

Course Syllabus
University of Florida

Course Name: Preparing Your Pitch
Listing: ADV3920C (20681)
Semester: Fall 2025

Course Description: *In this class, you'll learn how to prepare and work to perfect your pitch; whether it's a 15-minute conversation with co-workers or the final 3-hour presentation with a prospective client. You'll learn both soft skills (e.g., building trust, establishing credibility, the art of persuasion) and hard skills (e.g., storytelling, presentation design, presenting with power) required to effectively communicate your ideas. If you're in the marketing or advertising industry, you need to know how to sell because it's not the "best idea" that wins, but the "idea that is best conveyed" that wins.*

Credit Hours: 1 Credit
Grading Scheme: Letter Grade
Prerequisite: Sophomore standing or higher

Class Day: Tuesday
Class Time: Period 5 / 11:45am – 12:35pm
Location: Zoom via Canvas

Instructor: Thomas Nolen
Email: thomas.nolen@ufl.edu
Office Hours (via Zoom): By appointment

Course Objective: The objective of this course is to help you truly understand what is a pitch, what goes into making a great pitch and how to help you effectively communicate your idea. It sounds simple and seems straight forward, yet most agencies win 1 in 4 pitches, which is average at best.

Course Materials: There is no textbook for this class. This class will be taught using a combination of articles, speeches, videos, stories and discussions.

Attendance Requirements: Given that much of the learning will be taking place during the lectures, attendance will be critical to your success. If for some reason, you cannot attend class, you need to inform me at prior to class (no less than an hour before) via email.

Camera Requirements: All classes will be recorded. It's important to have your camera on during class to keep our communication and engagement strong. Everyone will get more out of the class if we're more connected. Additionally, please make sure that your name is visible at the bottom of your screen so that others may address you by name. If you have privacy concerns, poor Wi-Fi, or another issue that might prevent you from having your camera on, please message me and we will try to work out an acceptable solution.

Attention, Participation & Note Taking: Remote learning makes it easy for you to get distracted (things happening in your home, other windows open on your desktop, having your phone in your hand, etc.). It's in everyone's best interest to eliminate / minimize distractions for the short period of time that we are together every week. There will be points throughout every class where you will be asked to share your thoughts, an experience, etc. Understand that your participation will be vital to the learning of everyone in the class, so please be ready and willing to participate. Lastly, let me offer a suggestion as it pertains to taking notes. First of all, do so. This is not a class where everything we discuss will be fully written out on a slide in a presentation. Secondly, I would recommend taking notes the old-fashioned way, with pen and paper. It will enable you not to have to toggle back and forth between the class and a notes page on your computer. Additionally (and we will discuss later in the class) there are additional benefits of retention which are critical in a class of this nature.

Assignments and Deadlines: Assignments are expected to be completed and turned in by deadlines discussed in class. You will lose 5% of total points for each assignment for every day it's late. If you're having trouble with an assignment, communicate with me and we'll discuss a solution. Each student gets one deadline extension to be used on only one assignment throughout the semester.

Submission Guidelines: Unless noted otherwise, all assignments should be uploaded to Canvas. Each assignment should be properly labeled with the following naming convention:
LASTNAME_FIRSTNAME_DATE_ASSIGNMENTNAME

- NOLEN_THOMAS_8242022_QUIZ1

Honesty: Simply put, you are expected to abide by the UF Honor Code. All assignment should be your work, original and completed with a focus on understanding how you are growing and learning. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Grading: The overall course will be graded on a 5,000-point scale. You will be graded on the enthusiasm you bring to class (attendance, homework and participation), the accuracy of your answers (quizzes) and the quality of your work (assignments). When pitching, "everything communicates," from small interactions over the phone to your final presentation. Thus, the effort put forward on every interaction and assignment is important.

Please note, you're always welcome to set up a private meeting with me to discuss grades.

Below is a breakout of the points for the semester:

Category	Points	Percentage	Notes
Attendance	750	15%	We have a short time together every week and we a lot of material to get through. Be on time, be on camera and be ready to jump right into material each week. 50 points per class.
Homework & Participation	750	15%	You get out of anything what you put in. Be an active participant and be prepared (homework assignments) to help make the class a positive experience for everyone by sharing your knowledge and experiences. 50 points per class.
Presentation #1	500	10%	This is Part 1 of a two-part project where you will be asked to put together a pitch.
Quizzes (Quiz #1 & Quiz #2)	1,000	20%	There will be 2 quizzes given during the semester (midway through and towards the end). Each are worth 500 points.
Presentation #2	1,000	20%	This is Part 2 of a two-part project where you will be asked to put together a pitch.
Final Assignment	1,000	20%	In this assignment, you'll be asked to evaluate a presentation and provide feedback on what was done well in the pitch and what could have been done better.
	5,000	100%	

Date: 8/26

Discussion Topic: Expectations for The Course

Homework Assignments (For The Following Week):

- 1) Watch "Maurice Helps Darrin with an Account," from Bewitched
- 2) Read "Winning Pitches," By Research Science Institute

Date: 9/2

Discussion Topic: What's A Pitch

Homework Assignments (For The Following Week):

- 1) Read "The Levitan Pitch (Chapter 2)," by Peter Levitan
- 2) Read "What's Your Right to Win in Business," by James Michael Lafferty
- 3) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From Hanrahan
- 4) **Presentation #1: You're a recruiter for the University of Florida and you have 20 minutes to speak to an auditorium of high school students and their parents. What's your pitch? Due: 9/16 (500 points)**

