



PLP 6921 | Colloquium in Principles of Plant Pathology

Class Number: 15127

Delivery Method: Primarily Classroom

TH | Period 9 (04.05 PM-04.55 PM) Blueberry Research B 154

Instructor Information

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Office Hours

By appointment

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Course Details

Catalog Description: Colloquium in Principles of Plant Pathology

Credit Hours: 1

Course Fees: \$0.00

Additional Course Description

The topic of the Fall 2026 Plant Pathology Graduate Colloquium is **Grant Writing**. The course is designed to introduce graduate students to the principles and practical skills needed to develop competitive research proposals and to familiarize students with the funding opportunities relevant to plant pathology and related disciplines.

The course will combine instruction on fundamental aspects of grant writing with guest lectures from faculty members who have extensive experience developing and reviewing research proposals for a variety of funding agencies. Guest speakers will discuss strategies for developing competitive proposals for specific funding opportunities, including programs supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Binational Agricultural Research and Development Fund (BARD), Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Gates Foundation, and grower associations.

A central component of the course will be a team-based proposal-development exercise. Students will work in teams to develop a research proposal concept, prepare a Concept Letter (Letter of Intent/Pre-proposal), participate in a peer-review exercise, and present their proposed research to the class.

Through these activities, students will develop practical grantsmanship skills while strengthening their abilities in scientific writing, oral communication, critical thinking, and proposal evaluation.

Required Materials

The instructor has stated that there are no items required or recommended for this section.

Course Goals and Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. **Identify appropriate funding opportunities** for a proposed research project and assess how well a research idea aligns with the priorities of a funding agency.
2. **Interpret Requests for Applications (RFAs) and funding announcements**, including program priorities, eligibility requirements, submission requirements, and review criteria.
3. **Recognize the fundamental components of a competitive grant proposal** and understand the purpose of each component.
4. **Develop a compelling and fundable research idea** that addresses an important scientific or agricultural problem.
5. **Prepare a concise Concept Letter** that clearly communicates the significance, rationale, objectives, general approach, and potential impact of a proposed project.
6. **Evaluate research proposals from a reviewer's perspective** and provide constructive

- feedback on scientific merit, significance, innovation, feasibility, and potential impact.
7. **Communicate a research proposal effectively in an oral presentation**, clearly explaining the problem, rationale, objectives, approach, and expected outcomes.
 8. **Work effectively as part of a research team** to develop, evaluate, and refine a research proposal.

Expectations and Student Learning Outcomes

Because this is a graduate colloquium, **active participation is an essential component of the course**. Students are expected to:

- attend and actively participate in class discussions;
- engage with guest speakers;
- contribute meaningfully to their team's proposal;
- participate constructively in peer review;
- provide thoughtful feedback to colleagues; and
- communicate their research ideas clearly and professionally.

Students are expected to complete the following three assignments, which will be used for evaluation and grading:

1. Grant Proposal Concept Letter – 25 points

Students will work in teams to develop a research concept and prepare a concise **Concept Letter (Letter of Intent/Pre-proposal; one-page document)**.

The Concept Letter should communicate:

- the problem or unmet need;
- the significance of the problem;
- the knowledge gap;
- the central research question or hypothesis;
- the major objectives or aims;
- the general research approach;
- the expected outcomes; and
- the potential significance or impact of the proposed work.

The Concept Letter should also demonstrate that the proposed research is appropriately aligned with the targeted funding opportunity.

Due: October 15

2. Peer Review – 25 points

Students will participate in a peer-review exercise in which they evaluate a Concept Letter prepared by another student team.

The purpose of this assignment is to provide constructive feedback to colleagues and to develop the ability to evaluate research proposals from the perspective of a grant reviewer.

Students should consider:

- Significance
- Innovation
- Clarity of the research question
- Strength of the rationale
- Objectives/aims
- Feasibility
- Alignment with the funding opportunity
- Potential impact

Due: October 29

3. Grant Proposal Presentation – 50 points

Each student team will prepare and deliver a short oral presentation describing its proposed research project as a mock grant pitch.

