

Nonfiction Book Proposal

This is a sample syllabus. Actual course topics and assignments may vary by instructor and class.

Week 1

Introduction and overview: The passion and the positioning of a great idea is the first step on the way to a killer proposal. Other key ingredients to getting started.

Assignment: Write your pitch and craft an answer to "Why should an agent or editor care about my idea?"

Week 2

Be your own best marketer. Know your competition: "The overview/about the book" and "about the competition" sections.

Assignment: Draft overview/about the book.

Week 3

Market your book project and yourself. The market and about the author sections. Defining your audience. How to reach your market. How to craft an author bio.

Assignment: Write the about the market and about the author sections.

Week 4

The table of contents, book organization, and chapter summaries (with a brief nudge about your sample chapter).

Assignment: First draft of table of contents and chapter summaries.

Week 5

Promotion/selling points and production details. Finding marketing and promotional opportunities.

Assignment: Write promotion and production sections.

Week 6

Sample chapter. How much material do you need to submit to agents? Selecting your chapter(s) to send. Writing advice and examples of successful sample materials.

Assignment: Submit partial sample chapter (at least 1,000 words).

Week 7

Agents, editors, and query letters. Do you need an agent? What an agent will do for you. Finding an agent. How to proceed without an agent. Working with editors after your book sells. The anatomy of a successful query letter.

Assignment: Write a query letter.

Week 8

Format, tips, & goals. How to format and package your proposal. What happens after your proposal is accepted or rejected. Questions to ask your editor. The publishing process. Ethics.

Assignment: Last questions, student survey.