

MMC 3254 Media Entrepreneurship

Spring 2024 Syllabus

Professor: Bill Stump

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Class Time: Wednesdays at 9:35 am (Section 15427) and 10:40 am (Section 15428). **Office Hours:** By appointment.

Course overview

MMC 3254 is a dynamic 1-credit course designed to empower aspiring media professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to create and cultivate a successful personal brand in the digital age.

Through a combination of lectures, guest speakers, group discussions, and hands-on projects, students will learn how to leverage their journalism and media skills to develop a compelling and authentic brand that resonates with their target audience.

The course introduces students to the basics of entrepreneurship and the evolving media business models, including social, influencer, newsletter, blog, email newsletters, branded content creation/management, and more.

The course investigates general concepts of entrepreneurship and how digital technologies, and the Internet have transformed media economics. Students will be introduced to recent media start-ups as case studies for applying entrepreneurial principles.

This course is for those interested in using their skills and abilities to work in one of the various forms of media today. The intent behind the instruction is to offer a broad view of the industry and the variety of ways people can use what they know to build their careers.

In today's economy you're likely to be hired and compensated for core skills that can help companies reach their goals – often more quantitative than qualitative. But quality is a crucial element of “breakthrough” products, and once that quality is defined – and your ability to deliver it is established – you'll have a true possession to carry forward into your professional life.

In this class you will be exposed to different approaches to product development that take advantage of the evolutionary environment in digital media, one that requires less reliance on a “corporation” and more on personal agency and an evolving tool kit of skills and abilities.

This approach also allows you to serve communities of which you are a part, taking advantage of your insider understanding and passion for particular affinity groups and lifestyles.

This type of work is less predictable because your success is up to you and the products and communities you build, but nothing is more rewarding.

In this class, you will start to identify your strengths and weaknesses and how they will serve you. The Delphic aphorism is still true today: The first step to success is to “know thyself.”

This requires exploration. What’s been done, by who, why, and how? What resonates with you and your short- and long-term goals? We’ll look at case studies and hear from those who’ve built success, with an eye toward your own version of You Inc.

This is a 1-credit class, so you won’t be inundated with reading and other commitments. The key to success is simple: show up, pay attention, do the work, be a good classmate, and participate. That’s a good recipe for career success, too.

Anything else you’d like to learn, just speak up; we have a whole semester together. Consider me a sounding board for any questions you have about journalism. I may not always know the answer, but I’ll probably know someone who does.

Course Goals

Expected Learning Outcomes	Methods of Assessment
Establish a digital media presence/brand identity.	In-Class Assignments, Writing/Posting Assignments
Understand how media organizations and individuals are adapting to digital disruption.	In-Class Assignments; Writing Assignments

Be an economically viable media citizen (i.e., learn to create ideas that generate interest, stickiness, and value).	In-Class Assignments; Writing Assignments
Understand the economics of media, how they're changing, and what that means for the future.	Writing Assignments, In-Class Assignments
Improve your use of media software and tech platforms.	In-Class Assignments

Course Format

- The class is 1 credit and meets one period, one day a week. Most work will be done outside of class.
 - You will have about 30-minutes of assignments per week – reading, listening, watching interesting stuff from interesting people -- in advance of class, and will be expected to contribute to class.
 - You will develop a creative brand idea over the course of the semester, improving it along the way into a cohesive, consistent brand that's of value to your desired audience.

Attendance

The expectation is that you will attend each class from a place where you can actively engage with camera on out of respect for the instructor and your peers, and so that you are properly engaged. There are numerous filters available that will blur your background if you are uncomfortable showing your environment. If there is a valid reason for having your camera off, please notify the instructor.

Class Preparation, Assignments, and Late Work

Please complete all of the assignments before their respective class or due date. The calendar in this syllabus is laid out in a week-to-week format. It tells you what you need to complete before each class.

This document contains all of the due dates, and it's important that you meet those deadlines. People who consistently miss deadlines typically don't get good grades, or sustain a career.

