

MUM 4005/6008 – Foundations of Music Business

University of Florida | School of Music

Credits: 3

Grading Scheme: Letter Grade

Instructor of Record: Dr. Denis Vasenin, D.M.A.

Class Meeting Time, Location, & Modality: 4:05-7:05pm | MUM 147 | In-Person

Email: d.vasenin@ufl.edu

Office Hour: Mondays, 8am - 9am or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides a contemporary foundation in the structure, roles, and operations of the modern music industry. Students examine how music professionals operate within a digital-first, platform-driven global economy, with particular attention to professional roles, communication practices, and industry literacy. Emphasis is placed on employability, strategic presentation, and professional readiness rather than ownership models or venture creation. The course equips students with the vocabulary, frameworks, and professional awareness necessary to engage credibly with today's music industry.

Course Prerequisites & Format

This course is open to undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate music majors and minors. Non-music majors may enroll with permission of the instructor. No prior coursework in music business is required; however, students should be prepared to engage with professional writing, digital platforms, applied analysis, and presentation-based work.

The course meets once weekly in a three-hour lab format. Class sessions integrate brief lectures, applied discussion, case-based analysis, and student-led presentations. Students are expected to arrive prepared to present work, evaluate industry practices, and participate in professional dialogue reflective of real-world music business environments.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain how the contemporary music industry operates across platforms, roles, and revenue streams
- Communicate music business concepts using clear, professional visual and verbal formats
 - Analyze music industry careers through a digital-first and creator-economy lens
- Demonstrate foundational legal, contractual, and professional literacy
- Present industry research concisely and persuasively
- Understand how music professionals attract clients, gigs, and collaborators in online environments

Course Calendar (Subject to Adjustment)

The course schedule below provides an overview of weekly topics and major activities. Specific assignments, deadlines, and submission details are posted in Canvas. Students are responsible for monitoring Canvas regularly for updates.

Week	Topic	Major Activities
Week 1	Course Introduction & Industry Structure	Course overview; introduction to modern music industry sectors; Blitz Presentation orientation
Week 2	Professional Roles in Music	Industry role mapping; entry pathways; Blitz Presentations
Week 3	Revenue Streams & Monetization	Digital vs. physical revenue models; case analysis
Week 4	Artists & Teams	Artist–manager–label relationships; collaboration dynamics
Week 5	Marketing Fundamentals	Branding, messaging, and audience development
Week 6	Digital Platforms	Streaming, social media, and platform strategy
Week 7	Career Entry & Advancement	Internships, networking, and early-career positioning
Week 8	Contracts & Agreements	Legal literacy, risk awareness, and professional protections
Week 9	Professional Communication	Pitching, presentations, and industry correspondence
Week 10	Live & Experiential Music	Touring, festivals, venues, and experiential models
Week 11	Global Music Markets	Regional differences, global platforms, and cultural considerations
Week 12	Ethics & Professional Conduct	Professional standards, reputation, and accountability
Week 13	Future Trends & Final Synthesis	Emerging trends; Final Applied Synthesis Presentations

Syllabus Disclaimer: This syllabus and course calendar are intended as guides and may be modified during the semester at the discretion of the instructor. Any changes will be communicated via Canvas.

Major Projects Overview

1. Industry Role Breakdown

Students conduct an in-depth analysis of a specific, real-world music industry role (e.g., A&R coordinator, music supervisor assistant, tour manager, digital marketing specialist). The project examines required skills, entry pathways, day-to-day responsibilities, and long-term career trajectories, with emphasis on professional expectations and positioning.

2. Platform Strategy Analysis

Students analyze how an artist, company, or music professional strategically leverages a single digital platform (streaming, social media, or direct-to-fan tools). Focus areas include audience targeting, content strategy, monetization, and engagement outcomes.

3. Legal & Professional Literacy Case

Students examine a contemporary legal, contractual, or professional issue in the music industry, emphasizing terminology comprehension, risk awareness, and real-world implications rather than legal drafting or ownership theory.

4. Digital Presence Audit

Students conduct a structured evaluation of an artist, label, or music professional's online presence, assessing branding consistency, communication clarity, platform alignment, and audience signaling.

5. Career Communication Pitch

Students develop and deliver a professional pitch articulating their intended career direction within the music industry. This mirrors real-world scenarios such as informational interviews, internships, or early-career networking.

Graduate-Level Project Differentiation (Master's & Doctoral Students)

This course is offered concurrently to undergraduate and graduate students. While core learning objectives and major projects are shared across sections, graduate students (master's and doctoral) are held to advanced analytical, professional, and reflective expectations consistent with graduate-level study.

