

# RTV 4591

## Course Syllabus

---

### Instructor Information

**Name:** Benjamin Vollmer, PhD

**College:** College of Journalism

**Department:** Department of Media Production, Management, and Technology

**Contact/Email:** [bvollmer@ufl.edu](mailto:bvollmer@ufl.edu)

**Class Hours and Location:** Monday (11:45 1:40 PM) Wednesday (11:45 12:35 PM), NPB 1216

**Office Hours:** Wednesday (After Class) / Monday 2 PM EST OR by appointment via Zoom

**Contact Tip:** Make sure to give me 48 hours during the weekday to respond to emails! Usually I'm much faster than that, but my response speed can depend on several factors.

### Course Description and Contents

#### UF Guidelines

For all necessary information regarding UF guidelines, please [see the following link!](#)

#### Description

This course offers a newwave approach to mobile media by exploring aspects of design, storytelling, news, technological affordances, and user experience/user interface. Students will learn to use mobile technology in a way that directly accelerates their career opportunities - whether they are creative, academic, or industry. Emphasizing practical application, this course will focus on the development and refinement of ideas. Students will engage in in-class collaborative brainstorming as well as individual assignments, culminating in a portfolio of design work and a final pitch that utilizes mobile technology to help a) pursue creative endeavors or b) report on local happenings, news, or societal issues. Evaluation will be determined through rubrics and improvement.

**Course Tip:** A big part of this course will be taking ideas you have and turning them into something practical. By the end of the course, you will have ~~one~~ one fully fleshed out pitch to carry you forward after the class is over.

## Contents

1. Students will be tasked with designing a creative portfolio by the end of the semester. These will include a variety of creative works.
  - a. Linked-In Collabs
  - b. Mobile app design critique for beginners
  - c. User-experience sheet
  - d. Affordance sheet and thought bubble
  - e. Mobile app design critique for advanced
2. Students will also be tasked with a few written examinations (take home) and a final app development pitch.
  - a. Exam I\*: How can we use mobile technology to better our society?
  - b. Exam II\*: What does good design look like?
  - c. Final Pitch App Design: Preparing to design your own mobile application. This will include a variety of smaller assignments, including:
    - i. Five app ideas
    - ii. Picking an idea for your final pitch
    - iii. Presenting the idea to the class for feedback
    - iv. Spending in-class time developing your application
  - d. **OR** Final Pitch Creative Project: Preparing a storytelling project using mobile technology. This will include a variety of smaller assignments including:
    - i. Five story ideas
    - ii. Picking an idea for your final pitch
    - iii. Presenting the idea to the class for feedback
    - iv. Spending in-class time developing your creative project

**Course Tip:** Class examinations will be take home - these are meant to assess your ability to think creatively about mobile technology, design, and how those things fit into society.

## Philosophy and Expectations

It's not just enough to be creative, you have to be able to focus that creativity into tangible projects. In this course, students are encouraged to fully engage with the dynamic world of emerging mobile. Adhering to university policies, regular attendance is vital for active participation and collaborative learning. Meeting deadlines is crucial for maintaining the course's momentum and ensuring a cohesive learning experience. Assignments should be completed as

specified, reflecting each student's creativity and understanding of the course material. Active involvement in discussions, teamwork for group discussions, and participation in weekly critiques are vital, as they serve as key opportunities for students to explore and expand their storytelling skills in new media contexts.

My role as your instructor will be to provide thorough and critical feedback, both verbally in class and directly through your assignments. Adapting and progressing this feedback is a vital portion of the class. If students are learning and progressing, then they will succeed in this class. It is expected that students will respond professionally and gracefully to this feedback.

## Course Rules

### Attendance and Late Work

There will not be many course rules to abide by, but in the interest of consistency and clarity, students will be asked to do the following:

1. If you cannot come to class, please make sure to contact me **ahead of time** to let me know. This will involve an excused absence in compliance with [UF's attendance policies](#).
2. Late work is accepted, but will come with the following penalties assuming the late work is not excused:
  - a. 10% off if submitted within 48 hours late
  - b. 25% off if submitted within a week late
  - c. 50% off if submitted any time after a week late
3. Please check the Canvas page for updates several times a week. Updates and course notes will be sent through Canvas and students are expected to be aware of this.
4. If you have questions about an assignment or something related to the course, you must ask **before** the respective work is due.
5. Students will respect each other in class. This includes being patient and having meaningful discussions with others. This class is meant to be inclusive and based in having a sense of community between classmates.
6. Students are expected to actively participate in the class.

**Class Tip:** If you are typically a little more quiet in class, participation can be achieved in a variety of ways. Thorough feedback, being in class on time, actively listening to your classmates, and providing strong ideas through your work.

## Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center [Click here](#) to get started with the Disability Resource Center. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with me so that we can discuss your needs as early as possible. I'd like to make this process as easy as possible, so do not feel badly about approaching me should you need to.

## Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online [here](#). 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 [here](#).

## Materials & Resources

While there are no mandatory readings in this class, students will be expected to have access to mobile technology of some kind (an emphasis on iOS and Android platforms). This includes the ability to download and use applications. Even baseline mobile technology with access to an application shop will do. **You will not have to pay anything to be productive and successful in this course.** Here are some resources you can familiarize yourself with (none are mandatory):

- [Softlr](#), an app-design website that doesn't require coding ability to function
- [Bubble](#), another app-design website that doesn't require coding ability to function
- [MIT App inventory](#), a slightly more complex design website
- [YouTube](#), for watching tutorials or analyzing web content
- [Google Drive](#), for organizing your created work

**Class Tip:** If you ever need help tracking something down, ask me or send me an email!

## Assessment and Grades

### Assessment Philosophy

Students will be assessed by their ability to meet rubric standards (on a per assignment basis) as well as improve their skills, respective to feedback, as the course continues. This course will

assume a flexible grading style that encourages effort and participation, a willingness to follow instructions, and the aforementioned improvement.

This class will focus on a handful of assignments due almost every other week. These assignments will often include two separate segments - one for observation, editing, or critique, and the other for student-designed creative work. It's expected that every student will have a different path to success. This course design should reward students who want to better themselves and their creative abilities.

## Grade Breakdown

Please observe [UF's grading policy](#), which will be aligned with how grades are documented in this course.

- [Course Work \(50%\)](#)
  - This includes assignments such as the mobile app critique and app reports.
  - Grades on your course work will focus on your ability to listen and react to feedback. Improvement is the key to success in this course!
- [Final Pitch \(25%\)](#)
  - This is a collection and presentation of your work over the course of the semester. It will be what you take out into the professional world as evidence of your creativity and work - a portfolio of sorts.
  - The final pitch will be a detailed document of an app or project you want to create using mobile technology.
- [Examinations \(12.5%\)](#)
  - There will be two examinations across the semester, one as a mid-term and one as a final exam. These examinations are take home - you are encouraged and expected to use any available resources you have, this includes brainstorming with your classmates. That being said, original work is the primary objective and outcome of these examinations: it should be your ideas, written in your voice.
  - These take-home exams will be a brief 2-3 pages, double-spaced.
- [Attendance and Participation \(12.5%\)](#)

## Brief Project Overview

While creative and critical coursework will be detailed on a bi-weekly basis, it will be good to have a head start on some of the cumulative projects that will be built toward throughout the course.



## Coursework (Bi-Weekly)

These projects will be shorter and involve a brief, in-class brainstorming. They will be due about every other week (as seen on the schedule below). These assignments will come alongside a rubric, but the important thing to note is that you'll be creating *original* work, and that this should be something you can build on for a real project down the road. Think of these as creative drafts they are meant to exercise your creative muscles. Much of this work should build toward your final pitch.

## Examinations

These exams will be more reflective and serve as an opportunity to express what you've learned over the course of the semester. They will be evaluated based on the uniqueness of your ideas and the quality of your writing.

## Final Pitch

This will be the start of a creative endeavor that will propel you into the professional world. This pitch can be about either a) an idea for a mobile application you want to develop or b) an outline of a creative or newsworthy story you want to tell through mobile technology. Ideas include but are not limited to: movies, documentaries, or shortform content. This is something you will be working on throughout the semester. This pitch will be heavily reviewed **in-class** and students are welcome to push the boundaries for this project. The goal is to make something you are passionate about and invested in.

## Final Pitch Presentation


At the end of the semester, you will be asked to do a short, five-minute presentation on your semester project. If you do not like presenting live, you can submit a five-minute edited video that pitches your project (think like a commercial or trailer for your work).

## Schedule

It should be noted that this course schedule is FLEXIBLE and likely will change as the semester progresses. This should serve as an outline, however, for what we are working on in the class and when you are prepared to turn things in.

 = Assignment Due

 = Important Class Note

 = In-Class Activity

WEEK	DATE	CLASS NOTES
ONE	AUG 25/27	<b>NO CLASS MONDAY</b> (Ben out of town) Syllabus Overview Class Introductions
TWO	SEP 1/3	<b>NO CLASS MONDAY</b> (Labor Day) Understanding Design Mobile Technology and Overview <b>Share: Favorite Apps</b>
THREE	SEP 8/10	<b>Due: Linked In Logins</b> Understanding Phones/Tablets How to Use Our Phones Productively
FOUR	SEP 15/17	<b>Due: Mobile App Critique</b> <b>Brainstorm: Ideas for an App</b> What's a Unique Selling Point? Intro to Softr/Bubble
FIVE	SEP 22/24	<b>Share: Media Made on Phones</b> Mobile Apps for Visual Storytelling
SIX	SEP 19/OCT 1	<b>Due: UX Sheet Part One</b> <b>Share: Games Made for Phones</b> Mobile Apps for Games User Experience and Design
SEVEN	OCT 6/8	<b>Due: UX Sheet Part Two</b> <b>Share: Well Designed App</b> Mobile Apps for News Understanding Affordances
EIGHT	OCT 13/15	<b>Due: Exam #1</b> <b>Brainstorm: Design Concept</b> Mobile Apps for Business
NINE	OCT 20/22	<b>Due: Affordance Sheet</b> App Usability Mobile Heuristics
TEN	OCT 27/29	<b>Due: Five App Ideas</b>

		<b>Share: App Idea</b> Mobile Heuristics
ELEVEN	NOV 3/5	<b>Due: Five Storytelling Ideas</b> <b>Brainstorm: Catch Up</b> How we use Mobile Tech to tell stories
TWELVE	NOV 10/12	<b>NO CLASS MONDAY (Veteran's Day)</b> Colors and Words <b>Brainstorm: Word and Color Association</b> <b>Due: Picking a Pitch</b>
THIRTEEN	NOV 17/19	<b>Share: Your Pitch Concept</b> In Class Drafting of Ideas Crash Course to Softr/Bubble <b>Due: Advanced App Critique</b>
FOURTEEN	NOV 24/26	<b>NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)</b>
FIFTEEN	DEC 1/3	<b>Due: Final Pitch</b> Final Class Pitch Presentations
SIXTEEN	DEC 8/10	<b>No Class - Exam Days</b> <b>Due: Exam #2</b> Individual Meetings if Necessary

## Other Notes

### 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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click](#)



[here to read the Conduct Code](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult the instructor of this course. Plagiarism will absolutely not be tolerated.

## In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.


A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.40 Student.

## Other Resources

**U Matter, We Care:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

**Counseling and Wellness Center** Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352 392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.



**Student Health Care Center:** Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

**University Police Department:** Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

**UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:** For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.

**GatorWell Health Promotion Services:** For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

**Career Connections Center:** Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

**Library Support:** Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

**Teaching Center:** Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

**Writing Studio:** 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

**Student Complaints On-Campus:** Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.

**On-Line Students Complaints:** View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.

