

ENTRE 579 Program Syllabus
Entrepreneurial Influence
UW Foster School of Business

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Course Overview

As an entrepreneur, your success is directly tied to your abilities to communicate effectively... particularly in the context of the “pitch”. The employees you recruit and retain, the advisors you bring around your team, the investors you seat around your table, and the customers you win are largely driven by the vision you articulate to them. This course is about entrepreneurship and the role that verbal communication, influence, and persuasion play in shaping your success in starting, growing, managing, leading, and even exiting a venture. Of all the courses you take at Foster, this one will most emphasize the power of what you say and how effectively you say it in the entrepreneurial context. We will delve into what goes into an effective pitch, what the different parties around your business may be looking for, and how to influence key stakeholders in your own success as entrepreneur.

The course will follow a progression of different forms of “pitching” that you will need to deliver as an entrepreneur (and even as an “intrapreneur”). Throughout the course, you and/or your teammates will receive feedback on the way you verbally communicate your idea. To make this course as practical and as applied as possible, we will have plenty of guest speakers, feedback providers and “judges” coming in to share their perspective directly with you. These guests are some of the most influential members of the Seattle startup ecosystem: CEOs, investors, tech company executives, journalists, attorneys, etc. As a side benefit, it is a great chance to get to know some heavy-hitters in Seattle (all of whom happen to be excellent at the skills built in this course, and almost all of whom are hiring!).

Along the way, you’ll hear from compelling entrepreneurs about their journeys and how these particular skillsets have shaped the trajectory of their companies and their ambitions.

The course itself will culminate in a final “EXPO Night” on the last date of the class, where each team will present a multimedia/poster pitch to a large group of

investors/CEOs/executives. These individuals will be helping grade the final, and we'll call them "investors" for purposes of the exercise. For those of you familiar with the UW Business Plan Competition, our format is similar to the UWBPC Investment Round. Each team will get space in an auditorium to present alongside a large posterboard. The guest investors will walk around to you and talk with you, hear you out, and decide whether they wish to invest in your company. Each of these investors will have one million Foster dollars to invest in any companies they wish. The curve of the "EXPO Night Grade" (see below) is influenced by how much money you raise at this event. Needless to say, if your team raises the most money, your grade will be very positively influenced. I will also be walking around and evaluating your formal team pitches for the other part of your expo grade.

I have spent the past ten years of my career in the startup and venture capital community. Before running Pioneer Square Labs and PSL Ventures, I was a partner at Madrona Venture Group. Over my years in startups and VC I have invested in and worked closely with first-time entrepreneurs and their management teams on honing these very skills in the context of their startup ventures. I am thrilled to be doing the same with you.

Classroom Etiquette and Norms

I know you all work crazy hard during your Foster years. Outside of violating classroom norms for etiquette and treatment of speakers, there should be no need to feel anxious about grading in this course. The goal for this class is for all of you getting a ton of strong practical learnings out of our time together that will be highly relevant to your careers. In this class, the key thing that will most adversely impact grades is any form of disrespect toward speakers, fellow students, or the teaching team. I realize most of the below goes without saying, but this is exceptionally important to me given the unique amount of energy/time we ask of guest speakers and guest contributors in this class. Our three-hour sessions are big commitments on the five Thursdays we have together, but your attention, engagement, and respect for each other and for anyone leading a class session is paramount to our creating a powerful and positive shared in-class experience for everyone.

In terms of classroom norms, I have a handful of pet peeves that I hope you'll find fair and reasonable. Our teaching team will deduct points from participation grades when we see them:

- If a guest speaker is speaking, please do not have laptops or phones out.
- If I am speaking, feel free to have your laptop out and do anything relevant to the class. But I do look at "participation" as more than just raising your hand and speaking. It's being engaged with your classmates, with me, and with the course material. In the half dozen years I've been teaching we've never had a problem in this course, but if you're on your phone mid-class, or doing anything else to distract others / take away from a fully engaged classroom environment, we will deduct participation points.
- I have built good break time into each class. I know many of you are working in addition to being students and sometimes urgent matters come up during class. With that said, whenever it can be prevented please do whatever you can do to not leave the classroom when a guest speaker is speaking. It has thrown off a couple of these guest

speakers in past years, especially when multiple people leave the room. Just like all of you, our speakers are all busy, but unlike the rest of us, their time in our classroom on a Thursday evening is not compensated with a diploma or a paycheck. They are being generous with us - please, be generous back, and use break time for your breaks/calls whenever possible.

Additionally, because many of our speakers will be asked to share some relatively personal and confidential information about their entrepreneurial experiences (transactional and otherwise), our goal is to create a trusted environment for them to do so... please no posting or tweeting about speaker content unless permission is explicitly given by the speaker. The classes will be recorded and posted on Canvas if you need to miss a session, but please do not post videos of the course anywhere else. Thank you!

Academic Integrity

I employ the principles and procedures espoused by the UW Foster School of Business Honor Code and the University of Washington Student Conduct Code to maintain academic integrity in the course. The Codes establish the expectation that students will practice high standards of professional honesty and integrity. In particular, implementation of the Code at the Foster School of Business prohibits cheating, attempted cheating, lying, and plagiarism—including improper citations of source material—as it pertains to academic work. If you are unclear about how the Code applies to assignments for this course, please ask for clarification. Suspected violations will be handled in compliance with the University of Washington Student Conduct Code (<http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html>) as outlined in Washington Administrative Code 478-120.

Format and Grading

The course will be taught via lectures, feedback on “pitch” delivery and development, and guest speaker instruction. Grading for the class will be as follows:

Class Contribution	33%
Class Assignments (practice pitch, PR assignment)	33%
EXPO Night: Final Pitch Verbal Presentation, Poster, and “Foster Dollars Earned”	34%