Graduate students will complete all core course requirements, with one of the following substitutions or enhancements applied to the Major Projects outlined below. These graduate-level components emphasize deeper analysis, strategic reasoning, and professional or scholarly integration rather than additional workload volume.

Graduate Substitution / Enhancement Options

(Instructor will designate or approve the option used)

Graduate students will complete **one** of the following in place of, or in addition to, an undergraduate-level component of a Major Project:

Option A: Advanced Industry Analysis Addendum

(Recommended for master's students)

For one selected Major Project, graduate students will submit an additional written or recorded addendum (approximately 1,000–1,500 words or equivalent) that:

- Situates the project within broader industry structures, trends, or economic forces
- Evaluates strategic implications or professional risk considerations
- Demonstrates higher-order judgment beyond descriptive analysis

This addendum is graded as part of the original project and does not constitute a separate assignment.

Option B: Comparative or Systems-Level Extension

(Recommended for doctoral students or research-focused master's students)

Graduate students may expand one Major Project to include a comparative or systems-level perspective, such as:

- Comparing two platforms, roles, or professional models
- Analyzing how decisions scale across markets, regions, or organizational levels
- Examining long-term implications for industry practice or professional ecosystems

This extension may take written, visual, or presentation form, as approved by the instructor.

Option C: Scholarly or Professional Integration Brief

(Flexible for both master's and doctoral students)

Graduate students may complete a Professional Integration Brief tied to one Major Project that:

- Connects course concepts to prior professional experience, advanced study, or research interests
- Incorporates relevant industry literature, reports, or scholarly perspectives
- Articulates how insights inform leadership, teaching, consulting, or advanced professional practice

Evaluation of Graduate Work

Graduate-level work is evaluated using the same core rubrics as undergraduate work, with **additional emphasis on depth, synthesis, and professional judgment**. Expectations for graduate submissions will be communicated clearly in Canvas and during class.

Graduate students are encouraged to consult with the instructor early in the semester to determine which enhancement or substitution best aligns with their academic or professional goals.

Discussions (Canvas-Based)

Weekly Canvas-based discussions are designed to reinforce industry literacy, critical analysis, and professional communication. Discussions emphasize application of course concepts to real-world music business contexts rather than opinion-based reflection.

Each student is required to post one initial response (approximately 250–400 words) addressing the weekly prompt. The instructor will provide a weekly synthesis, highlighting key insights from student contributions and introducing additional perspectives not previously raised. This ensures conceptual clarity and reinforces connections between discussions, course units, and industry practice.

Weekly Discussion Topics (Aligned to Course Units)

1. **Week 1: Industry Structure:** How is the contemporary music industry organized, and how do its core sectors interact?
2. **Week 2: Professional Roles:** How do different music industry roles contribute to the lifecycle of recorded music?
3. **Week 3: Revenue Streams:** How do music professionals generate income across digital and physical channels?
4. **Week 4: Artists & Teams:** What makes effective collaboration between artists, managers, labels, and service providers?
5. **Week 5: Marketing Fundamentals:** How do music professionals use branding and messaging to reach audiences?
6. **Week 6: Digital Platforms:** How have streaming and social platforms reshaped professional pathways in music?
7. **Week 7: Career Entry:** What are common entry points into the music industry, and how do professionals advance?
8. **Week 8: Contracts & Agreements:** Why are contracts essential in music, and what risks do they mitigate?

9. **Week 9: Professional Communication:** What distinguishes effective professional communication in music business contexts?
10. **Week 10: Live & Experiential Music:** How do touring, festivals, and events function within the modern industry?
11. **Week 11: Global Music Markets:** How does the music industry operate differently across regions and cultures?
12. **Week 12: Ethics & Professional Conduct:** What does professionalism look like in contemporary music business practice?
13. **Week 13: Future Trends:** What emerging trends are likely to shape music careers over the next decade?

Assignments & Evaluation

- Weekly Blitz Presentations – 30%
- Major Projects (5 total) – 45%
- Weekly Discussions (13) – 10%
- Participation & Professionalism – 10%
- Final Applied Synthesis Presentation – 5%

Grading Scale

Numerical Grade	Letter Grade
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93–100	A
90–92	A-
87–89	B+
83–86	B
80–82	B-
77–79	C+
73–76	C
70–72	C-
67–69	D+
63–66	D
60–62	D-
0–59	E

Evaluation Rubrics

All assignments in this course are evaluated using professional, criteria-based rubrics aligned with industry standards, clarity of communication, and applied understanding. Rubrics are designed to assess **preparation, analysis, professionalism, and effectiveness**, not subjective opinion.

