

Horticultural Management Syllabus
HRT 404, Spring

Instructor: Dr. Simone Valle de Souza, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Horticulture Economics
Office Address: A240-E Plant and Soil Sciences Building,
Office Telephone: (517) 353-0341
Email: valledes@msu.edu



Dr. Simone Valle de Souza is an Assistant Professor in the MSU Department of Horticulture. With expertise in horticulture economics applied to controlled environment agriculture (CEA), Dr. Valle de Souza's research focuses on the economic viability and sustainability of CEA systems, specifically exploring profitability, cost-effectiveness of technologies, and the economic benefits of sustainable agriculture. In addition, Dr. Valle de Souza has expertise in marketing and consumer behavior analysis. Her research delves into market segmentation and consumer attitudes towards produce attributes, providing valuable insights into consumer preferences. Dr. Valle de Souza earned a MS in Economic Studies and a PhD in Resource Economics from the University of New England (UNE), in Australia. She also holds an MBA in Finance and Accounting and a BA in Business Administration from the UFPR, in Brazil.

Effectively managing a horticultural business requires individuals to allocate limited resources (time, money, people and materials) to accomplish well-defined, written goals. The mission of this course is to provide information and strategies for students to enhance their business management skills in the context of the horticulture industry. The goal is to provide students with fundamental knowledge and skills to better prepare them for careers in which they work with people and plants for profit. This class uses a variety of teaching approaches, including in class discussion, lecture, and oral presentations. Students should be proficient in the use of D2L to stay current with course assignments and grades.

Course Objectives: The objectives of this course are to:

1. Establish and evaluate goals for limited resources.
2. Articulate differences between leadership and management.
3. Develop an awareness of different styles of leadership and management.
4. Develop better management skills.
5. Understand financial terminology sufficiently to communicate with financial professionals and make informed decisions.
6. Construct and use an income statement, balance sheet, strategic profitability model, and cash flow budget.
7. Enhance effectiveness in business operations.

Learning Outcomes: This is a list of what you should be able to do upon successfully completing the course:

1. Apply principles of accounting, business law, labor, marketing, and personnel management to a horticultural business and contribute to developing various components of a business plan.
2. Demonstrate professionalism and proficiency in skills that relate to horticulture through leadership and the ability to collaborate and work in teams.
3. Develop thoughtful, clear, and consistent perspectives on ethical and moral issues related to horticulture.
4. Communicate effectively with various audiences using oral, written, and visual presentation skills, and contemporary networking/social media technologies.
5. Quantify economic importance of plants in managed ecosystems and the impact of horticultural crops in food systems.

This course is a Tier II writing course. You are expected to write, revise, and improve upon your own work. You should expect to write multiple drafts for each assignment and submit those with the final product.

Equal opportunity: Students may vary in their competency levels to these abilities. You can expect to acquire these abilities only if you honor all course policies, attend classes regularly, complete all assigned work on time, and meet other course expectations of you as a student. Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc).

Contact: Students are encouraged to discuss issues or concerns with me as soon as they arise. I find it more effective to schedule a time to meet with you (email valledes@msu.edu) without having regularly scheduled office hours. I will reply to emails within 48 hours.

DO NOT EMAIL ASSIGNMENTS TO THE PROFESSOR. Late work or make-up quizzes are not possible.

Grades will be posted on D2L. It is the responsibility of the student to verify their grade is posted correctly. All grade adjustment requests must be made before the last day of class.

Grading Policy: Course grades will be determined using the following scale:

4.0 = 90% and above	2.0 = 70% to 74.9%
3.5 = 85% to 89.9%	1.5 = 65% to 69.9%
3.0 = 80% to 84.9%	1.0 = 60% to 64.9%
2.5 = 75% to 79.9%	0.0 = below 60%

Point schedule and assignments:	Points
Article presentation	300
Attendance and participation	100
Written Business plan	130
Business plan oral presentation	50
Quizzes	320
Final exam	100
Total	1000 points

Quizzes: There is an online quiz for each lecture period, including the first week of class, on the material presented that day. Quizzes will be 10 points each and automatically scored. The quiz must be completed within 48 hours of the beginning of the class period in which the material was presented. Many weeks, you may have more than one quiz to take. There are no mid-term exams but one final exam.

