Course Title: High-Impact Communication to Advance Your Career in Technology
Course Code: COM 88
Instructor: Matt Vassar, Core Lecturer, Stanford University

Course Summary:

Barbara McClintock is a Nobel Prize-winning scientist. She won the Nobel Prize in the 1980s, which is great—except for one thing: she published in the 1940s. Why was there a 40-year gap between when she published and when her important work was finally recognized?

In interviews with her contemporaries, they described her as a master with a microscope—but utterly confusing when it came to communicating her ideas.

Having a brilliant idea is only half the battle. The other half? Convincing everybody else that the idea is important enough to adopt.

COM 88 will give you strategies so that when you speak about your own technical knowledge, you will instantly be met with enthusiasm and curiosity. The course will be divided into two major areas:

- **Formal Presentations**: When have the opportunity to stand before an entire audience to share your ideas, how should you compose yourself? How do you determine what to say?
- **Informal Conversations**: How do you talk about your work in everyday conversations? How can you get people interested and build supporters to rally around your ideas?

We’ll pay special attention to taking your technical knowledge and translating it to audiences of all backgrounds. Whether you’re speaking to colleagues in the same technical field—executives with no background in your technical field—or investors who can bring your ideas to life—you’ll learn strategies to adapt to the audience and give compelling presentations.

The course will be fast paced and highly interactive. Each week in class, you will try out new strategies with audiences of your peers and receiving feedback on how your communication is landing. After seeing their reaction and hearing their feedback, you’ll be able to adjust in real time and quickly hone your communication effectiveness so that you’ll be ready to communicate your ideas to your most important audiences.

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
365 Lasuen St., Stanford, CA 94305
continuingstudies@stanford.edu
650-725-2650
Grade Options and Requirements:

- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - Students must attend at least 7 of the 8 class sessions.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - Students must attend at least 7 of the 8 class sessions and post weekly on the Canvas discussion board with short responses to prompts designed to get you practicing your communication effectiveness.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*

Zoom Schedule:

Class meets over Zoom every Wednesday 7:00-8:50 PM from October 6th through December 1st. We will not meet the week of Thanksgiving.

Tentative Weekly Outline:

- **Week 1: Exciting your audience** - taking even the driest technical details and making them fascinating.
- **Week 2: Informing your audience** - making your technical ideas accessible to anybody, regardless of background.
- **Week 3: Delivery techniques** - nonverbal communication strategies to make yourself seem poised and confident as a presenter.
- **Week 4: Design theory** - principles and theories for effective visual aid design.
- **Week 5: Listening and Empathy** - why getting people to support you means supporting them—and how to do it through listening and empathy.
- **Week 6: Vulnerability and Giving and Receiving Feedback** - guest lecturer Jamila Rufaro from the wildly popular Stanford GSB elective class, Interpersonal Dynamics (AKA “Touchy Feely”), will offer strategies to connect with your colleagues and get results.
- **Week 7: Developing your authentic speaking style** - there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to personal communication style—let’s find yours.
- **Week 8: Bringing your best** - tapping into what matters most to you and leveraging it to give consistently compelling presentations.

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Note About Live Attendance and Recording:

These class sessions will be recorded.

Live participation is required in order for students to receive the full benefit of the course. Class recordings are not intended to be a replacement or substitute for class attendance.