

# ALS5934

## Graduate Professional Development Fall 2025

### Instructor Information

- **Instructor:** Jason K. Kruse, Ph.D.
- **Title:** Associate Professor | Turfgrass Science
- **Department:** Environmental Horticulture Department - UF/IFAS
- **Office Location:** 1541 Fifield Hall
- **Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 110670, Gainesville, FL 32611
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**Class Meeting Time (Zoom):** Mondays, 1:55 PM – 3:50 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/91489079568?pwd=fkuiDW9VGv2Dpcl0vdUVlleD2DqzCb.1>

### Office Hours

Tuesdays, 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM, or by appointment (<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/9511528048>)

### Course Goals and Objectives

The goal of this course is to connect graduate students with key non-technical skills so that they have an advantage when entering the workforce.

By the end of the semester, successful students will be able to:

1. Evaluate their current proficiency in essential non-technical skills relevant to their field and identify areas for improvement.
2. Analyze the gap between graduate training and professional readiness in terms of non-technical skills acquisition.
3. Demonstrate improved competency in key non-technical skills, including effective communication, leadership, and project management.
4. Develop a comprehensive Individual Development Plan that outlines strategies for enhancing non-technical workplace competencies.
5. Create a professional-quality curriculum vitae (CV) that effectively communicates their academic and professional achievements.

### Course Expectations

- Arrive to class on time
- Digest assigned materials ahead of time
- Share questions, perspectives, and ideas during and outside of class
- Convey superior work ethic and perform to high standards
- Practice thinking within the framework of enhancing non-technical skills

### **Attendance and Make-Up Policy**

Attendance is the student's responsibility. It is in your best interest to participate during every class period. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to talk with other students to discuss what you missed in class.

- All deadlines outlined in the syllabus are firm and may only be changed at the discretion of the instructor
- Two or more unexcused absences may result in a U grade
- Late assignments are not accepted
- Your instructor will consider cases of emergency, serious illness, bereavement, or activities that fall under the Twelve-Day Rule for make-up work. You must provide official documentation for all cases.

### **Assessments and Grading Information**

This course uses the S/U grading scheme, where S = satisfactory and U = unsatisfactory.

Students receive an S grade by earning  $\geq 85\%$  of the total points available for assessments.

<b>Assessment Type</b>	<b>Points</b>
2-to-4-minute reactions (11 at 20 points each)	220
Individual Development Plan	100
Curriculum Vitae (CV)	50
Soft Skills Group Presentation	50
Attendance and Participation (12 at 5 points each)	60
Total	480

Students need to earn  $\geq 408$  points to receive an S ( $480 \times 0.85 = 408$ )

## Description of Assessments

### 1. 2-to-4-minute reaction videos (20 points each)

#### Purpose

This assignment is designed to:

1. Enhance your ability to evaluate and synthesize information from multiple sources, focusing on non-technical workplace competencies (e.g., soft skills).
2. Develop skills in succinct, meaningful communication that is applicable to professional settings.
3. Foster critical reflection on how course material connects to your personal and professional growth.

By completing this assignment, you will practice articulating well-structured, professional insights that integrate key course concepts into practical, real-world applications.

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#### Skills

This assignment will help you practice these skills essential for success in professional life:

- **Understanding** key disciplinary knowledge related to workplace competencies.
  - **Applying** insights to real-world situations or personal experiences.
  - **Analyzing** and synthesizing multiple sources of information into a cohesive narrative.
  - **Communicating** effectively in a concise, clear, and professional manner.
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#### Knowledge

You will become familiar with the following concepts:

- Importance of soft skills in professional development.
  - Frameworks and tools for applying workplace competencies.
  - Methods for reflective learning and continuous improvement.
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#### Task

1. **Watch/Read Assigned Materials:** Review all assigned materials for the week, including videos, articles, or other resources.
2. **Create a Reaction Video:** Record a 2-to-4-minute video that:
  - Evaluates the assigned materials.

- Reflects on how these materials relate to your personal/professional growth.
  - Synthesizes insights from the week into a cohesive discussion.
3. **Upload to Canvas:** Submit your video to Canvas by the deadline.
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#### **Structural Format (4 points)**

- **Time Management:** Videos should be no longer than 4 minutes.
  - **Logical Flow:** Present a clear, well-organized response.
  - **Depth Over Listing:** Avoid simply listing concepts; instead, integrate them into a cohesive reflection.
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#### **Clarity of Thought and Expression (6 points)**

- **Integration of Ideas:** Thoughtfully connect ideas and express them clearly.
  - **Purpose-Driven Communication:** Your video should aim to inform, persuade, or raise questions that stimulate in-class discussions.
  - **Professionalism:** Use professional language and presentation.
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#### **Delineation of Core Message (10 points)**

- **Reflection:** Share personal insights or reactions and relate them to professional development.
  - **Application of Knowledge:** Demonstrate how you can use tools, frameworks, or insights from the materials.
  - **Understanding:** Showcase a thorough grasp of assigned materials, integrating key themes and explaining core concepts effectively.
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#### **Criteria for Success**

- **Excellent Work:** Clear, concise, and reflective video that integrates materials thoughtfully and connects to broader professional themes.
- **Adequate Work:** Basic reflection on the materials without much depth or connection to professional growth.
- **Needs Improvement:** Disorganized or surface-level response that does not engage with the core themes or demonstrate understanding of the materials.