Article Presentation Guidelines (see Grading Rubric for the Article Presentation on D2L): Each article will be presented by one student. The articles have specific presentation days (see the schedule) which will not be changed under any circumstances. Choose your article around your schedule. Sign up for the article (refer to the schedule for the day you will present, no changes are permitted) by posting your first, second, and third choices. Articles will be assigned on a first-come first-served basis. If you do not sign up for an article by the due date, an article will be assigned to you. The final schedule of presenters will be posted in D2L.

PRESENTATION MATERIALS (SLIDES) ARE DUE IN D2L BY 9AM AT LEAST ONE WEEK PRIOR TO THE PRESENTATION. NO EXCEPTIONS. The penalty for any portion of the work being late is the loss of all points for the assignment which makes passing the course nearly impossible.

You must develop a PowerPoint presentation to convey important points and serve as the springboard for discussion. The slides should conform to the article by N. Duarte 2012 (October). Do Your Slides Pass the Glance Test? From your PowerPoint, Dr. Valle de Souza will post the handout prior to class. Furthermore, if you are nervous or simply want to make things easier on the day of the presentation, record your presentation and make a video file for Dr. Valle de Souza to post. Again, this video (if you want to use one) is due at least a week prior to the presentation. Dr. Valle de Souza will play the video that day. The video is not a requirement but may aid some students in their confidence in presenting the information (since it can be edited). You should

share how this article is similar to a related one (or more) articles we read and how it is different. You might share personal examples or examples from friends.

Create at least 5 discussion questions which should be related to the article. This is the most important part of your grade. Discussion questions are not repeating the material you present, rather are intended (and must be) developed to have application to the horticulture industry. Use open ended questions like, “what examples of x have you encountered?” or “when have you seen this concept in any of your places of work?” or “how would you recognize someone doing x, y, or z in the workplace?”. Asking questions like “how” or “why” stimulate good discussion. Good discussion engages others by stimulating thought about the concepts presented. Provide some examples of answers to your discussion questions.

On the day of the presentation, start by introducing yourself, the article, and authors. Then move into the material. If you wish to present concepts first limit the presentation to approximately 10 minutes and then move into your discussion questions. The total presentation time should be no more than 15 minutes. Remember, the goal is to promote discussion, not just deliver a lecture. Dr. Valle de Souza will randomize the class list and she will call a name and then you need to ask that student (and subsequent ones Dr. Valle de Souza calls on) for responses. As you think about your presentation and leading discussion, use the concepts from the article: Zandan, N. 2018 (August). How to Stop Saying “Um,” “Ah,” and “You Know”.

Semester Project: Build a Business Plan

This project requires that your group develop a business plan, suitable for funding by a bank or other lending agency. A comprehensive outline of the topics to be covered in the business plan will be provided in class. You must form a group of two to four people (including you). Your group will either create a new business or use an existing business as a template to develop a complete business plan. There are three requirements for your business: it is physically located within 100 miles of MSU, it is related to a legal (by federal standards) horticultural product, service, or experience, and approved by the instructor. Your project should be creative and fun since it is a large part of your class grade. If you do not know others in the class, please seek my assistance to join a group working on an area in which you might also be interested. Written business plans and business plan oral presentations are due by week 13. If you are repeating the course, you may not use a previously submitted business plan (even in revised format). If you submitted any part of the business plan for another course, it constitutes plagiarism and may not be submitted for credit in this course.

Assignment purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to develop your understanding of all the components needed to begin a business as well as develop your team-building skills. Think of this business plan as your plan of action, should you really want to start or operate a business like the one you will describe. You will write an individual or group paper about your business following an established outline. You will identify, write about, and apply current information about this hypothetical business as your business plan.

Assignment audience: The audience for this paper is a banker or lender or other individual outside your industry. This individual wants to learn about your industry and understand what you will do, with whom you will do it, and with what resources. It is important to explain industry terminology and avoid jargon that they might not understand.

There are two objectives for this exercise: First, since working with people is part of doing business, completing this project as a group will give you more experience working with others to achieve a goal. Second, since many students hope to manage their own business one day, organizing it on paper is a critical first step to realizing the vision, financially and strategically. The business plan you are asked to complete gives you an opportunity to examine many pertinent issues for the development of a new business. Thus, the business plan group experience is a means (to understand groups) and an end (to develop the plan).

