

Communications for Accounting Professionals

Syllabus: Winter Quarter, 2013

ACC #261

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Course Objective

This course will help you develop the skills needed for professional-level communications in your future career. Its scope includes presentation skills, writing, and communication strategies.

Presentations

A competent speaker has eight basic skills that apply in public presentations. Students come into the class with strength in some skills, but others need to be learned. For instance, some students speak too quickly (and usually know it) because they're nervous. That can readily be undone, using a positive technique called cognitive restructuring, which is the foundation for the coaching. Beyond basic competence, students will also learn how to have a commanding presence and other more advanced skills. Professional-level PowerPoint training will be folded in as well, including a PowerPoint Tutorial.

Writing

Writing skills typically vary greatly within the class. A special Basic Writing Self-Tutorial writing packet measuring grammar, punctuation and other fundamentals will check a student's foundation at the outset. During the quarter, certain self-editing techniques will be brought to bear to enhance your business writing. Numerous examples of actual business writing will be examined by students. Writing challenges will often involve simulated situations and cases studies.

Required Materials

A downloadable **TEXTPAK** will be provided to students.

E-Mail, A Write It Well Guide: How to Write and Manage E-Mail in the Workplace, by Janis Fisher Chan, 2008, available on Amazon

Guide to Managerial Communication, Mary Munter, 9th edition, Prentice-Hall, 2012.

Recommended

Students will sometimes need to consult a reference work or website.

Students who prefer to have online reference should consider the Purdue University Online Writing Lab, available free. Place it on your toolbar.

Students who prefer to have a reference book should consider **The Business Writer's Handbook (10th edition, Bedford/St. Martin's)**. This is an excellent, well-indexed, spiral-bound book.

Both the Purdue Lab and the handbook have material directed at ESL students.

Students who need to sharpen their punctuation should acquire **Eats, Shoots & Leaves**, an inexpensive, engaging paperback on the subject by Lynne Truss. It was a New York Times best seller.

Students who need to excel in creating charts for presentations would do well to have this reference book: **The Say It With Charts Complete Toolkit**. Gene Zelazny, McGraw Hill, 2007.

Students who expect to be active with start-ups or pitching for capital should consider **Presenting To Win**. Jerry Weissman, FT Press, 2008.

Your owner's manual for ACC 261

- **All writing assignments** should be sent to the professor's UCD email address (dnykennedy@ucdavis.edu), and **NEVER** to SmartSite, which will not be checked for assignment submissions. **Your email subject line** should contain your name and a key word or phrase from the assignment—for example, "Lee, McGregor case"
- **Grades** will be posted on SmartSite, available to you in an ongoing manner. Final grades are curved; see **Grading** section of this syllabus.
- **The weekly assignments** and due dates will appear in SmartSite as we go through the quarter. (Adjustments are sometimes required because of how the class is progressing, so assignments for all 10 weeks are not posted at the

outset.) The assignment posted in SmartSite is the final version of any assignment.

1st Class—This will offer an overview of business writing and speaking skills, with numerous examples, exercises and discussion.

2nd Class—Half of the class will deliver a very brief presentation to enable an assessment of speaking skills. Individualized guidance will follow in class, and continue through the remaining classes whenever presentation skills are taught. In the remaining time, there will be exercises and examples to nurture one's writing style.

3rd Class—The other 15 students will deliver a very brief presentation for the same purpose as class 2. Again, the focus otherwise will involve business writing, including the Writing Self-Tutorial.

4th Class—Every student will deliver a presentation, which will tell a story about an influential person regarding your future career. We'll split the class into two groups to accomplish this, with a trained teaching assistant at hand. Afterward there will be a PowerPoint tutorial conducted in a workshop environment.

5th Class—The continuing focus on business writing will feature the McGregor case, with breakout discussion of all students' work. Students will also review essays written for this class, based on their budget-building exercise for Professor Yetman, with discussion to follow.

6th Class—Individual student presentations will delve into the financial implications of healthcare economics. A teaching assistant will take part, with the class splitting into two groups. Also, attention will be devoted to the protocols and skills involved in writing emails in a professional environment.

7th Class—Every student will be on a two-person team that will give an engaging presentation of four minutes, using a minimum of eight PowerPoint slides. Each team will choose an insightful, entertaining topic beneath the broad umbrella "money."

8th Class—Half the students will give presentations requiring confidence and enthusiasm as each makes a presentation seeking a financial commitment. Afterward, a prominent public relations professional will conduct a seminar on crisis communications, with an emphasis on the financial industry.

9th Class— The other half of the class will give the same presentations as class nine. Then we will tackle the so-called "Friedman Doctrine." This op-ed column by the Nobel prize-winning economist Milton Friedman, written in 1970, is still very influential in modern-day economics. Students will debate this controversy, involving business and social responsibility.

10th Class—Students will write an analysis of California’s controversial high-speed rail project, which received its first funding this year. The analysis will be accomplished through the numbers. Student groups of four will have met previously to discuss their organized research. (This will be instead of a final exam.) A debate will ensue.

Final Exam: No

Grading

Grades will be compiled as follows. (Should there be any changes, the professor will notify you in a timely manner as the course progresses.) Note also that the professor may curve the numerical grades to achieve appropriate letter grading at the end. In other words, your letter grade might be slightly higher or lower than the accumulated points might indicate. This will be discussed in an early class.

Class 4: 10 points for the written assignment that accompanies the presentation

Class 5: 10 points for McGregor writing assignment

Class 5: 10 points for budget balancing assignment

Class 6: 10 points for oral presentation

Class 7: This is a speaking assignment with two persons on a team. However, grading is primarily individual, as follows, with 20 points available: 5 points for separate written assignments (graded individually) that relate to the presentation; 10 points for oral presentation (graded individually); 5 points for PPT quality and its integration with the talk (same grade for both students).

Class 8/9: 10 points for the speaking assignment

Class 9: 10 points for the written assignment involving the Friedman Doctrine.

Class 10: 20 points for the high-speed rail assignment

In Addition....

Up to **20 Points may be deducted**, at the professor's discretion, for significant shortcomings in participation. This class is an interactive workshop. While it doesn't happen often, sometimes the professor has occasion to adjust a grade for lack of participation. Shortcomings could include a serious failure to contribute; unpreparedness for the reading assignments; extensive "multi-tasking" on a laptop or smart phone in class. Please notify the instructor beforehand when unable to attend a class, citing the reason. Missing more than one class would be significant and a matter for discussion. It's understood that ACC #261 students may at times have unavoidable conflicts, especially related to interviews with firms. Do everything possible to schedule travel, interviews, and other matters around class requirements. This is an interactive class; much of the important learning occurs in the classroom.