Logo: The USC Andrew and Erna Viterbi School of Engineering

**CSCI 598 – Professional Writing and Communication for Computer Scientists**

**Units: 1**

**Spring 2017**

**Course URL :** [**http://courses.uscden.net**](http://courses.uscden.net)

Location: SAL 101

Instructor: Steve Bucher

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Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Writing Consultants: TBA

Contact Info: TBA

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**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

We will be working to improve communication skills, both written and verbal, for computer science graduate students. Emphasis will be placed on writing for a professional engineering environment, giving oral presentations, and learning to present data visually.

**This course is required for all computer science master’s students who expect to pursue a professional internship. No internship will be approved for credit unless this course is successfully completed with a passing grade.**

CSCI 598 will provide you:

* A variety of professional and academic engineering communication skills.
* Proficiency in writing for public and professional audiences.
* An overview of the standard conventions of English.
* Exposure to a code of ethics within the field of computer science.
* Flexibility in communicating for a variety of purposes.
* The ability to prepare effective written documentation both individually and collaboratively.
* The skills required to create and deliver effective oral presentations.
* The ability to give and receive critical feedback.

**COURSE OUTCOMES**

At the end of CSCI 598 you should be able to:

* Write for professional audiences.
* Demonstrate research and documentation abilities at the professional level.
* Revise and edit to professional standards.
* Prepare and give professional oral presentations for a variety of audiences and purposes.
* Utilize visual aids in both written and oral communication.
* Work collaboratively to research, write, and present information and ideas.
* Write accurate, precise technical prose.

**COURSE RESTRICTION**

Enrollment in CSCI 598 is limited to students with graduate standing in computer science.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Writing On The Job, Brereton and Mansfield, Norton & Company, 2000.

The Essentials of Technical Communication, Tebeaux and Dragga, Oxford University Press, Third Edition, 2015.

Additional handouts will be distributed throughout the course

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Students will be asked to complete 3 written assignments and 2 in-person oral presentations, as well as an ungraded writing sample. Pre-writing, research, and revision will be required elements of each assignment. Students will engage in the revision process until the work achieves a strong professional tone and content. All work must pass the 70% threshold (see below). The course will be organized around the introduction of these assignments and their particular qualities.

The prompts for each assignment will be posted to the course website.

Please note: For every written submission, students are required to add a “Statement of Originality”. This will be discussed in class. Details will be posted to the course website.

# Evaluation Policies

This course is Credit/No Credit. Credit for this course is based on the following criteria:

* Attending a minimum of 80% of class meetings (or 2 absences maximum)
* Participating in class discussions and workshops
* Completing all writing assignments and oral presentations to a 70% level of approval

**GRADING AND ATTENDANCE**

The course is graded on a credit/no credit basis. To receive credit, students must achieve a score of 70% on each of the following:

* 3 written assignments
* 2 oral assignments

Guidance and criteria for a successful submission or presentation will be provided to you for each project.

There is no grading curve. Grades will be assigned by a submission’s own merits. I will do my best to make my expectations for the various assignments clear and to evaluate them as fairly and objectively as I can. We will review the requirements for good writing in class throughout the semester, and you can refer to the CSCI 598 rubric.

**All required assignments must be completed to pass the course.**

**The course is designed for experiential learning, so my hope is that you will attend all class meetings. All students are allowed a maximum of 2 absences. Any unexcused absences beyond that will result in receiving no credit for the course.**

All assignments will be submitted and returned via the course website.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

*GENERAL SUBJECT ASSIGNMENT/READING DUE*

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| Week 1  1/13 | COURSE INTRODUCTION |  |
| Week 2  1/20 | WORKPLACE WRITING FOUNDATIONS, WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1 DISCUSSION | Tebeaux Chapters 1 and 2  Brereton, Chapter 1  Writing Sample Due |
| Week 3  1/27 | BASICS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION, PERSUASION AND ORGANIZATION, | Tebeaux Chapter 11 |
| Week 4  2/3 | ORAL PRESENTATION 1 DISCUSSION | Writing Assignment 1 Due |
| Week 5  2/10 | Oral Presentation 1 Delivery | Oral Presentation 1 |
| Week 6  2/17 | WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 DISCUSSION, PROFESSIONAL WRITING FORMS AND AUDIENCES | Tebeaux Chapter 5 |
| Week 7  2/24 | ETHICS AND CITATIONS, TONE | Tebeaux Chapter 3 |
| Week 8 3/3 | COLLABORATIVE WRITING | Writing Assignment 2 Due |
| Week 9  3/10 | JOB SEEKING SKILLS | Guest Speaker |
| 3/17 | SPRING BREAK |  |
| Week 10  3/24 | VISUAL AIDS, LISTENING  ORAL PRESENTATION 2 DISCUSSION | Tebeaux Chapter 6 |
| Week 11  3/31 | ORAL PRESENTATION 2 DELIVERY | Tebeaux Chapter 8 |
| Week 12  4/7 | WRITING ASSIGNMENT 3 DISCUSSION |  |
| Week 13  4/14 | INTERVIEWING SKILLS | Guest Speaker  Brereton, Chapter 9 |
| Week 14  4/21 | SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS |  |
| Week 15  4/28 | COURSE CONCLUSION | Writing Assignment 3 Due |

**PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

You are expected to be an active contributor to the class. Active contribution includes volunteering answers to questions; asking questions; requesting clarification; challenging me or other students in productive ways; contributing useful and relevant comments; engaging fully in any workshop-type activities.

A particularly important contribution you’ll make to the class is critiquing other students’ work in our rough draft workshops. Our in-class workshops are crucially important, and *you must attend them*.

You will also, during the course of the semester, provide other feedback to your classmates and brainstorm with them. You also will be expected to get together with others outside of class to share work and give/get feedback.

The following will also impact your participation points: evidence of preparation for class, including having completed any reading; quality of otherwise non-graded work; quality of contribution to workshop activities; quality of e-mail correspondence; quality and quantity of participation in individual conferences; and quality and quantity of interaction with community partners.

A note regarding email: Your email represents you as much as any other written or oral communication does. Take care to make it professional. That means applying all of the rules of good writing that we’re discussing in class to your email. This includes, but is not limited to, using good grammar, spelling, and punctuation; employing a direct and concise writing style; and organizing the document to further its purpose.

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences.  Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>.  Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.  See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university.  You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>.  This is important for the safety of the whole USC community.  Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person.  *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

## **Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing.  Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more.  Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.  *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html> provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.  If an officially  declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* [*http://emergency.usc.edu/*](http://emergency.usc.edu/)will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.