GE 610 — Negotiations & Pricing Posture (14-week elective syllabus)

Winning a federal contract is not the end of the price conversation; it is often the beginning. The government negotiates — through discussions, clarifications, BAFOs, orals, and post-award changes — and the firm that cannot negotiate from a defensible position leaves money and margin on the table. This elective teaches negotiation as a discipline and pricing posture as the position you negotiate from.

Course number: GE 610 · **Credits:** 3 · **Format:** 14 weeks, one 75-minute session per week (plus reading and a weekly deliverable). **Audience:** Graduate students in the MS program; especially pricing analysts, capture managers, and principals who will sit across from a contracting officer. **Prerequisites:** GC 540 (advanced finance) recommended, or concurrent — the course assumes you can build a defensible price and read the other side's cost analysis. **Texts:** the doctrine and literacy folders of this repository; the course reader on negotiation theory (BATNA, ZOPA, interests vs. positions). The course is stack-agnostic by design (doctrine/08).

Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, a student can:

- Prepare for a negotiation the way a capture team prepares for a pursuit: positions, interests, alternatives, evidence, and a walk-away.
- Apply the core negotiation concepts — BATNA, ZOPA, reservation price, anchoring, concession dynamics — to a federal negotiation.
- Explain the federal negotiation process: discussions, clarifications, BAFOs, and the rule that you cannot change your price carelessly once submitted.
- Set a pricing posture as a negotiation position: the floor you will not cross, the ceiling you cannot exceed, and the target that serves the strategy.
- Read the other side's cost/price analysis: what a contracting officer and an auditor see when they look at your price.
- Use a debrief as a disciplined information-gathering event — and negotiate for the information you are entitled to.
- Negotiate with a team: roles, the "one voice" rule, and the discipline of the room.
- Respect the ethical and legal boundaries of federal negotiation — including what can and cannot be said, shared, and promised.

Weekly schedule

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading / material	Assignment due next week
1	Negotiation as a discipline	Positions, interests, BATNA, ZOPA. Why a good negotiation is prepared, not improvised.	the course reader on negotiation; doctrine/04	One-page prep sheet for a case negotiation: interests, BATNA, ZOPA, reservation price.
2	The federal negotiation process	Discussions, clarifications, BAFOs, orals. What the process permits and forbids, and when the price is truly locked.	doctrine/02; the course reader on the federal process	Process map: draw the negotiation arc of a competitive procurement from proposal through award.
3	Pricing posture as position	The floor, the ceiling, the target. How a posture is set before a word is spoken.	doctrine/05; the pricing-posture canon at concept altitude	Posture memo: set the floor, ceiling, and target for a case pursuit and state the strategy each serves.
4	Anchors and concessions	Anchoring, concessions, and the dance of movement. When a concession is a signal and when it is a giveaway.	the course reader on anchoring	Concession-plan exercise: design your concession sequence for a case negotiation with a rationale for each move.

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading / material	Assignment due next week
5	The other side's analysis	What a contracting officer and an auditor see in your price. Cost analysis vs. price analysis, and the questions each raises.	doctrine/05; the audit canon at concept altitude	Memo: from the CO's side, write the three questions your price would raise.
6	The debrief as intelligence	The debrief is the negotiation for information after the decision. What you are entitled to, what you can learn, and how to run it.	doctrine/03; the course reader on debriefs	Debrief plan: design the debrief you would run after a loss, with the questions you would ask and the records you would keep.
7	Team negotiation	Roles in the room, the "one voice" rule, and the discipline of a negotiating team. Who talks, who watches, who decides.	the course reader on team negotiation	Team-charter memo: define roles and decision rights for a case negotiating team.
8	Power and leverage	Where leverage comes from in a federal negotiation: alternatives, information, incumbency, and time.	doctrine/05; the course reader on power	Leverage map: for a case negotiation, map each side's sources of power and how they shift over time.

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading / material	Assignment due next week
9	Midterm	In-class: prepare a negotiation plan for a case situation in 75 minutes — posture, anchors, concessions, team, boundaries.	(review weeks 1–8)	Midterm submission.
10	Mock negotiation I	A full mock negotiation on a case fact pattern. Half the class negotiates; half observes and critiques against the prep.	(exercise)	Reflective memo: what did you learn about your own negotiation behavior from the mock?
11	Mock negotiation II	A second mock with a different fact pattern — this time the pricing posture is contested, not the scope.	(exercise)	Revised negotiation plan incorporating the first mock's lessons.
12	Ethics and boundaries	What cannot be said, shared, or promised in a federal negotiation. The wall between negotiation and influence.	doctrine/04; the course reader on negotiation ethics	Ethics memo: the boundary rules for a case negotiation, stated as a pre-negotiation checklist.

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading / material	Assignment due next week
13	The negotiation record	Documenting a negotiation: positions, offers, concessions, agreements. The record as the governance artifact.	doctrine/04	Record-keeping exercise: produce the negotiation record for your mock negotiation.
14	Synthesis	The negotiator's desk: posture, preparation, process, and boundary. Final negotiation defense.	(course synthesis)	Final memo: "My negotiation doctrine," synthesizing posture, prep, and boundary into a personal playbook.

Assessment summary

- **Weekly deliverables — 40%.** Prep sheets, process maps, posture memos, and plans.
- **Midterm — 20%.** In-class negotiation-planning examination.
- **Mocks + reflection — 20%.** Two mock negotiations with reflective memos.
- **Final negotiation doctrine — 20%.**

Policies

- **Real process, safe exercise.** Mocks use case fact patterns drawn from real (closed) procurements; nothing touches a live negotiation.
- **Boundaries are graded.** A negotiation plan that crosses an ethical or legal line fails the relevant assessment.
- **Late work.** An honest early warning beats a silent late submission.

The price is a position; the negotiation is where you hold it. This course teaches you to hold it with discipline.