

Communications for Professional Accountants ACC #261

Syllabus: Winter Quarter, 2016

Homework Hub to receive your written assignments: 261acc@gmail.com

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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, chosen with an eye toward your future needs in the accounting field.

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 bias, poor logic, and other 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. (There is an inexpensive booklet or an electronic version.)

A downloadable **TEXTPAK**, accessed through the link in SmartSite.

Google “Purdue Owl” to reach the online Purdue Owl Language Lab. Add to your toolbar. It offers immediate consultation on grammar and much more, especially for ESL students.

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, McGregor case.”
- **Administrative matters, attendance problems,** and other communications that are not assignment submissions should be directed to the TA’s ucdavis.edu email address (listed at the top of the syllabus). The TA will involve the instructor in decisions as needed. Direct sensitive, personal, or confidential 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 Homework Hub before 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 presentations and writing assignments.

- **Student discussion groups** will work in an ongoing way with critical analyses of cases and other tasks. The instructor will create student groups of four in class one. At the end of the quarter, group members must submit peer evaluations that factor into participation grades.

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

ACC 261 is a workshop; your engagement contributes to a better class for all. 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 is also affected by attendance (see note at the end of the syllabus), contributions that advance class discussion, 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. The purpose is to reward those who make impressive 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 critical thinking will receive a good deal of attention. Students will also tackle their first case, “How Much Is Sweat Equity Worth?”

PROGRESSIVE CLASSES:

4th 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. We’ll also review actual business announcements, reviewing their style and effectiveness.

5TH Class—We will discuss a classic Harvard case, “McGregor’s Ltd. Department Store,” with role-playing by some students and a related writing assignment. Critical thinking challenges will also be featured.

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. The role of excellent writing in the CPA exam will receive attention as well, and we’ll do a PowerPoint

self-tutorial that offers training in PowerPoint design that goes far beyond the simple standard.

7th Class— 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 discuss The Friedman Doctrine, which has a related writing assignment.

8th Class— Student teams will compete in an effort to climb Mount Everest in a popular Harvard simulation that taxes your skills in organization teamwork and leadership. Each team member assumes a different role, as one would on audit teams and in other endeavors in your field. An inability to work together, efficiently, will cause your team to stumble.

9th Class—In this final individual talk, you will bring to bear all your skills for a persuasive talk. It includes an “ask” for investment capital. Afterward, we will delve into an ethical puzzler—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 such failed corporations 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: Essay tied to your policy talk (not the talk itself)(20 points)

Class 5: McGregor announcement (20 points)

Class 6: Healthcare policy talk (20 points)

Classes 7: 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.