Presentations should clearly communicate:

1. The problem and its significance
2. The knowledge gap
3. The central research question or hypothesis
4. The proposed objectives/aims
5. The general research approach
6. Expected outcomes
7. Potential impact
8. Why the project is appropriate for the targeted funding opportunity

Students should present the proposal as if they were making the case for funding to a panel of reviewers.

Presentations: November 5, November 12, and November 19

Methods of Evaluation

Assignment	Points	Percentage
Grant Proposal Concept Letter	25	25%
Peer Review of Concept Letter	25	25%
Grant Proposal Presentation	50	50%
Total	100	100%

Grading Scale

Letter grade and percentage

Letter	Percentage Value
A	94 - 100%
A -	90 - 93%
B +	87 - 89%
B	83 - 86%
B -	80 - 82%
C +	77 - 79%
C	73 - 76%
C -	70 - 72%
D +	67 - 69%
D	63 - 66%
D -	60 - 62%
E	59% and below

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Key Learning Goals	Assignment / Milestone
Aug. 20	Introduction and Course Overview	Course expectations; overview of grant writing; introduction to team proposal exercise	Form proposal teams

Date	Topic	Key Learning Goals	Assignment / Milestone
Aug. 27	Developing a Competitive Research Idea and Finding the Right Funding Opportunity	What makes a research idea compelling; identifying appropriate funding opportunities; how to read RFAs	Form proposal teams
Sept. 3	Components of a Grant Proposal and the Review Process	Major components of a grant proposal; understanding how proposals are evaluated; thinking like a reviewer	Begin developing proposal concepts
Sept. 10	Developing Proposals for FDACS Funding Opportunities	Understanding FDACS priorities and developing responsive proposals	Proposal development
	<i>Guest speaker: Romina Gazis-Seregina</i>		
Sept. 17	Developing Proposals for Grower Association Funding Opportunities	Understanding stakeholder-driven research priorities and demonstrating practical impact	Proposal development and Concept Letter preparation
	<i>Guest speaker: Nicholas Dufault</i>		
Sept. 24	Developing Proposals for NSF Funding Opportunities	Developing proposals for fundamental research; addressing scientific significance and review criteria	Proposal development and Concept Letter preparation
	<i>Guest speaker: Ying Wang</i>		

Date	Topic	Key Learning Goals	Assignment / Milestone
Oct. 1	Developing Proposals for USDA Funding Opportunities	Aligning research with USDA priorities; demonstrating agricultural relevance and impact	Proposal development and Concept Letter preparation
	<i>Guest speaker: Gary Vallad</i>		
Oct. 8	Developing Proposals for BARD Funding Opportunities	Developing collaborative and internationally relevant research proposals	Finalize Concept Letter
	<i>Guest speaker: Amit Levy</i>		
Oct. 15	Student Panel: Developing Proposals for Fundamental Research	Lessons learned from students who have participated in developing proposals for fundamental research	Concept Letter due
Oct. 22	Student Panel: Developing Proposals for Applied Research	Lessons learned from developing proposals for applied research; connecting research with stakeholder needs and impact	Prepare peer review
Oct. 29	Developing Proposals for Gates Foundation Funding Opportunities	Addressing global challenges; communicating impact and broader relevance	Peer Review due
	<i>Guest speaker: Frank White</i>		

Date	Topic	Key Learning Goals	Assignment / Milestone
Nov. 5	Student Grant Proposal Presentations	Communicating a research proposal clearly and effectively	Presentations
Nov. 12	Student Grant Proposal Presentations	Communicating a research proposal clearly and effectively	Presentations
Nov. 19	Student Grant Proposal Presentations	Communicating a research proposal clearly and effectively	Presentations

Schedule of Assignments

Due Dates	Assignments	Type of Assignment	Points
10/15/26	Grant Proposal Concept Letter		25
10/29/26	Peer Review of a Concept Letter		25
11/5/26	Grant proposal Presentation		50

University Policies and Resources

Information about grading policies, support for students with disabilities, course evaluations, the Honor Code, and other course policies and campus resources can be found on the [Syllabus Policies page](#).

Attendance Policy

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Students may only participate in classes if they are registered officially or approved to audit with evidence of having paid audit fees. The Office of the University Registrar provides official class rolls to instructors.

