ECE 3803 IRD – Industry Readiness and Professional Development
Fall 2026 Syllabus | DRAFT – Subject to Change

Instructors:

Mel Coker, Professor of the Practice
Office hours: TBD or by appointment

Sharon Spears, Professor of the Practice
Office hours: TBD or by appointment

- Combined 50+ years' experience, including C-suite roles
- $20 Billion P&L
- Four $100^{+} Million new product launches
- 1000^{+} employees managed

Grader/TA: TBD

Background

Do you know what it takes to be **successful** at work?

Do you know how to stand out as a **high performer** and a **leader**?

Are you comfortable **networking**? Speaking in front of others? Finding new opportunities?

Do you understand how **compensation** and **personal finances** work?

If not, this course is for you.

Today's employers are actively seeing candidates with well-developed soft skills (e.g. resiliency, networking, leadership). While technical or "hard" skills show employers your technical expertise and abilities, soft skills indicate your ability to collaborate with others and can have a significant impact on an individual's and organization's overall success. Soft skills, also called people skills, can help you build relationships, navigate challenges and solve problems so you can make positive contributions to an organization. Understanding what they are and how to use them can help you find new opportunities, advance your career and stand out as a leader.

Catalog Description: This course is designed to provide students with an opportunity to develop key soft skills necessary to launch a productive and successful career and stand out as leaders in industry.

Outcomes: Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

A. Demonstrate the key soft skills necessary to succeed in industry (e.g., collaboration, teamwork, networking, resiliency, and extemporaneous speaking).
B. Display greater professional and personal confidence.
C. Explain corporate structure types, analyze business finances, and articulate the roles these play in the success of a career.
D. Describe how networking, teamwork and leadership impact industry success and demonstrate skills through class assignments.

E. Demonstrate an understanding of emotional and social intelligence, the difference between the two and how they drive professional success.
F. Display ability to communicate (and relate) effectively using spoken and written words, non-verbal language, and listening skills.
G. Describe key components of personal finances, total compensation and methods for developing financial independence.

Textbooks: No textbook required.

Prerequisites: ECE students: successful completion of ECE 1100. All other students: Sophomore standing or higher. Not recommended for Freshmen.

While all students will benefit from this course, the course is best suited for students who are currently seeking or have an internship, co-op position or full-time job lined up.

Lectures: This course will be taught by Georgia Tech Professors of the Practice to provide external perspectives based on industry experiences. Professor Coker and /or Professor Spears will hold lectures weekly (e.g., twice per week). Occasionally, lecture periods may be used to practice skills and/or for experiential learning activities. Additionally, there may be guest speakers / lecturers. Towards the end of term, students will give presentations on their team projects during class.

Keys to Success: There are several keys to success in this class.

- First and foremost, be excited to learn and be passionate about understanding and practicing soft skills.
- Seek understanding, rather than just getting the correct answer.
- Complete course activities in a timely manner; complete pre-work prior to attending lectures, attend and take notes during lectures, engage in class discussions and activities, complete homework, and actively participate in team projects and other outside of class work.
- Participate actively in your team project including attending and engaging in team meetings / check-ins, effectively contributing to project, completing group assignments on time, and being an effective team member.
- Review materials and course exercises (well) prior to quizzes, midterms, and exams. Go over the solutions carefully and understand the concepts behind the solutions.
- Ask questions. It is critical that you dialogue with your team, class members, and the instructor.

Grading:

Midterm Exams	200 points	20% total
Homework	350 points	35% total
Individual Participation	100 points	10% total
Individual Project	100 points	10% total
Team Project (paper, presentation and peer review)	250 points	25% total

Your final grade will be a letter grade based on the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Homework: Homework will be assigned approximately weekly. Homework is not limited to materials taught during lectures but will also cover material in pre-work, team project assignments and include additional components for hands-on learning. Homework is designed to complement theory taught in class and allow students to develop and practice skills. All homework will be graded, and your overall homework grade will be a weighted average of all your homework grades.

Midterms: See the class schedule for the date of the midterm exams. These are ~60 minutes in duration. Students who attend the lectures, actively participate in class, and complete assigned pre-work and homework are more likely to score well on the midterms.

Individual Project: An individual project related to one or more of the key skills taught during the course will be assigned for the student to further develop and practice skills.

Team Project: A student team project is an important part of this course and is designed to combine several principles taught throughout the course: teamwork, leadership, communication, social and emotional IQ, time management, etc. This project is a culmination and demonstration that you have gained these skills throughout the semester. The team project will have both written and presentation components as well as a peer feedback assessment. Additionally, each team member will provide an individual report related to his/her team experience.

