

CSC290 Communication Skills for Computer Scientists

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Lecture 7; Feb 25, 2019

Announcements

- ▶ **Documentation** Due Sunday Mar 3, 9pm
- ▶ **Critical Review Edits** Due Mar 10, 9pm
- ▶ **Midterm** March 4th (next lecture)

Documentation

- ▶ Can be more like a progress report addressed to your team members, but also understandable by your TA.
- ▶ A 1-page description of:
 - ▶ What you've done
 - ▶ Why you've made certain decisions
 - ▶ How your contribution fits in the context of your project
 - ▶ How your team members should use your code
- ▶ Submit a **pdf** file on MarkUs before the deadline.

Documentation Grading

Like a blog post:

- ▶ 1 point for substantial completion.
- ▶ 1 point for structure and grammar.
- ▶ 2 points for a clear description of your contributions, decisions, and how your team members should use your code.

Critical Review Edit

Improve your critical review based on the TA comments.

Remember:

- ▶ Submit using **MarkUs**
- ▶ Use 'Track Changes' in MSWord (automatic 0 if you don't)
- ▶ Do NOT remove your TA comments

Midterm

- ▶ Two-stage test
- ▶ 60 min: individual test
- ▶ 30 min: group test

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- ▶ 60 min: individual test
- ▶ 30 min: group test

- ▶ You may select your own group **of 4 or 5**.
- ▶ If you don't have a group, you'll be grouped with others on test day.
- ▶ Groups will get ONE copy of test/answer sheet on which you must work together.

Why?

- ▶ Get immediate feedback on your answers from your peers
- ▶ See alternative approaches to a problem
- ▶ Midterm as a collaborative learning opportunity

Midterm - what to expect

- ▶ Bring pen, pencil and eraser
- ▶ Wait outside the room while test is being set up
- ▶ Bags, books, coats at front of class
- ▶ Cellphones OFF and in your bags
- ▶ No student can leave until end of test time

What's on the test?

- ▶ Materials from weeks 1-6
 - ▶ Don't memorize numbers (e.g. XX % of software projects fail...)
- ▶ Required Readings from weeks 1-6
- ▶ Coding in Python
- ▶ Sample midterm posted on the course website.

Group Midterm Strategies

- ▶ Talk to your group members ahead of time about how to handle disagreements
- ▶ Assign roles:
 - ▶ Who will be writing answers on behalf of group?
 - ▶ Who will lead the discussions?
 - ▶ etc.
- ▶ Define discussion strategies, to ensure everyone's input is heard

Today

- ▶ Interpersonal Communication
 - ▶ “I Statements”
 - ▶ Perception Checking
- ▶ Critical Review Edits

I Statements

Interpersonal Communication

How not to be a jerk

Interpersonal Communication

How not to be come off as a jerk

Scenario

One of your group members has been missing group meetings recently and has contributed very little to the group. The assignment deadline is approaching and the individual has not responded to your last meeting request. The meeting is in 2 days.

“I” Statements

Accept responsibility for your feelings

Instead of:

You're going to make us fail the project because you didn't finish your part!

Say:

I feel frustrated and concerned when you don't come to meetings with your completed part of the project because I don't want our project to fail.

“I” Statements

Avoids blame, hostility, and accusations, while expressing your emotions.

***I feel...** (State your emotion) **when you...** (describe their behavior or under what conditions you feel this way) **because...** (explain why their behavior or the conditions cause you to feel this way).*

Rephrasing exercise:

Rephrase:

You rewrote all my parts of the PowerPoint presentation and you've screwed it all up.

Format:

***I feel...** (State your emotion) **when you...** (describe their behavior or under what conditions you feel this way) **because...** (explain why their behavior or the conditions cause you to feel this way).*

Rephrasing exercise:

Rephrase:

You guys are leaving me out. Can we please talk about the project only during project meetings?

Format:

***I feel...** (State your emotion) **when you...** (describe their behavior or under what conditions you feel this way) **because...** (explain why their behavior or the conditions cause you to feel this way).*

What's wrong with this?

I feel like you are intentionally sabotaging the project when you rewrite my slides because I spent a lot of time on them.

Another example

Slightly different format, but accepts responsibility for own feelings:

I'm feeling frustrated because I need appreciation for my contribution. Would you be willing to share areas where the slides align with the group's goals, as well as those where they may not?

Perception Checking

Perception Check



Figure 1: What do you see?

Perception Check

A way to check your understanding of someone's words or behaviour in a way that reduces defensiveness or potential conflict.

Format:

1. **Description:** of words or behaviour observed.
2. **Interpretations:** two possible interpretations of the behaviour.
3. **Clarification:** request for clarification.

Avoids blame / hostility / accusations.

Perception Check Example

- ▶ Description: *“When you didn’t respond to my last email”*
- ▶ Interpretations: *“I wasn’t sure if I said something wrong, or if you were really busy”*
- ▶ Clarification: *“What’s going on?”*

Perception Check Exercise

Your co-worker, while not malicious, is extremely blunt. She mentions that the vacation time you took severely affected the productivity of the rest of the team, and that it's your fault that the team missed a deadline.

- ▶ Description:
- ▶ Interpretations:
- ▶ Clarification:

Perception Checking

When you looked bored at the last meeting, I wasn't sure if you thought the content was too repetitive or if you just weren't interested. What's up with that?

Perception Checking is about Listening

Sometimes people want to be heard and understood, not necessarily to convince you.

People need to feel appreciated and listened to.

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Urgency is not an excuse for unprofessional behaviour.

You haven't been responding to our meeting requests. Have you been getting these emails, or does the time not work for you? Could you let us know if there is a better way to get through to you? I really don't think we can push the meeting back further. We want you to be a part of the team, but if you don't respond we'll have to meet without you.

Aside: Tips for Group Work

- ▶ Allow group members to have ownership of deliverables and deadlines
- ▶ Be considerate of other people's communication preferences

Hanlon's razor (modified)

Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence things going wrong.

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- ▶ People are generally *not* jerks.
- ▶ Things go wrong all the time.

Be Respectful, Be Kind

Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about.

Be someone that others find easy to work with.

References

0. CSC290 Slides, Fall 2017, by Nia McCash
1. <https://compassioncoach.com/blog/when-use-i-statements>
2. http://www.creducation.net/resources/perception_checking/
3. <https://alistapart.com/article/people-skills-for-web-workers>