

COMP 3301F: Technical Writing for Computer Science  
School of Computer Science  
Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada  
Course Outline Fall 2020

**Instructor:**

**Elizabeth Stobert**

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Office Location: HP 5127

Primary method of contact: Email

Please note that access to campus in the Fall 2020 semester is restricted due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Neither the instructor nor the TA will be available to meet in person.

**TA:**

**Lin Kyi**

Email Address: lin.kyi@carleton.ca

Office Location: HP 5126

Primary method of contact: Email

**Meetings:**

The course will be delivered online and asynchronously.

**Term:** Fall 2020

**Times:** Lectures will be broadcast live on Tuesdays, and recordings will be made available after class.

**Lectures:** 2:35 - 3:55 PM Tuesdays, September 10 – December 8.

**Office hours:** 2:30–4:00 PM Thursdays, September 17 – December 10

(All meetings cancelled October 27 and 29 for Fall break)

**Online Resources:**

All course material, assignment submissions, other resources and interactions will be available online through CUlearn. Use your Carleton ID and password to log into <http://culearn.carleton.ca>.

You are expected to stay up to date with material and assignments on CUlearn.

**Prerequisites:**

Course prerequisites are COMP 2402 and COMP 2404. Students who do not have these prerequisite courses must withdraw from the course, and otherwise will be de-registered.

**Course Objective:**

The objective of this course is to give students a working knowledge of technical writing and communication for computer science. We will cover the mechanics of writing, including structure, style and clarity, as well as the conventions of scientific writing in computer science. We will also cover technical documentation, and the mechanics of data analysis, visualization, and communication.

**Topics:**

The course will be divided into three units, which will include the following sub-topics:

**Writing mechanics** Writing structure, style, grammar, writing conventions

**Technical documentation** Code structure and commenting, software documentation

**Data analysis and communication** Graphing and data visualization, writing about data

**Assessment:**

Assessment will be based on work including: weekly knowledge check quizzes, weekly small writing assignments, and larger unit writing assignments. All assignments are to be completed individually.

Knowledge checks: 20%

Weekly writing assignments: 30%

Unit assignments: 50%

An alternative grading scheme will be available for those who choose to participate in the first year mentorship program as a study group leader. In this case, the grading scheme will be:

Knowledge checks: 20%

Weekly writing assignments: 30%

Unit assignments: 45%

Study group leadership: 5%

Study group participation bonus: Up to 5%

For the first 5% (in study group leadership), a grade will be determined from feedback from the first year students in the study groups, as well as two short video summaries (2-3 minutes in length) created by the study group leader during the semester (one about 1/3 into the term and one at the end).

## Late work policy:

All work submitted late in the course will be subject to a deduction of one grade level per day late (for example, a project submitted one day late could attain a maximum grade of A).

## Textbooks:

The course will include material from *Writing for Computer Science, Third edition* by Justin Zobel (Springer, 2014, ISBN 978-1-4471-6638-2). The e-book is available for download from the Carleton library. Hard copies can be purchased from either the university bookstore (<https://www.bkstr.com/carletonstore/home>), or Octopus Books (<https://octopusbooks.ca>).

Weekly writing assignments will make use of short articles from the Communications of the ACM (CACM), the flagship magazine published by the Association for Computing Machinery. These articles are available through the ACM Digital Library (<https://dl.acm.org>), to which you have access through the Carleton library (<https://library.carleton.ca>)

Links to additional papers and online resources will be posted on CULearn.

## Code of Conduct

Editing and revision are a significant part of writing, and this course includes the giving and receiving of peer feedback. In this activity, you are expected to be considerate, polite, and give feedback that respects the value of other people's efforts. In general: be excellent to each other. Everyone feels vulnerable in the feedback process, but it is a significant part of learning to be a good writer.

In this course, we are also committed to the use of inclusive and bias-free writing. This includes using "they" as a gender neutral pronoun, and avoiding the use of problematic terminology such as "master/slave" and "blacklist". It is possible that these terms may show up in articles that we read; you are still expected to avoid them in written material submitted for the course. More information can be found in the Microsoft Guide to Bias-free Communication (<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/style-guide/bias-free-communication>) and the IETF Draft on Terminology, Power, and Inclusive Language (<https://tools.ietf.org/html/draft-knodel-terminology-03>).

## University Policies

**Student Academic Integrity Policy:** Every student should be familiar with the Carleton University student academic integrity policy. A student found in violation of academic integrity standards may be awarded penalties which range from a reprimand to receiving a grade of F in the course or even being expelled from the program or University. Some examples of offences are: plagiarism and unauthorized co-operation or collaboration. Information on this policy may be found in the Undergraduate Calendar.

**Plagiarism:** As defined by Senate, “plagiarism is presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own”. This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in ”substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial.

All cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Office of the Dean. For more details, please see the Faculty of Science policy on Academic Integrity: <https://science.carleton.ca/academic-integrity/>

**Unauthorized Co-operation or Collaboration:** Senate policy states that “to ensure fairness and equity in assessment of term work, students shall not co-operate or collaborate in the completion of an academic assignment, in whole or in part, when the instructor has indicated that the assignment is to be completed on an individual basis”. Please refer to the course outline statement or the instructor concerning this issue.

**Pregnancy obligation:** Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf>

**Religious obligation:** Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf>

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. <https://carleton.ca/pmc>

**Survivors of Sexual Violence:** As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support>

**Accommodation for Student Activities:** Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: <https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline>