

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
FALL 2025 SYLLABUS – JRM 5930, SPECIAL TOPICS
1 CREDIT

Professor Brittan L. Mitchell

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Office Hours: Zoom, by appointment only.

Preferred times:

Wednesday from 6:00 – 7:00 pm

Friday from 12:00 – 1:00 pm

MEETING TIME: Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.

LOCATION: Zoom

*Preferred contact is text message to mobile phone

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The primary objective of this course is to teach you how to effectively communicate in business settings.

This class includes at least 13 hours (780 minutes) of recordings, quizzes, tests, or other instruction that is directly supervised by the instructor; it also will require students to spend at least 30 hours (1800 minutes) of out-of-class work.

Zoom Lectures will be held every Wednesday evening from October 15 – December 10 from 7:00 pm – 8:15 pm. The last 15 minutes are for questions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOME:

The primary objective of this course is to teach you to write and present for multiple professional audiences. Through written and oral experiences, the class aims to refine your ability to communicate effectively.

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify the various types of professional communications;
- Prepare effective responses to professional communications;
- Use effective organizational techniques for professional communication;
- Appropriately adopt a voice, tone, and formality suited to the professional situation;
- Revise, edit, and proofread your professional writing;
- Use business appropriate research tools and processes to evaluate business scenarios;
- Present a formal oral presentation that requires public speaking skills and presentation media; and
- Solidify knowledge of writing conventions, including editing, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS:

Helen Cunningham and Brenda Greene, The Business Style Handbook: An A-to-Z Guide for Effective Writing on the Job (McGraw Hill October 2012)

Please be sure to register for the Canvas course and have any required materials with you in print or easily accessible electronic form in class. You are responsible for checking your Canvas page and the e-mail connected to the page regularly for any class announcements or adjustments.

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS, INCLUDING A LIST OF IMPORTANT DEADLINES:

This syllabus is offered as a guide to the direction of the course. Our pace will depend in part on the level of interest and the level of difficulty of each section and is subject to change.

Assessments/Assessments:

Assignment	Percent of Grade
Assignment #1: LinkedIn Learning on Personal Branding	10
Assignment #2: Create Your Online Elevator Pitch	10
Assignment #3: LinkedIn Learning on Writing Emails	10
Assignment #4: LinkedIn Learning on Establishing Work from Home Policy	10
Assignment #5: Draft a Work from Home Policy	20
Assignment #6: Socialize the Work from Home Policy utilizing PowerPoint	20
Assignment #7: Multiple Choice Canvas Quiz on Textbook (Canvas timed quiz)	20
Total	100

***SOME CLASSES MAY BE RESCHEDULED AND/OR PROVIDED THROUGH A VIRTUAL FORMAT, AS NEEDED THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER**

Week	Date	Topic
1	10/15	<i>Class 1: Introduction to Professional Communication</i> Required Readings before class: • The Business Style Handbook: ○ Introduction xv-xvii Required Video before class: LinkedIn Learning: Amplify your Personal Brand with Generative AI (Link) Lecture time will focus on the following topics: • Course introduction • Required Reading • Personal branding through resume writing & LinkedIn presence Assignment 1: Upload the certificate from the above LinkedIn Learning course into Canvas. This certificate will demonstrate your participation in this online asynchronous learning activity. Certificate must be uploaded into Canvas by October 17, 2025, by 11:59 pm.
2	10/22	<i>Class 2: Why we write</i> Required Readings before class: • The Business Style Handbook: ○ Chapter 1—Fortune 500 Survey Results, pages 1-13 ○ The A-Z Entries: pages 59-78 Required Video before class: Ted Talk: The elevator speech is out of order (2012) (Link) Lecture time will focus on the following topics: • Required Reading • Personal branding through a professional elevator speech • Writing with Generative AI (Do's and Do Not's) • Think about your "About" statement on LinkedIn as your online elevator pitch Discuss Assignment 2: Create the "About" section on your LinkedIn profile utilizing the principles discussed in the first two classes. LinkedIn restricts "About" section to 2600 characters. If you use Generative AI, please also include the prompts you used to generate the content. Assignment must be uploaded into Canvas by October 31, 2025, by 11:59pm.

3	10/29	<i>Class 3: Style</i> Required Readings before class: • The Business Style Handbook: ○ Chapter 2 – Why Style Matters, pages 15-21 ○ The A-Z Entries: pages 113-144 Lecture time will focus on the following topics: • Required Reading • Identifying and understanding your audience for professional communications • Communication Strategy: Selecting the right tools for communication Discuss Assignment 2: Create the “About” section on your LinkedIn profile utilizing the principles discussed in the first two classes. LinkedIn restricts “About” section to 2600 characters. If you use Generative AI, please include the prompts you used to generate the content. Assignment must be uploaded into Canvas by November 2, 2025, by 11:59pm.
4	11/5	<i>Class 3: Writing emails</i> Required Readings before class: • The Business Style Handbook: ○ Chapter 5– Before You Hit Send, pages 43-59 ○ The A-Z Entries: pages 188-216 Required Video before class: LinkedIn Learning, Writing Email (Link) (60 minutes) Lecture time will focus on the following topics: • Required Reading • Why emails matter, tips and tricks Discuss Assignment 3: Upload the certificate from the above LinkedIn Learning course into Canvas. This certificate will demonstrate your participation in this online asynchronous learning activity. Certificate must be uploaded into Canvas by November 14, 2025, at 11:59 pm.
5	11/12	<i>Class 5: Standards</i> Required Readings before class: • The Business Style Handbook: ○ Chapter 3 – The Case for Standards, pages 23-28 ○ The A-Z Entries: pages 145-166 Required Vide before class: LinkedIn Learning: Establishing Work from Home Policy (link) (*This video is foundational to a large writing assignment later in the course). Lecture time will focus on the following topics:

		• Required Reading • Professional Research techniques and strategies • Professional Visualization and Organization • Discuss Assignment 5 & 6 regarding work from home policy <u>Discuss Assignment 4:</u> Upload the certificate from the above LinkedIn Learning course into Canvas. This certificate will demonstrate your participation in this online asynchronous learning activity. Certificate must be uploaded into Canvas by November 21, 2025, at 11:59 pm.
6	11/12	<i>Class 6: Purpose</i> Required Readings before class: • The Business Style Handbook Textbook: ○ Chapter 4—Write with Purpose, pages 29-42 ○ The A-Z Entries: pages 167-187 Lecture time will focus on the following topics: • Required Reading • Professional Writing: Drafting, Designing, and Revising <u>Discuss Assignment 5:</u> Draft a Work from Home Corporate Policy on provided template. Policy must be uploaded into Canvas by December 5, 2025, at 11:59 pm.
7	11/26	<i>Class 7: Professional Drafting Techniques: Microsoft Word</i> Required Readings before class: • The Business Style Handbook: ○ The A-Z Entries: pages 217-241 Lecture time will focus on the following topics: • Required Reading • Professional Collaboration and Presentation Styles • Syntax and word choice • Punctuation and Writing Mechanics <u>Discuss Assignment 5:</u> Draft a Work from Home Corporate Policy on provided template. Policy must be uploaded into Canvas by December 5, 2025, at 11:59 pm. <u>Discuss Assignment 6:</u> Introduce the Work from Home Policy through a PowerPoint presentation. Presentation must be uploaded into Canvas by December 12, 2025, at 11:59pm.
8	12/3	<i>Class 8: Professional Drafting Techniques: Microsoft PowerPoint & Excel</i> Required Readings before class: • The Business Style Handbook: ○ The A-Z Entries: pages 241-260

		Required Video before class: Ted Talk: Death by PowerPoint (2014) (Link) Lecture time will focus on the following topics: • Required Reading • Verb Tenses and Moods Discuss Assignment 5: Draft a Work from Home Corporate Policy on provided template. Policy must be uploaded into Canvas by Friday, December 5, 2025, at 11:59 pm. Discuss Assignment 6: Introduce the Work from Home Policy through a PowerPoint presentation. Presentation must be uploaded into Canvas by Friday December 12, 2025, at 11:59pm. Discuss End-of-Course Multiple Choice Quiz based on readings from <i>The Business Style Handbook, An A-to-Z Guide for Effective Writing on the Job</i> (2013) by Friday December 12, 2025, at 11:59pm.
9	12/10	<i>Class 9: Professional Drafting Technologies: Microsoft Office & TEAMS</i> Required Readings before class: • The Business Style Handbook: ○ The A-Z Entries: pages 261-271 Lecture time will focus on the following topics: • Required Reading • Presentations: Commanding the stage Discuss Assignment 6: Introduce the Work from Home Policy through a PowerPoint presentation. Presentation must be uploaded into Canvas by Friday, December 12, 2025, at 11:59pm. In class, Canvas Quiz: Multiple Choice Quiz based on readings from <i>The Business Style Handbook, An A-to-Z Guide for Effective Writing on the Job</i> (2013) by Friday December 12, 2025, at 11:59pm.
**		<i>Optional material, Guest Lectures (as time and availability permits)</i>