2. **In class presentation of soft skills (50 points)**

## Purpose

This assignment is designed to:

1. Strengthen your ability to identify and demonstrate essential soft skills that contribute to professional success.
  2. Provide experience in creating and leading activities that engage peers in meaningful learning.
  3. Encourage reflection on your personal strengths and areas for growth in professional skill development.
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## Skills

This assignment will help you practice:

- **Collaboration:** Working effectively with a group to plan and deliver a presentation.
  - **Professional Communication:** Explaining concepts clearly and engaging an audience.
  - **Leadership and Facilitation:** Designing and guiding an activity or discussion.
  - **Reflection:** Connecting soft skills to your own academic and professional journey.
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## Knowledge

By completing this assignment, you will gain familiarity with:

- Core soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, adaptability, leadership, conflict resolution).
  - Strategies for applying these skills in graduate education and professional environments.
  - Methods for fostering interactive learning among peers.
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## Task

1. **Group Selection:** Work with your assigned group to choose one or more soft skills to highlight.
2. **Develop Engagement:** Design a short activity, case study, or guided discussion (8–10 minutes) that involves the class.
3. **Present in Class:** Deliver your activity during your scheduled session, explaining the importance of the skill(s) in academic and professional contexts.

4. **Reflection:** Each group member should be prepared to briefly reflect on what they learned through preparing and presenting.
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#### **Structural Format (10 points)**

- **Time Management:** Presentations should last 8–10 minutes.
  - **Organization:** Content should have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
  - **Active Engagement:** Include an interactive component for classmates.
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#### **Clarity of Thought and Expression (15 points)**

- **Professional Delivery:** Present with clarity, confidence, and appropriate language.
  - **Logical Flow:** Communicate ideas in a way that is easy to follow.
  - **Connection to Context:** Make clear links between the soft skill(s) and academic/professional settings.
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#### **Depth of Content and Application (25 points)**

- **Understanding:** Demonstrate thorough knowledge of the chosen soft skill(s).
  - **Application:** Show how the skill(s) are applied in real-world situations.
  - **Reflection:** Provide insight into personal or group growth through the assignment.
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#### **Criteria for Success**

- **Excellent Work:** Well-prepared, engaging, and professional presentation that clearly connects soft skills to graduate and workplace success.
- **Adequate Work:** Basic explanation and activity, but limited engagement or connection to professional growth.
- **Needs Improvement:** Disorganized or incomplete presentation with minimal engagement or unclear relevance.

#### **3. Curriculum Vitae (CV) Creation (50 points)**

##### **Objective:**

Create a professional Curriculum Vitae (CV) that effectively showcases your academic achievements, work experience, skills, and contributions to your field.

**Deliverables:**

- A professionally formatted CV that includes:
  - All relevant sections as outlined in the assignment.
  - Clear, concise descriptions of your experiences and achievements.
  - Consistent formatting and error-free content.

**4. Individual Development Plan (100 points)****Objective:**

Develop a comprehensive Individual Development Plan (IDP) that aligns with your academic and professional goals, with a particular focus on enhancing non-technical workplace competencies.

**Deliverables:**

- A comprehensive and finalized Individual Development Plan that includes:
  - A self-assessment summary.
  - A prioritized list of goals.
  - A detailed action plan for enhancing non-technical competencies.
  - Confirmation of the review meeting with your advisor.

**Grading Criteria:**

- Completeness and accuracy of the self-assessment.
- Relevance and specificity of the identified goals.
- Feasibility and thoroughness of the action plan.
- Integration of advisor feedback into the final IDP.

### **Tentative Course Schedule**

Date	Topic
Aug 25	Understanding the Graduate Student Experience
Sep 1	No Class - Holiday
Sep 8	Research Skills & Methodologies
Sep 15	Time Management & Productivity
Sep 22	Writing for Academia
Sep 29	Navigating Graduate School Challenges
Oct 6	Effective Communication
Oct 13	Networking & Collaboration
Oct 20	Leadership & Teamwork
Oct 27	Career Planning & Job Market Preparation
Nov 3	Financial Literacy & Planning
Nov 10	No Class - Holiday
Nov 17	Fostering an Inclusive and Respectful Environment
Nov 24	No Class - Holiday
Dec 1	Technology & Digital Literacy
Dec 8	Finals Week



## **Course Policies**

### **Attendance and Make-Up Policy**

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies. Click [here](#) to read the university attendance policies.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. 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.

### **Grading Policy**

Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points can be found [here](#).

### **Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **Materials and Supplies Fees**

There are no additional fees for this course.

### **Online Course Communication**

For public course-related questions or discussions, please use the course discussion board on Canvas. For private communications, please email the instructor directly using your official UF email address.

### **Technical Issues**

If you encounter technical issues with the course website or related features, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

### **Academic Honesty**

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. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

### **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.

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 Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **Campus Resources**

#### Academic Policies and Resources

Academic policies for this course are consistent with university policies. See <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

#### Campus Health and Wellness Resources

Visit <https://one.ufl.edu/whole-gator/topics> for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF. Please contact U\_MatterWeCare for additional and immediate support.

#### Software Use

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

#### Privacy and Accessibility Policies

- Instructure (Canvas)

- o [Instructure Privacy Policy](#)

- o [Instructure Accessibility](#)

- Zoom

- o [Zoom Privacy Policy](#)

- o [Zoom Accessibility](#)