

# Communications for Accounting Professionals ACC #261

## Syllabus: Winter Quarter, 2014

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### *Course Objective*

This course will enable you to develop professional communications skills for your upcoming career. It primarily addresses presentation and writing skills. Critical thinking is taught as well, with some time devoted to negotiating.

#### **Presentations**

A competent speaker has eight basic skills that are on display in a good presentation. Students enter this class with some speaking skills, but others need to be learned. For instance, some students speak too quickly (and usually know it) because they're nervous. A coaching technique based on cognitive restructuring rapidly enables students to speak in presentations at an ideal tempo. Students will also learn more advanced skills, such as having a commanding presence. Professional-level PowerPoint training will be folded in as well.

#### **Writing**

Writing skills typically vary greatly within the class. The Writing Staircase is a series of six skill exercises. Each one improves business writing. Every student has the opportunity to develop excellent writing skills, whatever their original skill level as a writer. Numerous examples of actual business writing will be assessed. Writing challenges will often involve real or simulated business situations and case studies.

### *Required Materials*

REQUIRED BOOKLET FOR ALL STUDENTS: "The Thinker's Guide to Analytic Thinking," from the Foundation for Critical Thinking.

A downloadable **TEXTPAK** will be available to students. Access it through the link in SmartSite.

An extensive amount of material will be provided in the ten class folders within Resources on SmartSite.

### **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, MacGregor case"
- **Grades** will be posted on SmartSite, available to you in an ongoing manner. Final grades may be curved; see **Grading** section of this syllabus.
- **The weekly assignments** are in the folder for that class. All written assignments should be e-mailed to the instructor by the start of class unless noted otherwise.
- **One or more teaching assistants** will participate in the coaching of presentation skills and reviewing/grading writing assignments.
- **Student discussion groups** will support each other in an ongoing way with critical analyses of cases, development of speeches, and other tasks. The instructor will assign groups of four no later than class one. At the end of the quarter, group members will do confidential peer evaluations.

***IMPORTANT: IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION (25 points of the grade)*** ACC 261 is a workshop. Please use your laptop or other electronics only for educational purposes, and always have only course-relevant material open (no email or web checking, please). Laptops should remain closed when students are giving talks, out of courtesy. All of the foregoing figures into the participation grade, which factors in attendance (see below), contributions to class discussion, discussion group participation, peer evaluations, having done the readings, abiding by the electronics policy above, and other factors the instructor deems appropriate.

**Please obtain and display your name cards in all classes.**

### **FOUNDATION CLASSES:**

**1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Classes:** Every student will do a brief presentation in either class 1 or 2. These display baseline skills and receive evaluations from the class and the instructor. Also, The Writing Staircase will be introduced and applied over the three

classes. Students will evaluate actual writing from the business world as well. In short, these classes are devoted to learning skills, which will continue to develop through the next seven classes. Students will take on the classic McGregor case in their discussion groups in preparation for class 3.

### **PROGRESSIVE CLASSES:**

4<sup>th</sup> Class—The class will split, with TA assistance, for three-minute individual presentations that will be evaluated. A written report is expected. Also, critical thinking skills will be introduced, based on the work of Nobel Prize Winner Daniel Kahneman.

5<sup>th</sup> Class—Student groups will apply critical thinking to the Sweat Equity case, which calls for valuation judgments in an early-stage business. The balance of the class will be devoted to critical thinking material.

6<sup>th</sup> Class—The class will again split, with TA assistance, for three-minute individual presentations. Students will develop a related written report and apply for the first time a critical analysis protocol from “The Thinker’s Guide to Analytic Thinking.”

7<sup>th</sup> Class—Student teams will be dropped into a workplace dilemma fraught with ethical issues. Selected role-playing will put some students to the test. In addition, student groups will critically analyze, write about, and debate the Friedman Doctrine, a famous document about corporate social responsibility.

8<sup>th</sup> Class—Every student will be on a three-person team that will give an engaging presentation of four minutes, using a minimum number of PowerPoint slides. (A PowerPoint self-tutorial is available beforehand.) Each team will choose an informative topic beneath the broad umbrella “money.” Also, the basics of negotiation skills will be presented and put to the test, with follow-up next week.

9<sup>th</sup> Class—For the third and final time, the class will split for three-minute talks. Students will give individual persuasive talks to make an “ask” for investment capital, business sales or for other purposes. Further negotiation skills will be featured, extending material from class eight.

10<sup>th</sup> Class— Each ongoing student discussion groups will develop and deliver a presentation, using PowerPoint, about the core failures involved in the collapses of various major corporations. Each collapse involves accounting issues. The instructor will assign groups to failed corporations such as Enron, WorldCom and Global Crossing. Afterward in class, a related writing assignment to be done individually.

**No final exam**

### ***Grading***

Grades will be assessed on a 200-point scale, which allows greater discrimination. Note: the professor may curve all the numerical grades to achieve appropriate letter

grades at the end of the class. In other words, everyone's letter grade might be slightly higher or lower than the accumulated points might indicate.

Class 3:       McGregor (20 points)

Class 5:       Healthcare report (15 points)

Class 6:       National policy segments (30 points)

Class 7:       Essay on Friedman (20 points)

Class 8:       Three-Partner PowerPoint (25 points)

Class 9:       Three-minute talk (20 points)

Class 10:      PPT presentations by discussion groups (30 points)

Class 10:      Individual write-ups related to PPT presentations (15)

Overall Participation: (25 points)

### ***If you must miss a class...***

Please notify the teaching assistant beforehand (not the instructor) 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.