

COURSE SYLLABUS
PUR4932: Public Relations Pitching

Date/Time: Tuesdays, period 6 12:50 p.m. – 1:40 p.m.

Location: Weimer 1092

Instructor: Vanessa Wakeman

Email: vdalton1@ufl.edu

Office hours: 3103 Weimer – Tuesdays from 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. and Wednesdays from

12:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Course Description

Media relations is a critical component of public relations. The course is designed as a lab, providing an environment for students to build fluency in pitching the media. Students will spend time reviewing and analyzing current news stories, researching media contacts, writing email pitches, and practicing real and mock telephone pitches. PR Pitching will be an immersive experience. All students will gain a full understanding of the various aspects of media relations. This course is intended to be interactive and requires a high level of participation for students to receive the maximum benefits of the class.

Course Objectives:

In this course, you will gain hands-on experience in media relations. By the end of the course, students should:

- Be comfortable creating story angles on a wide variety of topics.
- Know how to create a media list using common PR databases and online research.
- Be fluent in creating written and verbal pitches to share with the media.
- Understand the role of media relations within public relations.
- Be prepared to work in a professional environment, serving as a member of a Media Relations team.

Course Schedule and Topics*

1/7	Course overview and introductions
1/14	Interacting with the media
1/21	Identifying media contacts
1/28	Client meetings
2/4	Getting creative and finding sources
2/11	Speed pitching
2/18	Guest speaker
2/25	Client meetings
3/3	Spring Break
3/10	Lab 1
3/17	Lab 2
3/24	Speed Pitching
3/31	Client meetings
4/7	Guest speaker
4/14	Pitching Audit
4/21	Pitching Audit

*This schedule may change at the discretion of the Professor. Any updates will be added to Canvas.

Course Evaluation

The evaluation of coursework will be based on the student's performance in four areas, each of which constitutes a proportion of the final grade. These include: attendance; pitching development; individual and group assignments; and analytics. The allocations for each are as follows:

Attendance – 25%

Your presence and participation will allow you to receive the full benefit of the course curriculum and best prepare you for a media relations role. The lessons and assignments are cumulative and multiple absences can put you behind and hinder you from fully participating in other assignments.

Pitching Progress – 30%

You will be graded on your progress throughout the semester. The goal is for you to develop a comfort level and fluency in engaging the media. Through the speed pitching exercises and audits, I am looking for consistent and steady evolution of your skills throughout the 16-week course.

Individual and Group Assignments – 30%

You will be assigned four individual writing assignments and one group assignment for the semester. The assignments are designed to help you demonstrate your mastery of a specific topic that you are learning in class. Specific details and deadlines will be shared in Canvas. These assignments are an opportunity for you to explore various aspects of media relations while challenging yourself to strengthen your skills.

Analytics - 15%

In addition to creating pitches, you will be responsible for analyzing the pitches of your classmates throughout the semester, to demonstrate your understanding of the key elements of a pitch. Detailed instructions will be given for each assignment.

The grading scale for the course is:

A 92-100%	C 72-77%
A- 90-91%	C- 70-71%
B+ 88-89%	D+ 68-69%
B 82-87%	D 62-67%
B- 80-81%	D- 60-61%
C+ 78-79%	E: Below 60%

More information on grades and grading policies is here:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

Availability

I am excited to get to know you and support you in your learning journey. I welcome you to come speak with me at any time during the semester about questions or concerns you have. I have weekly office hours and am also available by appointment.

Class Attendance and Make-Up Policy

Class attendance is expected. Each unexcused absence will result in a 10 point reduction in the final grade. Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog

(<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) and require appropriate documentation. Late essay response papers will not be accepted. A makeup midterm and makeup final exam will be provided for students who miss either exam due to extreme, documented circumstances. A cumulative make-up quiz will be provided at the end of the semester for any and all quizzes missed. This score will replace all missing quiz grades. Students should arrange with the instructor for makeup material, and the student will receive one week to prepare for any makeup assignment, if circumstances allow it.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>.

Course Professionalism

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school, and professional decorum is expected at all times. You must conduct yourself in an honest, ethical and courteous manner with other students and me, abiding by the UF Student Conduct & Honor Codes.

You are expected to:

- Arrive on time and remain in class for its duration unless I dismiss the class early.
- Not speak when another student is speaking or the instructor is speaking
- Not use cell phones, laptops, tablets or other electronic devices, except as part of in-class assignments. All cell phones and electronic devices must be set on silent during class time.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conducthonor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Campus Resources Health and Wellness Resources U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392- 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department: 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

<http://www.police.ufl.edu/> Academic Resources E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu.

<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Connections Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling.

<https://career.ufl.edu/> Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>.

Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.