Individual Participation: The course includes several in-class experiential learning opportunities. Active participation in classroom discussions and activities is important to the learning experience and will count toward the overall grade. Completing pre-work assignments prior to lectures will impact your ability to actively participate in class. See Absence policy.

Final Exam: The final team project will be the measure of the students' comprehension of the course material. This will include a paper, presentation and peer review. There will not be a final exam.

Academic Integrity: Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code and/or http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/.

Collaboration and Use of AI

Students are strongly encouraged to discuss homework, problem strategies and related concepts with one another. However, each student must formulate and turn in their own solutions written in their own words. Cases where scripts, programs, design descriptions, or any relevant material appear to be identical or nearly identical, will be immediately referred to the Office of Student Integrity. Students should not collaborate on tests unless specifically permitted by instructors.

Students are allowed to use AI, but they are held responsible for the content of their assignment submissions. Allowed AI use cases include information gathering, text editing, ideation, brainstorming and feedback for your work. However, AI can never be referred to as a source or an authority.

AI can often make mistakes. No special consideration will be given for errors arising from the use of AI. If you incorporate any AI-generated information that is false or nonsensible, you will be held responsible for the content and your grade will be impacted.

Students are not allowed to submit directly AI-created works (i.e., directly copying and pasting the outputs without editing). If submissions are clearly directly copied and pasted from generative AI interfaces, they will receive a 0 for the assignment and lose resubmission privileges.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404) 894-2563 or http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. We fully support and recognize the need to make accommodation that improve teaching and learning for all students. Please also e-mail us as soon as possible to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Absence policy:

Students are expected to attend all classes. The course includes several in-class experiential learning opportunities. Active participation in classroom discussions and activities is important to the learning experience and will count toward the overall grade.

Punctuality and attendance are important in industry. Attendance is based on the entire period. Tardiness and partial attendance are considered an absence.

Students who miss class are responsible for all material covered in their absences, and they are responsible for the academic consequences of their absences. Students should discuss planned absences with the instructor as soon as possible after the beginning of an academic term.

Planned absences: Except for approved Institute activities, permission to miss a scheduled quiz/test/exam will only be given in extremely unusual circumstances. All planned absences must be supported by documentation in advance of the planned absence. Therefore, planned absence from a quiz, term test, presentation and/or exam without prior discussion with the instructors and their approval will

automatically result in a mark of zero for that quiz/term test/presentation/exam, with no exceptions.

Unplanned absences: If a student is unavoidably absent from one or more quizzes, terms test, presentation or the final exam, he/she must notify the professor as soon as practically possible. The reason for the absence must be communicated and documentary evidence provided, e.g. a doctor's note in case of illness. Failure to provide suitable documentary evidence and/or timely notification will automatically result in a mark of zero for that quiz/term test/presentation/exam, with no exceptions.

The attendance policy is firm. Please do not ask for an exception to this policy. As a courtesy, please inform the professor(s) in advance if you will not be attending a given class, will be arriving late or need to leave early.

Institute Absence Policy (http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/).

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement: At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/ for an articulation of some basic expectations that you can have of us and that we have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, we encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Communication: Verbal notices may be given in class. It is your responsibility to obtain this information in class. If you are not present, you must get this information from other students. Notices and other communications may also be delivered via email or Canvas announcements; read your email and check Canvas announcements every morning. Email inquiries to an instructor should be signed with a student's first and last name to receive a response.

Digital Etiquette: Georgia Tech is a professional environment, and all members of the campus community are expected to act accordingly. This extends to the use of digital communications.

ECE 2803 – Industry Readiness and Personal Development General Course Outline
DRAFT | Subject to Change

Topics

Intro to Industry Readiness

Performance Evaluations

Corporate Structures and Financials

Learning How to Prioritize Assignments and Activities

Intro to Extemporaneous Speaking

Learning How to Deal with Constructive Feedback and Setbacks (Resiliency)

Becoming More Emotionally and Socially Intelligent

Interviewing From the Industry's Perspective (the Interviewer's Side)

Professional Etiquette – Keys to Making a Positive Impression

Becoming a Better Team Member

Developing Your Personal Brand

Understanding How Your Strengths and Values Play a Role in Your Career

Career Journey

Understanding and Practicing Networking

Practical Workplace Communications Skills – Knowing What, When and How to Communicate

Understanding Leadership and How to Lead in Any Role

Total Compensation and Benefits

Managing Your Personal Finances and Generating Wealth