If you ever have a question about an assignment, ask it sooner rather than later so you don't fall behind.

Speakers and Events

We'll have various speakers join us in class virtually throughout the semester.

Assignments

Digital Brand Creation

You will create a personal "brand" using a digital platform such as a social, blog, or email platform. You will work to identify brand positioning:

- What is your brand?
- What value/benefit do you offer?
- What type of content are you making?
- Who is it for?
- What makes your brand unique?
- What is the visual identity?
- What is the brand tone/voice?
- Why are you the perfect person to create this content?

Over the course of 16 weeks, you will create a Brand Pitch outlining your idea and then three "Project Posts" that are examples of the brand you're creating.

Your goal is to begin to establish a measurable online presence that grows over the course of the semester.

You will be graded on the unique value proposition your theme brings to the market, how well you take advantage of the format you choose, and the ingenuity, freshness, voice, accuracy, and authenticity of your writing/scripting, presentation, and editing.

The grading rubric for the project posts:

- Is your work in line with your original intention?
- Is it clearly for your intended audience?

- Does it deliver the unique value you've planned to create?
- Is it well made content, accurate, creative, entertaining, informative, useful?
- Does it leverage the value of the platform?

In-Class

You'll be expected to attend and participate in class unless you have a documented excuse. You will have various short assignments in the form of discussion posts during the semester that will be based on that day's class. These will be practical exercises based on speakers and trending topics.

Grading

You'll be graded on your initial Brand Pitch, in-class participation, and Discussion and Project Posts.

The usual qualitative measures of good journalism will apply – creativity, rigorously reported and well-written/presented, accurate, useful, authoritative – are important in addition to how well you apply the themes and ideas we are discussing in class. Although it will be difficult to drive substantial metrics in a short-time, identification of the measures that matter, and reporting out the measures, will be expected.

Your work will be weighted like so, total of 1,000 points:

In-Class Attendance/Participation:

10% (Attendance and in-class participation @ 100 points)

Discussion Posts

20% (4 Discussion Posts @ 50 points each for 200 points)

Brand Pitch

10% (1 @ 100 points for 100 points)

Project Posts:

60% (3 Project Posts @ 200 points per for 600 points)

Details of each assignment will be available in Canvas. If you're having trouble with an assignment or understanding a topic, email me or set up a time to discuss via Zoom.

The goal is for you to produce your best work possible, so please choose a project topic that you're passionate about.

Late assignments will lose 10 points per day. After four days it will not be accepted.

Academic Honesty

As a student at this university, you have accepted a commitment to the Honor Code, and the principles of academic integrity, personal honesty, and responsible citizenship on which it was founded. The instructor of this class is bound to take that commitment seriously and encourages you to contact her with specific questions regarding the Honor Code and your responsibilities within this course.

Specifically, plagiarism will be grounds for significant penalty, including potentially failing the course and being reported to student judicial board.

Plagiarism may include a failure to cite sourced material, copying portions of others' work without appropriate citation, work generated by Chat GPT and other AI programs, and inappropriately reusing your own work from other courses. Cheating on exams also is a violation of the honor code.

University of Florida students are expected to read, understand, and follow the Student Conduct & Honor Code. Violations of this code are taken very seriously and can result in your failure of this course and additional sanctions up to and including academic probation and expulsion.

Diversity Statement

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity,

sexuality, class, and religion. We expect each of our journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

The craft of journalism strives to be objective. However, much of the gathering of information for reporting purposes could be from subjective sources that are historically built on subset of privileged voices.

Furthermore, we often find ourselves relying on information about historically important events that were mostly framed through the perspectives of a segment of our society.

I acknowledge that it is possible that there may be both overt and covert biases in the course's material due to the lens and/or period of time in which it was written. Please contact me with feedback if you have any suggestions to improve the quality of the course materials.

Furthermore, I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official records, please let me know.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, Joanna Hernandez, CJC director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can email her at jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu.
- If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.

