assignment 2 [S]	25-Jan	26-Jan	27-Jan
3	Leading High-Performing Teams	27-Jan	28-Jan	29-Jan	Presentation and In-Class Exercise	1, 6	Read chapter 11; complete Assignment 3 [S]	1-Feb	2-Feb	3-Feb
4	Meetings	3-Feb	4-Feb	5-Feb	Presentation and In-Class Exercise	1, 3, 4, 6	Read chapter 12; complete Assignment 4 [S]	8-Feb	9-Feb	10-Feb
5	Organizational Issues	10-Feb	11-Feb	12-Feb	Presentation and In-Class Exercise	1, 4, 5, 8	Read chapter 13; complete Assignment 5 [M]	15-Feb	16-Feb	17-Feb
6	Internal Communications	17-Feb	18-Feb	19-Feb	Presentation and In-Class Exercise	1, 3, 5, 6	Read chapter 14; complete Assignment 6 [S]	22-Feb	23-Feb	24-Feb
7	External Communications	24-Feb	25-Feb	26-Feb	Presentation and In-Class Exercise	2, 3, 5	Begin reading "Getting to Yes"	NA	N/A	N/A
--	Spring Break: No Class Meetings	3-Mar	4-Mar	5-Mar	N/A	N/A	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	Negotiations: Introduction	10-Mar	11-Mar	12-Mar	Introductory Presentation	7	Finish reading "Getting to Yes" and prep Alpha-Beta Case Study (Assignment 7)	N/A; no submission	N/A; no submission	N/A; no submission
9	Case Study: Alpha Beta	17-Mar	18-Mar	19-Mar	In-Class Negotiation Simulation and Discussion [M]	3, 4, 5, 7	Prep SHARC Case Study (Assignment 8)	22-Mar	23-Mar	24-Mar
10	Case Study: SHARC	24-Mar	25-Mar	26-Mar	In-Class Negotiation Simulation and Discussion [M]	3, 4, 7, 9	Prep Mouse Case Study (Assignment 9)	N/A; no submission	N/A; no submission	N/A; no submission
11	Case Study: Mouse	31-Mar	1-Apr	2-Apr	In-Class Negotiation Simulation and Discussion [M]	3, 4, 5, 7	Prep Motorola Droid 2 Case Study (Assignment 10)	Saturday, 4-Apr	Sunday, 5-Apr	Monday, 6-Apr
12	Case Study: Motorola Droid 2	7-Apr	8-Apr	9-Apr (classes will meet on 7-Apr due to Carnival)*	In-Class Negotiation Simulation and Discussion [M]	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7	Complete final prep work for final presentation (Assignment 11)	N/A	N/A	N/A
13	Final Team Presentations	14-Apr	15-Apr	16-Apr	Team Presentations [L], Debrief, and Discussion	All	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
14	Final Team Presentations	21-Apr	22-Apr	23-Apr	Team Presentations [L], Debrief, and Discussion	All	Complete Assignment 12 [S]	Presentation slides due by 11:59 pm on 4/21; Assignment 12 due by 5 pm on 4/26	Presentation slides due by 11:59 pm on 4/22; Assignment 12 due by 5 pm on 4/27	Presentation slides due by 11:59 pm on 4/23; Assignment 12 due by 5 pm on 4/28
Note: All assignments are due at 11:59 pm Pittsburgh local time on the date indicated unless otherwise announce or indicated above.										

Note: There will be no class on Thursday, April 9, per the University's academic calendar. Students in Sections C and E will be asked to attend one of the other class sessions that week to participate in the negotiation exercise. The instructor will work to accommodate all students and will make additional arrangements if necessary.