Students are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. Absences count from the first-class meeting.

Acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to engage in class include illness; Title IX-related situations; serious accidents or emergencies affecting the student, their roommates, or their family; special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences); military obligation; severe weather conditions that prevent class participation; religious holidays; participation in official university activities (e.g., music performances, athletic competition, debate); and court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena). Other reasons (e.g., a job interview or club activity) may be deemed acceptable if approved by the instructor.

For all planned absences, a student in a situation that allows an excused absence from a class, or any required class activity must inform the instructor as early as possible prior to the class. For all unplanned absences because of accidents or emergency situations, students should contact their instructor as soon as conditions permit.

Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered during absence from class or inability to engage in class activities because of the reasons outlined above.

If a student does not participate in at least one of the first two class meetings of a course or laboratory in which they are registered, and they have not contacted the department to indicate their intent, the student can be dropped from the course. Students must not assume that they will be dropped, however. The department will notify students if they have been dropped from a course or laboratory.

The university recognizes the right of the instructor to make attendance mandatory and require documentation for absences (except for religious holidays), missed work, or inability to fully engage in class. After due warning, an instructor can prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences.

Religious Holidays Guidelines

At the University of Florida, students and faculty work together to allow students the opportunity to observe the holy days of their faith. A student should inform the faculty member of the religious observances of their faith that will conflict with class attendance, with tests or examinations, or with other class activities prior to the class or occurrence of that test or activity. The faculty member is then obligated to accommodate that particular student's religious observances. Because students represent a myriad of cultures and many faiths, the University of Florida is not able to assure that scheduled academic activities do not conflict with the holy days of all religious groups. Accordingly, individual students should make their need for an excused absence known in advance of the scheduled activities.

The Florida Board of Education and state law govern university policy regarding observance of religious holidays.

Guidelines

- 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.

If a faculty member is informed of or is aware that a significant number of students are likely to be absent from class because of a religious observance, the faculty member should not schedule a major exam or other academic event at that time.

A student who is to be excused from class for a religious observance is not required to provide a second party certification of the reason for the absence. Furthermore, a student who believes that they have been unreasonably denied an education benefit due to religious beliefs or practices may seek redress through the student grievance procedure.

Absence due to Illness

A student who is absent from class or 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.

Twelve-Day Rule

Students who participate in university-sponsored athletic or scholarly activities are permitted to be absent 12 scholastic days per semester without penalty. A scholastic day is any day on which regular class work is scheduled as defined in the approved university calendar. [More Info](#)

The student or student's advisor must notify the instructor as early as possible prior to the anticipated absence to allow ample time for accommodations. Instructors must be flexible and not penalize students when re-scheduling during-term and final exams, class assignments, and other required activities and must follow the UF Attendance Policy herein and UF Examination Policies. As noted in the UF Examination Policies, during-term exams should be re-scheduled no later than before the end of the semester, while final exams no later than 90 days after the originally scheduled exam time. However, instructors are encouraged to re-schedule final and during-term exams, assignments, and other activities as soon as possible after the last day of the absence and must not penalize the student in any way. [More Info](#)

A group's schedule that requires absence of more than 12 scholastic days should be adjusted so that no student is absent from campus more than 12 scholastic days. Students who previously have been warned in writing by their instructor about the impact of absences on their individual class performance should not incur additional absences, even if they have not been absent 12 scholastic days. The student is responsible to maintain satisfactory academic performance and attendance.

Course Policies and Resources

Students are expected to attend all course lectures and discussions as well as complete required assignments on time. Students should arrive to the class on time. Cell phones

should be silenced. Along with the fact that these are firm requirements for participating in the course, the ability to fulfill these expectations reflects your professional characteristics.

Technology in the Classroom

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

One of the purposes of this course is to provide students with opportunities to develop and communicate research ideas and to strengthen their scientific writing skills. Because these skills are best developed through your own effort and practice, all work submitted or presented in this course must reflect your own ideas and work. Students are therefore discouraged from using generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT or similar tools) for course assignments. If AI tools are used for an assignment, their use must be clearly acknowledged, and the prompts used to generate the work must be submitted along with the assignment.