Weekly Blitz Presentation Rubric (30%)

Each Blitz Presentation is a short, focused professional presentation (typically 3–5 minutes) designed to simulate real-world industry briefings.

Criteria	Excellent (A)	Satisfactory (B–C)	Unsatisfactory (D–F)
Preparation & Accuracy	Demonstrates clear preparation; content is accurate, relevant, and well-scoped	Adequate preparation; minor gaps or inaccuracies	Unprepared, unclear, or factually weak
Industry Understanding	Demonstrates strong understanding of industry roles, practices, or platforms	Demonstrates basic understanding with limited depth	Misunderstands or misrepresents industry concepts
Clarity & Organization	Clear structure; ideas communicated efficiently and logically	Organization present but uneven or unclear	Disorganized; difficult to follow
Professional Delivery	Confident, concise, professional tone and pacing	Delivery uneven or overly informal	Unprofessional delivery or poor engagement
Visual / Supporting Material (if used)	Clean, professional, enhances message	Functional but underdeveloped	Distracting, unclear, or absent

Major Project Rubric (Applied Projects 1–5) – 45%

All major projects are evaluated using the same core criteria, with project-specific expectations provided in Canvas.

Criteria	Excellent (A)	Satisfactory (B–C)	Unsatisfactory (D–F)
Conceptual Understanding	Demonstrates strong, applied understanding of music industry structures and practices	Demonstrates basic understanding with limited application	Weak or inaccurate understanding

Analysis & Insight	Offers thoughtful analysis and clear professional insight	Analysis present but surface-level	Lacks analysis; descriptive only
Professional Relevance	Clearly connects work to real-world industry contexts	Connection present but underdeveloped	Minimal or no professional relevance
Organization & Clarity	Well-organized, concise, and readable	Organization uneven or repetitive	Disorganized or unclear
Professional Presentation	Polished formatting, tone, and visual clarity	Adequate presentation with minor issues	Unprofessional or careless presentation
Originality & Judgment	Demonstrates independent thinking and sound judgment	Some original thought; relies heavily on sources	Overly derivative or unsupported

Weekly Canvas Discussion Rubric – 10%

Discussions are evaluated on quality, relevance, and professionalism, not length alone.

Criteria	Excellent (A)	Satisfactory (B–C)	Unsatisfactory (D–F)
Initial Post Quality	Directly addresses prompt with clear application and insight	Addresses prompt but remains surface-level	Off-topic or minimal engagement
Application to Industry	Clearly connects concepts to real-world music business practice	Limited or generic application	No meaningful application
Professional Writing	Clear, concise, and professional tone	Minor clarity or tone issues	Informal, unclear, or careless
Engagement with Peers	Responses are thoughtful and advance discussion	Responses are present but limited	No substantive peer engagement

Participation & Professionalism Rubric – 10%

Participation reflects industry readiness, not mere attendance.

Criteria	Exemplary	Adequate	Deficient
Preparedness	Consistently prepared and engaged	Occasionally unprepared	Frequently unprepared

Professional Conduct	Respectful, focused, professional	Generally appropriate	Disruptive or disengaged
Contribution Quality	Adds value to discussions	Limited contributions	Minimal or absent contributions

Final Applied Synthesis Presentation – 5%

This presentation evaluates the student's ability to synthesize course concepts into a coherent professional narrative.

Criteria	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Synthesis of Concepts	Integrates multiple course themes effectively	Partial integration	Fragmented or unclear
Professional Framing	Clear, confident, industry-appropriate framing	Adequate framing	Unclear or unfocused
Delivery & Clarity	Polished and concise	Uneven	Unprofessional

Materials and Supply Fees

There are no required materials or supply fees for this course beyond standard access to Canvas and internet-enabled devices. Students must have regular access to a laptop capable of creating presentations, viewing digital platforms, and submitting professional-quality written and visual work. A Canvas course site has been established for this course. Students should access course materials, assignments, announcements, and discussions via:

<https://ufl.instructure.com>.

