

Skills for Information Professionals
DRAFT COURSE SYLLABUS

DISCLAIMER: This syllabus is provided for informational use only. Content and assignments may change before the start of the course and may differ between course sections. Students enrolled in this course are to retrieve the official version from the McGill course management site.

Course Description

This course addresses four inter-related “people” or soft skills that information professionals require: communication skills, interpersonal abilities, leadership skills and ethical and professional conduct. Students will learn more about themselves and their current level of ability on these four areas in order to identify and address specific gaps. Topics covered will include: how to present effectively, work collaboratively, how to lead and facilitate groups, and professional ethics.

Learning outcome:

The general learning outcomes are to ensure that MIST graduates develop foundation communication, interpersonal, leadership and professional skills needed for workplace success. By the end of this course, graduates should have an increased awareness of their marketability and have greater confidence in their abilities. They should be able to make a more effective transition from school to their workplace.

Specific learning outcomes include:

1. to prepare and deliver effective presentations that engage the target audience
2. to develop a communication plan that takes into account key messages, target audience and appropriate channels (including social media).
3. To be familiar with and able to apply appropriate leadership strategies to achieve specific goals (such as consensus).
4. To be able to identify and mitigate potential ethical issues in order to remain professional with respect to their work roles and responsibilities.

Instructional Method

Students will first learn more about themselves and their current level of ability on the four skills through a series of reflective exercises and short essays. The course will make use of scenario-based activities, case studies, role-playing, guest lectures. Evaluation will be based on in-class demonstrations (“auditions”) of the four skills to be mastered and will involve a panel of assessors (e.g. practitioners and professionals from the field) in addition to the instructor. In addition, students will provide a written assessment of areas they needed to work on, how these were addressed and how they would document soft skills (e.g. anecdotes) for potential employers. Some activities may be video-recorded to provide feedback to students on their

progress. In general, each class will consist of 50% presentation of key concepts and 50% hands-on activities to apply these new concepts.

Required Textbooks:

Berman, D. (2012). *People skills at work*. Boca Raton, Fl: CRC Press.

Sheldon, B. (2010). *Interpersonal skills, theory and practice: the librarian's guide to becoming a leader*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited. (optional)

Additional materials will include case studies, additional readings, instructional videos and self-assessment diagnostic tests. These will all be available through myCourses and Muse.

Course Outline

Week #	Topic	Description
1-3	Module 1: Communication skills (verbal and written)	Select the best medium to communicate based on the topic and the people involved (e.g. when to email, to meet f2f...). Different writing styles for different purposes (essays, business writing, information mapping). Strategies for cold calls, information interviews, business networking opportunities (inc. use of social media). Identify needs of different audiences to better target key messages. Make effective public presentations that engage the audience. Appropriate use of visual aids, multimedia.
4-6	Module 2: Interpersonal skills	How to work collaboratively, both face-to-face and virtually. Define and identify what a “good team player” means. Draw upon appropriate conflict resolution and negotiation strategies. Proficient in active listening and validating that the message has been correctly sent and received by all concerned.
7-9	Module 3: Leadership skills	Ability to facilitate groups to attain specific outcomes (e.g. problem solving, consensus building). Ability to draw out participants so that they all contribute and "manage" those who dominate. Able to plan but also contingency planning (knowing what to do when things don't go according to plan). How to run effective meetings. How to influence in the absence of direct authority.
10-12	Module 4: Ethical and professional conduct	Identify possible ethical issues. Compare and contrast professional vs. unprofessional

		<p>responses to a variety of work situations. Exercise appropriate judgement to deal with issues related to confidentiality, copyright, dealing with difficult patrons/customers/partners; being inclusive (diversity); managing boundaries, business etiquette. Can manage their personal online brand (digital identity and privacy).</p>
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Assignments and Evaluation

There will be an assessment upon completion of each module. There will be in addition short weekly self-assessments to be submitted. Given the nature of the course, there is no separate participation grade. However attendance is required and will be taken.

Each of the 10 weekly reports is worth 2% of your overall grade for a total of 20%. They will be graded as pass/fail. The majority will be available online in myCourses and they will be completed and submitted online.

Module Evaluations

Module #	Evaluation
1	Individual presentation using visual aids on an assigned topic. Assessment will be on how well you prepared your talk, how effective you were in delivering the talk as well as how well you answered questions.
2	Individual case study analyses that address the themes of good team interactions and conflict resolution strategies. Each student will be assigned a different scenario. Each student will present their key findings and discuss their specific case in a roundtable classroom discussion with panel members.
3	Each student will be provided with a leadership objective (provided to you in an envelope) that will require you to influence "difficult" people in a role-playing exercise. The instructor together with the panel will assess how well you are able to meet your assigned objective.
4	Written analysis of an ethical scenario that is assigned to you or your group. You may work individually or in a group of max. 3 members.

Each module evaluation will be worth 20% of your grade for a total of 80%. The assessment of each module will be by the instructor together with professionals from different organizations during an in-class session on the 3rd week of each module. The instructor and each panel member will complete an assessment form and your grade will be the average grade of all submitted forms.

No extensions, delays, or late assignments will be accepted unless a physician's certificate is provided.

Office Hours and Contact Information

Please contact me for an appointment. Always use your McGill email to contact me. Allow 48 hrs for a response (excluding weekends).

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"McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). *L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).*

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded (except in the case of language courses). *Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).*