CLASS DEMEANOR EXPECTATIONS:

You are responsible for the information contained in all Canvas postings, handouts, and assigned reading. I expect that you will have completed the reading assignment and that you will participate in class. I will call on students during class and expect them to be prepared. I also expect that you will be prepared to participate in group exercises. This is not a lecture course. I will not use our valuable class time to reiterate what you have read. Instead, I will use class meetings to give you practice using the skills and applying the principles covered in the assigned reading. Our class meetings will be of value to you only if you come prepared to participate.

I understand that sometimes things will complicate your life and that you may not be prepared for a particular class session. If you are unprepared to participate in a class session, please let me know before class begins, and I will not call on you that day. Do not, however, make a habit of this.

CLASS ATTENDANCE & MAKEUP POLICIES:

Observance of Religious Holidays: UF Law respects students' observance of religious holidays. Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith. Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence. Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

Absence Due to Illness: A student who is absent from class or misses any required class-related activity because of illness should contact their instructor, if feasible, as early as possible prior to the missed class or activity. Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered during an excused absence. Students should contact their college by the deadline to drop a course for medical reasons. Students can petition the Dean of Students Office to drop a course for medical reasons. The university's policy regarding medical excuse from classes is maintained by the Student Health Care Center.

Satisfactorily complete assignments: The goals of all assignments in this course are to teach you the principles of and give you practice in developing professional communication skills. I want you to use the assignments to practice writing techniques, learn from my feedback, learn from your strengths and weaknesses, and improve.

For each assignment, I will provide you with a checklist of my expectations for the project and will use the checklist to aid me in assessing the quality of your work. I will evaluate your performance based on the skill and effort you demonstrate in doing the best work that you can on each assignment, the skill and effort you demonstrate in applying the principles discussed in the assigned reading and during our class meetings, and the skill and effort you demonstrate in revising your work.

Timely complete assignments: Just as in all business settings, professional colleagues expect work to be submitted timely, I expect your work to be submitted no later than the specified deadline. Your assignment grade may be lowered one level (e.g. B to B-) for each assignment not submitted by the deadline. The grade on your final writing assignment may be lowered one level (e.g. B to B-) for every day or portion of a day that the assignment is late.

I will excuse late submissions only in limited emergency situations. As to emergencies involving your serious illness, accident, or the complete death of your computer (i.e., computer blows up, the hard drive crashes), please call me, e-mail me, or see me before the date that the assignment is due. Under such circumstances, I will delay the deadline for your paper to give you enough time to deal with the emergency. The following examples do not constitute an excuse for missing a deadline:

- a job interview;
- reasonably foreseeable transportation trouble;
- reasonably foreseeable computer or printer problems (including but not limited to difficulties submitting assignments on the course Canvas page and other user technological issues);
- lack of time to complete;
- leaving the assignment at home; and/or
- not understanding the assignment.

EVALUATION METHODS & GRADING POLICY:

[If a portion of the grade is tied to participation, please provide specific detail on how you will determine an individual student's participation grade.]

Grade Scale & Grading Policies:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>
A	4.0
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.00
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.00
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.00
D-	0.67
E	0.00

The law school grading policy is available at <https://www.law.ufl.edu/uf-law-student-handbook-and-academic-policies>. Note that the mandatory mean does not apply to MSL or LLM students.

EXAM DELAYS AND ACCOMMODATIONS:

The law school policy on exam delays and accommodations can be found [here](#).

STATEMENT RELATED TO ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must first register with the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>). Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the Assistant Dean Brian Mitchell. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. 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. Students may access information about various resources on the UF Law Student Resources Canvas page, available [here](#).

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Click [here](#) for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and may 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 [here](#).

COMPLIANCE WITH UF HONOR CODE:

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Law Honor Code located [here](#). The UF Law Honor Code also prohibits use of artificial intelligence, including, but not limited to, ChatGPT and Harvey, to assist in completing quizzes, exams, papers, or other assessments.

UF students are also 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 University Conduct Code](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

RECORDINGS:

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 4.040 Student.

RESOURCES:

Wellness:

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact 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](#).

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.

Academic & Tech Support Resources:

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

On-Line Students Complaints: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).