Required Materials

- **Weekly Readings:** Curated articles, industry reports, and short-form analyses selected by Dr. Vasenin, provided directly on Canvas
- **Supplemental Resources:** Case studies, interviews, and multimedia resources posted through Canvas Announcements and Discussions

Recommended (Non-Textbook) Readings

The following titles are **professional and industry-facing works**, not traditional textbooks. They are intended to provide practical context and contemporary insight into music careers and industry operations:

- **All You Need to Know About the Music Business** by Donald S. Passman

- **Music Business Handbook and Career Guide** by David Baskerville & Tim Baskerville
- **How to Make It in the New Music Business** by Ari Herstand
- **Get More Fans** by Jesse Cannon & Todd Thomas
- **The Music Industry: Music in the Cloud** by Patrik Wikström

University Policies & Resources

Academic Policies

<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

Attendance and Make-Up Work

Requirements for class attendance, participation, and make-up exams or assignments are consistent with University of Florida academic regulations. Students are expected to attend all class sessions as a demonstration of professional responsibility and preparedness. Because this course operates in a presentation- and application-based format, regular attendance is essential.

All assignments are due by the stated deadline. Late work will not receive credit unless prior approval has been granted by the instructor or the student provides documented, verifiable justification for the delay. Requests for extensions must be communicated in advance of the deadline whenever possible. Submissions made after the due date without prior approval or documented justification will receive a grade of zero, regardless of how soon after the deadline they are submitted. Approval of late work is granted solely at the discretion of the instructor and is not guaranteed. Students should not assume that late submissions will be accepted without explicit confirmation.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and wish to request academic accommodations must register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Information on how to begin this process is available through the “Get Started with the DRC” webpage. Students should share their accommodation letter with the instructor and discuss access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Professional Communication

Students are expected to communicate using their official UF email account. All correspondence should reflect professional norms, including appropriate greetings, clear subject lines, and signed messages. Emails sent Monday–Friday can typically expect a response within 24 hours. Weekend responses are not guaranteed.

Technology & Classroom Conduct

Laptops, tablets, and mobile devices are permitted for course-related purposes only. Non-instructional use (texting, browsing, personal media) during class is not permitted. Students are expected to engage fully and professionally during class sessions.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI tools may be used for brainstorming, outlining, or preliminary research. However, all submitted work must reflect the student's original analysis, voice, and professional judgment. AI-generated final submissions or undisclosed reliance on AI beyond planning stages may be treated as academic integrity violations.

Grading Policies

This course follows University of Florida grading policies for assigning grade points. Information regarding UF grading standards may be found through the University Grades and Grading Policies.

Course Evaluations (GatorEvals)

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction by completing course evaluations online through GatorEvals. Evaluations may be accessed via:

- The email notification sent to students
- The Canvas course menu under "GatorEvals"
- The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>

Guidance on providing constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Academic Integrity

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, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

The Student Conduct Code outlines behaviors that constitute academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, as well as potential sanctions. Students are expected to uphold these standards at all times. Additional information is available through the UF Conduct Code website. Questions or concerns regarding academic integrity should be directed to the instructor.

In-Class Recording Policy

Students are permitted to record audio or video of class lectures under the following limited conditions:

Permissible uses include:

1. Personal educational use
2. Use in connection with a formal complaint to the University
3. Use as evidence in, or preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding

All other uses are prohibited. Students may not publish, share, or distribute recorded lectures without the prior written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” includes instructor-led educational presentations intended to inform or teach enrolled students, including instructor-guided discussions. It does not include lab sessions, student presentations, assessments, field trips, or private conversations.

To “publish” means to share or distribute a recording or transcript in any format or medium, including posting to social media, websites, or third-party services. Unauthorized publication may subject a student to disciplinary action under UF Regulation 4.040 and/or civil liability.

Academic and Student Support Resources

E-Learning Technical Support

UF Computing Help Desk

Phone: 352-392-4357

Email: helpdesk@ufl.edu

Career Connections Center

Reitz Union, Suite 1300

Phone: 352-392-1601

Career planning, internships, and professional development support.

Library Research Support

Phone: 866-281-6309

Email: ask@ufl.libanswers.com

Teaching Center / Academic Resources

1317 Turlington Hall

Phone: 352-392-2010

Private appointments: 352-392-6420

Email: teaching-center@ufl.edu

Writing Studio

Daytime: 2215 Turlington Hall | 352-846-1138

Evening: Library West, Room 339

Support with brainstorming, drafting, formatting, and revising written work.

Public Speaking Lab

Dial Center, 501 Rolfs Hall

Email: publicspeakinglab@clas.ufl.edu

Assistance with developing, organizing, and practicing presentations.

Academic Complaints

Office of the Ombuds

Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for procedures and support.

Enrollment Management Complaints

(Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions)

See the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for details.

Health, Wellness, and Student Success

UF Student Success Initiative

Resources supporting academic and personal success: <https://studentsuccess.ufl.edu/>

UF Whole Gator

Comprehensive health and wellness resources supporting physical, mental, and emotional well-being: <https://one.uf.edu/whole-gator/discover>