Tutoring Services

The Writing Studio is a free service for current UF graduate and undergraduate students. Students have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a consultant on issues specific to their own particular development. Because their aim is to help students become more effective writers, they do not simply proofread or edit

documents. They can, however, assist students to become better proofreaders and editors of their own work.

Their main office is 302 Tigert Hall, and their office phone is 352-846-1138. They also offer online tutorials from 11am-4pm ET on Wednesdays. You must register in advance for all tutorials.

Students With Disabilities

Students requesting accommodations 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 making a request for accommodations. Please contact the professor within first two weeks of class with documentation to request accommodations.

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. The UF Police can be reached at 392-1111 or, in an emergency, by dialing 911.

Instructor Evaluation

Students are highly encouraged to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> and are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Thank you for taking the time to complete this process.

Grading Scale

A: 94-100

A-: 90-93

B+ 87-89

B: 84-86

B-: 80-83

C+: 77-79

C: 74-76
C-: 70-73
D+: 67-69
D: 64-66
D-: 60-63
E: 59 or lower

Class-by-Class Plan (Assignments and Updates Provided in Canvas)

JAN. 10, 2024

Intro to Media Entrepreneurship. Syllabus review followed by discussion of course and expectations. How media creation and distribution has fundamentally changed in the last decade, and how it will continue to change.

JAN. 17, 2024

Developing a Digital Brand. How to create a brand, determine your mission and vision, choose a name, pick your platform, define your topic and audience, determine voice and personality, create a logo and brand assets, plan your work.

JAN. 24, 2024

Guest Speaker No. 1. An accomplished media content creator shares how they created and sustained their media brand.

Discussion Post No. 1 Due

JAN. 31, 2024

Creating a Brand Pitch. We will discuss the elements of an effective brand pitch and use class time to form a first draft and share with peers. Examples from past classes.

FEB. 7, 2024

Guest Speaker No. 2. How to make a business out of a passion for digital media.

Discussion Post No. 2 Due

FEB. 14, 2024

Creating a Content and Execution Strategy:

- Developing a content strategy aligned with your brand.
- Storytelling techniques for engagement.
- Incorporating multimedia elements (videos, images, podcasts).
- Planning 3 Project Posts

Brand Pitch Due

FEB. 21, 2024

Guest Speaker No. 3: How to build a multi-channel brand.

Discussion Post No. 3 Due

FEB. 28, 2024

Case Study -- Morning Brew. How two University of Michigan students built a \$70 million dollar newsletter business.

Project Post No. 1 Due

MARCH 6, 2024

Project Post Check-in No. 1: Students share their Project Posts with peers to get feedback.

MARCH 13, 2024

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

MARCH 20, 2024

Project Post Check-In No. 2: Students share their Project Posts with peers to get feedback.

MARCH 27, 2024

Brand Evolution. How to create consistently, respond to customer feedback, monetize your work.

Project Post No. 2 Due

APRIL 3, 2024

In-Class Discussion: Students share their favorite branded content.

APRIL 10, 2024

Guest Speaker No. 5. How one journalist built an international brand.

Discussion Post No. 4 Due

APRIL 17, 2024

How to Be Creative: Why creativity still matters in the digital age, with class exercise.

APRIL 24, 2024

Final Class Wrap-Up.

Project Post No. 3 Due

Recommended Readings

The Strategic Digital Media Entrepreneur, by Penelope M. Abernathy and JoAnn Sciarrino.

Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future, by Peter Thiel and Blake Masters.

How I Built This: The Unexpected Paths to Success from the World's Most Inspiring Entrepreneurs, by Guy Raz.

Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable, by Seth Godin.

About the Professor: *Bill Stump is a creative executive with deep experience launching, leading, and growing healthy lifestyle brands in the U.S. and abroad. He has held top brand positions at Men's Health, Women's Health, and Prevention, and is founder and principal at Well Made Creative Consulting.*