

Communications for Professional Accountants ACC #261

Syllabus: Winter Quarter, 2015

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS TO: 261acc@gmail.com

Daniel Kennedy, lecturer
dnykennedy@ucdavis.edu
(cell) 916-501-3352
Office hours: by request

Amber Lewis
amblewis@ucdavis.edu
Office hours: by request

Course Objective

This course will enable you to develop professional communications skills for your upcoming career. It will also enhance your critical thinking abilities for business situations. You'll find numerous opportunities to express yourself in both writing and oral presentations.

Presentations

A competent speaker displays a foundation of eight basic skills 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. PowerPoint training will be folded in as well.

Writing

Initial writing skills typically vary greatly within the class. The Writing Staircase is a series of six skill exercises. Every student has the opportunity to progress from any skill level. Actual business writing is often reviewed in the class. Also, your writing challenges will often involve real or simulated business situations and case studies.

Critical Thinking Series

This component will enhance your abilities to analyze dispassionately and thoroughly. It is a collection of readings, exercises, and other challenges. (You will

see it referred to later in the syllabus simply as the series; the individual activities for the week will be in the assignments.)

What does it include? A critical thinking protocol from the Foundation for Critical Thinking provides a helpful structure for analyzing complex matters. Insights from popular thinker Malcolm Gladwell and Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman will provide real-world texture for making sound judgments. Both reflect on how human beings think...and make errors. Numbers can mislead, so you will delve into false inferences, bias, and challenges to sound analysis. The Critical Thinking Series has other elements that will unfold in the assignments.

Required Materials

REQUIRED BOOKLET FOR ALL STUDENTS: “The Thinker’s Guide to Analytic Thinking,” from the Foundation for Critical Thinking. (The inexpensive booklet is handier than the download.)

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.

Search “Purdue Owl” to reach the online Purdue Owl Language Lab. Add to your toolbar. It offers immediate consultation on grammar and much more.

Your owner’s manual for ACC 261

- **IMPORTANT! Send all writing assignments to 261acc@gmail.com, the homework hub for this class.** Do **NOT** send submissions to SmartSite, which will not be checked. **Your email subject line** should contain your name and a key word or phrase from the assignment—for example, “Lee, MacGregor case.”
- **Administrative matters, attendance,** and other communications that are not assignment submissions should be directed to the TA at her ucdavis.edu email address (listed at the top of the syllabus). She will involve the instructor in decisions as needed. Direct sensitive personal matters to the instructor’s email address, or speak with him.
- **Grades** will be posted in **Gradebook** on SmartSite. Final grades may be curved; see **Grading** at the end of this syllabus.
- **The weekly assignments** can be found in the class folders in the Resources section of SmartSite. All written assignments should be e-mailed to the instructor by the start of class unless noted otherwise. The instructor may deduct points for tardy submissions.

- **One or more teaching assistants** will participate in the coaching and grading of certain presentation and writing assignments.
- **Student discussion groups** will work in an ongoing way with critical analyses of cases and other tasks. The instructor will assign groups of four in class one. At the end of the quarter, group members must submit confidential peer evaluations that factor into your participation grade.

IMPORTANT: IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION (25 points of the grade):

ACC 261 is a workshop; your engagement contributes to a better class for all. Please use your personal electronic devices only for educational purposes, and always have only course-relevant material open (no email or web browsing, please). Extensive inappropriate use of electronic devices in class may have a significant effect on your participation grade.

The participation grade also factors in attendance (see note at the end of the syllabus), contributions that advance class discussion, discussion group participation, peer evaluations, knowledge of the readings, and other factors the instructor deems appropriate.

Note that there may be a wide spread among the in-class participation grades. This approach rewards those who make great efforts to engage and advance the class experience.

Please display your name cards in all classes.

FOUNDATION CLASSES:

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Classes: Every student will do a brief presentation in either class 2 or 3. These display baseline skills and receive evaluations from peers and the instructor. Also, The Writing Staircase (in Resources) and the Critical Thinking Series will receive a good deal of attention in these classes. Students will also tackle their first case, “How Much Is Sweat Equity Worth?”

PROGRESSIVE CLASSES:

4th Class—We will discuss a classic Harvard case, “McGregor’s Ltd. Department Store,” with role-playing by some students. It includes a written assignment. A series of either critical thinking or writing skills will fill the rest of this class and classes 5 and 6.

5th Class—You will give your second talk thus far, in split groups with TA assistance. You will share with the class your view of an important government or regulatory policy of your choosing. This taps your skills for building a persuasive argument.

6th Class—In your third talk, you will explain your dismay or approval of costs associated with healthcare in the U.S. or around the world. You’ll learn how to explain numbers in an interesting, comprehensible way.

7th Class— In either this class or the next, student teams of four will give engaging five-minute presentations. You will use PowerPoint slides that incorporate skills learned in a special PowerPoint self-tutorial. You will choose an informative, entertaining subject beneath a broad umbrella topic—“Money.” Afterward we will have a case discussion of “In Search of a Second Act.”

8th Class—The remaining half of student teams will give their “Money” PowerPoint presentations. Afterward, we will critically analyze, write about, and debate the Friedman Doctrine, a famous document about corporate social responsibility.

9th Class—In this final individual talk, you will bring to bear all your skills for a persuasive talk that includes an “ask” for investment capital. Afterward, we will delve into two ethical puzzlers—leadership decision-making in real time, with selected role-playing as time allows.

10th Class— Each ongoing student discussion group 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.

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 what Gradebook might indicate.

Class 4: McGregor (20 points)

Class 5: Essay tied to your policy talk (not the talk itself)(20 points)

Class 6: Healthcare policy talk (20 points)

Classes 7/8: PowerPoint (30 points)

Class 8: Essay on Friedman (20 points)

Class 9: Individual talk (25 points)

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

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

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.