

**PITCHING YOUR SCRIPT (AND YOURSELF!)  
RTV4930 Section 25558  
Thursdays 5:10pm - 8:10pm**

**Instructor: Barrington Smith  
Email: bsmithseetachitt@ufl.edu  
Phone: 310-497-0094**

**Office Hours: 3:40 - 4:40 Thursdays or by appointment  
Office location: WEIM 3065**

**Course Description:**

As I was becoming a writer people told me, “Writers *write*.” Less often did I hear: “Writers *talk* about writing,” or “Writers spend hours *preparing* to talk about writing,” or “Writers *sell* their writing,” or “Writers *sell themselves* as well as their writing.” As a card-carrying introvert, I wasn’t thrilled to find out all these things are true! But true it is. A critical tool in any successful TV or screenwriter's belt is the ability to creatively and succinctly sell their stories and themselves.

In this introductory class where we will learn the basics of pitching features, television, and ourselves, by analyzing what our stories unique, and practicing the skills and techniques needed to confidently convey our stories to others in a compelling way.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of this class you’ll be know:

- 1) Different types of pitches and when to use them.
- 2) How to prepare for a pitch situation by determining genre, premise, tone, theme, and basic plot, primary characters, their arcs and set pieces.
- 3) How to pitch a dramatic or comedic feature.
- 4) How to pitch a dramatic or comedic television series.
- 5) What to expect of a Hollywood meeting, be it a pitch or a “general” – which is another word for pitching yourself!
- 6) How to prepare a logline and a synopsis to get the opportunity to pitch.

**Overview:**

This course is held one night a week for three hours. Class will be comprised of lecture by the instructor, class discussion, student application and demonstration of the skills we’re learning, and guest speakers who will speak to us about their pitching experiences.

**Required Texts:**

*The Hollywood Pitching Bible: 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*  
by Douglas Eboch and Ken Aguado

Students may also need to review produced films and /or series in order to summarize and pitch them to the class.

**How You'll Be Evaluated:**

72%: Weekly Assignments

14 %: Attendance and participation:

14%: Final Pitching Project

A	100% to 94%	C	76% to 73%
A-	93% to 90%	C-	72% to 70%
B+	89% to 87%	D+	69% to 67%
B	86% to 83%	D	66% to 63%
B-	82% to 80%	D-	62% to 60%
C+	79% to 77%	F	59% to 0%

**Weekly Assignments:** Weekly assignments are each worth 6 points.

**Attendance and participation:** In addition to being physically in the room, you are expected to be *present, curious, and helpful* for your fellow students and the instructor. Each class meeting is worth 1 point, but note that since you need to be in class in order to present your work, absences result in a deduction of 7 points from your final grade.

**Final Pitch:** Class will culminate with a developed and polished pitch to a wider public. This will take place over two class periods. You are encouraged to invite friends (subject to space).

**Expectation of Professionalism**

Students are expected to arrive on time and prepared. This is an interactive class—you should think of it as if it were a professional meeting with co-workers or clients. Written material should be turned in on time and in the proper format. Please proof your assignment prior to submission.

**Respect**

Constructive critiques of your peers' work is expected and encouraged. However, personal or needlessly harsh attacks will not be tolerated.

**Internet Policy**

Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, posted, snapchatted anywhere on the internet.

**Laptop and Cell Phone Policy**

Laptops are welcome for note taking purposes during lecture only. No social media or email please. Please turn cell phones off.

**Missing an Assignment Deadline or Class**

Acceptable excuses for missing a class or assignment deadline are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform the professor before the assignment due date and present verifiable evidence in order for a make-up to be scheduled.

## TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1 – 01/09/20

#### **Introductions**

Introductions: Who are you, why are you here?

Instructor demonstrates a pitch in progress.

In class exercise: Break into pairs for personal background conversation, in order to “present your partner” as the perfect writer for this project.

Course overview: Objectives, assignments, grading

Lecture: What is pitching? Kinds of pitches.

#### **Assignment:**

Read *The Hollywood Pitching Bible* 62-78 (loglines) and 199-202 (genres)

Re-watch a film you love and prepare a written logline for your film.

### Week 2: 01/16/20

#### **Loglines and Short Pitches**

Students present their loglines.

Class discusses and suggests revisions to loglines.

Discuss: Written vs Spoken

In class exercise: Break into small groups and create a “conversational” version of your logline, to respond to the question “What are you working on?”