Group Work: You have the option of “firing” a teammate who does not actively participate. We will use the “three strikes” rule before the person can be fired. Copy Dr. Valle de Souza on the three strikes emails (first offense, second, and third). The firing must be a unanimous decision of the group after three strikes (they are out on the third strike). If fired, the individual must complete the assignment either alone (but with no opportunity to present the business plan orally and forfeit those points) or as part of another team. It is the student’s responsibility to meet the commitments and expectations of their teammates.

Cloud Etiquette is important for keeping things organized and working smoothly when collaborating online. Follow these simple tips to make sure everyone is on the same page:

- **Name Files and Folders Clearly:** Label files and folders in a way that makes it obvious what's inside, so no one has to open them just to check.
- **Ask Before Deleting:** Always ask before deleting any files or folders, especially if you didn't create them, to avoid accidentally losing someone's work.
- **Watch File Sizes:** Don't upload huge files that take up too much space. Keep things organized and delete unnecessary files to make room for what's needed.
- **Set Clear Permissions:** Make sure everyone knows who can access and edit each file or folder to prevent accidental sharing.
- **Keep Track of Edits:** Be mindful of who's editing what to avoid confusion and ensure that the right person is responsible for final changes.

Assignment components: There are two components: written component and oral component. The written plan is to be typed using 12-point font, one-inch margins, and written in complete sentences, and submitted as a single PDF file. You should address all the points in the outline with any additional information you feel necessary. The product you submit should tell a compelling story to a lender about why s/he should invest in this business. It is a narrative. The oral component is an oral presentation by all members of the group for 15 to 20 minutes. This is a fun portion of the group project for many previous classmates. You must explain the business

to a non-horticulture lender, logically and concisely, and make financial justifications during the presentation.

Assignment deadlines: The D2L website shows the deadlines for draft portions (a loss of 50 points per group member will be assessed for missing or very poor drafts) and final portions of the business plan. This will be your only reminder of these deadlines, so please add them to your planning tool.

Assignment resources: You should use any resources at your disposal, including your group members' experiences, past courses, instructors, Internet resources, librarians, chambers of commerce, radio stations, newspapers and anything else that provides information to you on your project. Your group decides how the plan is written and presented; not all members must participate in all aspects. You will evaluate your own performance as well as learn to constructively evaluate the performance of your peers. Your assigned team-mates are your business colleagues in the development process, and may (or may not) have a defined role in the business. You may hire or out-source additional labor if you need it. It's your group, so you decide how the work gets done and who does it.

Lab hours: Dr. Valle de Souza will meet with your group during lab hours to discuss progress, for you to ask questions, and to help keep your group on track. You may request additional meetings. You will be required to produce drafts at the meetings with Simone.

Meeting Times: Lectures meet Tuesday and Thursday from 9:10-10:00, Plant & Soil Science Bldg, room A149. Lab meets in person on Thursdays from 3:00 to 4:50 pm, Plant & Soil Science Bldg, room A152

Honors Option: Students can participate in an Honors Option if they are members of the Honors College. Students should initiate a project description (e.g., format, timeline, and scope), that will be agreed upon by the instructor, preferably no later than the end of the second week of the semester. The Honors Option Agreement form is located on the Registrar's website by selecting "Student-Instructor Agreement", last entry in the Other Links column on the right (will require logging in as an official MSU student). Note that the Honors designation is awarded only for work that is of high quality and more intensive and/or extensive than is required of the non-honors students in this course (thus, a high grade for regularly required work does not in itself warrant the awarding of the H-designation). Furthermore, the quality of an H-Option project does not affect the grade assigned for this course; however, a minimum grade of 3.0 must be earned before the Honors credit associated with the H-Option can be awarded.

Attendance: Students are required to attend both lectures and laboratory sessions. Class attendance will be recorded and will account for 10% of the final grade.

University Attendance Policy: REPORTING NON-ATTENDANCE. In compliance with federal regulations governing financial aid and veterans' education benefits, instructors are required to report students who stop attending or who have never attended class. After the first week of classes, through the middle of the term of instruction, instructors who identify a non-attending student should notify their departmental office. Upon receiving a report of non-attendance, departmental representatives are encouraged to initiate an administrative drop. "Attendance" is defined as physical attendance or participation in an academically related activity such as submission of an assignment, an examination, participation in a study group or an online discussion, etc. Instructors who do not take attendance may utilize key assessment points (e.g. projects, papers, mid-term exams, and discussions) as benchmarks for participation.