Date: 9/9

Discussion Topic: Building Your Pipeline

Homework Assignments (For The Following Week):

- 1) Read "How To show Trustworthiness in an Interview," By Heidi Grant
- 2) Read "The Critical Difference Between Trust & Credibility," by Tom McMakin
- 3) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From Ozzy

Date: 9/16

Discussion Topic: Establishing Trust & Credibility

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Read "Small Actions Make Great Leaders," by Hitendra Wadhwa
- 2) Read "Leadership Lessons from The Cuban Missile Crisis," by Ryan Holiday
- 3) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From Kaplowitz

Date: 9/23

Discussion Topic: Being A Leader

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Watch "Ask Better Questions to Build Better Connections," By Amber L. Wright
- 2) Read "The Art of Asking Great Questions," by Tijs Bisieux
- 3) Read "Why Assuming Might Be Your Most Dangerous Daily Habit," by Raphael Paulin-Daigle
- 4) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From Miro

Date: 9/30

Discussion Topic: Checking Your Assumptions & Asking the Right Questions

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Watch "A Stop at Willoughby" from Thirty Something
- 2) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From Reulas

Date: 10/7

Discussion Topic: Understanding Your Audience

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Read "How Jeff Bezos Turned Narrative into Amazon's Competitive Advantage," by Ben Bashaw
- 2) Watch "The Power of Simple Words," by Terin Izil
- 3) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From Hartell
- 4) **Quiz #1: Online quiz covering the lectures to date. Due: 10/13 (500 points)**

Date: 10/14

Discussion Topic: Organizing Your Thoughts & Rules of Simplicity

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Read "What Makes Storytelling So Effective for Learning," by Vanessa Boris
- 2) Read "The Science Behind the Art of Storytelling," by Harvard Business Publishing
- 3) Read "Omne Trium Perfectum: The Rule of Three for Writers," by Linda Carroll
- 4) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From Rosenberg

Date: 10/21

Discussion Topic: The Rhythm of a Story

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Read "Persuasion Starts with Good Listening Skills," by Evansville Courier & Press
- 2) Read "Harness the Power of 'The Ben Franklin Effect' To Get Someone to Like You," by Shana Lebowitz
- 3) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From Neugebauer

Date: 10/28

Discussion Topic: The Power of Persuasion

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Read "Beyond Bullets: Signal to Noise," by Bill Branson
- 2) Read "8 Tips for Unforgettable Presentation Design," from Kimp
- 3) Watch "The First Secret to Great Design," by Tony Fadell
- 4) Read "Reasons Why Effective Communication is Important for Designing," from Naldz Graphics
- 5) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From Dundas
- 6) **Presentation #2: Assignment details to be provided in class. Due: 11/17 (1,000 points)**

Date: 11/4

Discussion Topic: Designing the Page & Beyond

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Read "How to Tell a Story – Right Now – From a Master of Improv," by Joe Berkowitz
- 2) Read "Stoicism for Toughening," by Franklin Annis
- 3) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From TBD

Date: 11/11 – No Class

Date: 11/18

Discussion Topic: Presenting with Power

Homework Assignment:

- 1) **Final Assignment: Watch Steve Job's presentation introducing the iPhone at the Mac World convention in 2007. Taking what you've learned in this class, write a short paper (no more**

than 3 pages single spaced) identifying 5 things that you believe Jobs did well in the presentation and why it made it effective and 3 things that you believe could have been better and how. Due 12/1 (1,000 Points)

- 2) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From TBD

Date: 11/25 – No Class

Discussion Topic: Thanksgiving Holiday

Date: 12/2

Discussion Topic: Running a Pitch Process

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Read "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," by Chris Argyris
- 2) Watch "Words of Wisdom" From TBD
- 3) **Quiz #2: Online quiz covering the lectures to date. Due: 12/1 (500 points)**

University of Florida Policies

Zoom Professionalism: Please be mindful of maintaining a professional appearance and conduct via our remote lecture meetings. Consider your wardrobe and hygiene just as you would were we all in the same room, as well as your audio and visual backgrounds.

You are strongly encouraged to have your camera on during Zoom sessions. If you go to black screen for a significant amount of time, points could be deducted from your attendance / participation score at the instructor's discretion. Note that lectures will be recorded for educational purposes.

Virtual backgrounds: You are encouraged to use virtual backgrounds for Zoom if you want to protect the privacy of your environment or surroundings.

For online course with recorded materials: Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to

type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

For additional information please refer to the U.S. Department of Education Protecting Student Privacy site: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/fag/what-ferpa>

If you have extenuating circumstances or concerns about Zoom attendance, please see the instructor.

Find more information in the university attendance policies.

University Policy on Accommodating Students With Disabilities: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

University Policy on Academic Misconduct: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

The 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 (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. All individual, or group, work submitted for academic credit should be the original work of the individual, or individuals, seeking credit. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student. 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. ACEJMC Objectives Professional values and competencies: University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communication is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC).

The ACEJMC has identified several core values and competencies that journalism and mass communication students ought to possess upon graduation:

Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
- Think critically, creatively and independently. v Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

These examples were adapted and are from various resources, including the UF Instructor Guide by the University of Florida Center for Teaching Excellence; Brown University; CJC Harrison Hove's RTV 4301 TV News Reporting syllabus; and CJC Rachel Grant's Race, Gender, Class and Media syllabus

Getting Help

Health and Wellness 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 Learningsupport@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.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> Student Complaints On-Campus:
<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/studenthonorcode-student-conduct-code/> [On-Line](#) Students

Complaints: <http://distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process/>

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals.

Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>