Lecture: Elements of a pitch

#### **Assignment:**

Read *The Hollywood Pitching Bible* Pgs. 49-62, 82-86, 98-102.

Using your previously selected film, create a 2-minute short pitch.

### Week 3: 01/23/20

#### **Back-pocket pitches, film structure re-cap**

Students present their two-minute pitches.

Lecture: Feature film structure recap

Intro to longer short pitches.

Demonstration: 12 Deaths of Christmas Pitch

#### **Assignment:**

Read *The Hollywood Pitching Bible* pgs. 88-98, 103-106, 107

Prepare a five-minute version of your film pitch

### Week 4: 01/30/20

#### **Short Pitches / One sheets**

Students present 5-minute film pitches – feedback and discussion

Lecture: Coming up with ideas for your original feature.

(Tracing structure, working with I.P. public domain vs obtaining rights)  
Lecture: Looking at One-Sheets / Synopsis  
Share: 12 deaths of Christmas one-sheet.

**Assignment:**

Create a one-page synopsis for your film.  
In advance: Thinking of ideas for a feature film to present to the class.

**Week 5 – 02/06/20**

**How to take a Hollywood meeting:**

Lecture: general meetings vs. pitch meetings.  
Preparation and research: Learning about the people you'll be meeting.  
Preparation: Honing your personal pitch  
Students share one-page synopsis.  
TBD Guest Speaker

**Assignment**

Create three mini-pitches for your original feature ideas.

**Week 6 – 02/13/20**

**Development**

Students present their three mini-pitches.  
Class responds to help choose the most compelling idea  
Guest Speaker TBA

**Assignment**

Create a 3-5 minute pitch for your chosen original feature.

**Week 7 – 02/20/20**

**Original 5-minute Pitches**

Lecture: How to pitch with confidence. To memorize or not to memorize? Note taking. Creating an answerbank.  
Students present their 3-5 minute pitch including all elements of a pitch.

**Assignment:**

Using questions asked by the class, expand your pitch to a compelling and conversational full-length pitch (10 minutes.) Be prepared to discuss genre, premise, tone, theme and basic plot in three act structure. Identify primary characters, their arcs and at least two compelling set pieces.

**Week 8 – 02/27/20**

**Complete Pitches**

Students present 8-10 minute original pitches.

**Assignment:**

Assignment: Read *The Hollywood Pitching Bible* pgs. 109-120 (Pitching for Television)

Choose a television show you know well and prepare a logline and premise pitch for this show. Be prepared to discuss its format, tone, open or close-ended, the “engine.” (Send me show choice when you know it – and I’ll watch it if possible)

**Week 9 – 03/05/20 \*\*\*\*\*Have a great SPRING BREAK!\*\*\*\*\***

**Week 10 – 03/12/20**

**Pitching for a TV Series**

Lecture: TV structures and forms.

Ideation for TV shows.

Students share their TV loglines and pitches for a produced series.

**Assignment**

Prepare three concepts for an original television series.

**Week 11 – 03/19/20**

**Developing the TV Idea**

Students present their three television concepts.

Class discussion of tone, format engine, potential as series, possible models.

Guest Speaker TBA

**Assignment:**

Craft a 3-5 minute pitch for your chosen television series.

**Week 12 – 03/26/20**

**Original Series Short Pitch**

Students present 3-5 minute pitches for original TV series.

Class provides feedback and questions.

**Assignment:**

Develop an 8-10 minute pitch using questions asked by class.

Choose either your feature or television pitch to polish for your final presentation.

**Week 13 – 04/02/20**

**Original Series Long Pitch**

Students present 8-10 minute pitches for original TV series.

Class provides feedback and questions.  
Students take notes for development and answerbank.  
Determine order for final presentations.

**Assignment:**

Polish and Memorize (or close to it) your final presentation. Finalize supporting materials if needed.

**Week 14 – 04/09/20 – Final Presentations, Part 1**

First half of students to introduce themselves and present their complete original feature or series pitches for class and guests, followed by analysis and discussion.

**Week 15 – 04/16/20 – Final Presentations, Part 2**

Second half of students to present their 10-15 minute original feature or series pitches for class and guests TB, followed by analysis and discussion.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

**STUDENT EVALUATION OF COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.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.

**UF HONOR CODE** 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://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-studentconduct-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.

**HELP WITH COPING** The UF Counseling and Wellness Center is a terrific, free resource for any student who could use help managing stress or coping with life. The center, at 3190 Radio Road on campus, is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To make an appointment or receive after-hours assistance, call 352-392-1575.