DROP FOR NON-ATTENDANCE. Students may be dropped from a course for non-attendance by a departmental administrative drop any time after the fourth class period, or the fifth class day of the term of instruction, whichever occurs first.

University Policy on Religious Observance: It has always been the policy of the University to permit students and faculty to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith. The faculty and staff should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. Please let me know within one week from the beginning of class if you need to be absent for Observance of a Religious Holiday or Festival. Additional information on this MSU policy can be found at <https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/ReligiousPolicy.aspx>

Additional College and University Policies: All other general college and university policies applicable to this course are available at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/academics/courses/policies>. Please review these policies.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (from the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD): Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation (VISA) form. Please present this form to the instructor by the end of the second week of class.

Academic integrity is essential to success in college just as integrity is essential to success in business and life. Academic integrity means being honest about your intellectual work. Interacting with other people is a natural way for students to learn, but each person must construct his or her own knowledge in the process. Michigan State University has an all-university policy concerning Academic Honesty and Integrity. Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of

scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the Department of Horticulture adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu.) You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you have completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. You may not have any individual not enrolled in the course create or submit any portion of any assignment for you. Students who violate MSU academic integrity rules may receive a penalty grade, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact me if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestyFAQ.html>). Some students are challenged with the definition of academic integrity. Simply stated, don't share your writing or files with other students. Don't have any family member or friend create or modify any part of any assignment you submit for a grade. Penalties for unethical conduct are largely at the discretion of the instructor and include failing the assignment or failing the course. The instructor will file an academic dishonesty report which then requires the student to complete an online course regarding ethical conduct. The second offense becomes a permanent part of the student's transcript. I use "Turn it in" as one way to assess the plagiarism in this course.

Schedule of Lecture and Lab Topics for Spring Semester 2025
Updated last on January 17, 2025

If necessary, a revised schedule will be posted on D2L and students will be notified by in class and by email of the changes as they are made.

Week	Article Title / Course Materials
Week 1	Syllabus and course overview
	Business Plan overview, expectations, and grading rubric
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 2	Accounting terms, Income Statement, Financial Definitions, and Balance Sheet
	Legal forms of a business, constructing vision & mission statements; Do Your Slides Pass the Glance Test? How to Stop Saying “Um,” “Ah,” and “You Know”
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 3	What Leaders Really do?
	Strategic Planning Should Be a Strategic Exercise
	What Makes a Leader?
	Marketing Products and Services, and Pricing Strategies
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 4	Guest Lecturer
	Four Mistakes Leaders Keep Making
	Becoming the Boss.
	Saving Your Rookie Managers from Themselves
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 5	Nine Things Successful People Do Differently
	How Resilience Works
	Leading the Team You Inherit
Week 6	Managing Oneself
	What to Ask the Person in the Mirror
	Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time
	SWOT, PEST and Industry Analysis
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 7	How Managers Become Leaders
	Smaller Companies Must Embrace Risk Management
	How Midsize Companies Can Use Uncertainty to Their Advantage
	Funds needed and their uses
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 8	Artificial Intelligence for the Real World
	The Age of Continuous Connection
	Find Innovation Where You Least Expect It
	Strategic Profitability Model – collecting data

	A2Z Nursery SPM
Week 9	The Secrets of Great Teamwork
	The Discipline of Teams
	Why Diverse Teams are Smarter
	Strategic Profitability Model - analysis
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 10	How to Work with Someone Who Isn't a Team Player.
	How to Deal with a Passive-Aggressive Colleague
	How to Manage Someone Who Thinks Everything is Urgent
	Labor in Horticulture
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 11	Emotional Agility
	Using the Crowd as an Innovation Partner
	Taking the Stress Out of Stressful Conversations
	Managing Efficiency
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 12	How to Work with a Bad Listener
	How to Deal with a Slacker Coworker
	How to Work with a Manipulative Person.
	How to Give Feedback to People Who Cry, Yell, or Get Defensive
	Moving the Needle on Sustainability
	A Step Toward Making Your Company More Sustainable
	Time to work on Semester Project
Week 13	How to Give Tough Feedback that Helps People Grow
	What Good Feedback Really Looks Like
	What Really Works
	Project Oral Presentation
	Project Oral Presentation
Week 14	Exam Review
	Time to prepare for exam
	Time to prepare for exam
	Final Exam