

Communications for Professional Accountants ACC #261 (Sections 1 & 2)

Syllabus: Winter Quarter, 2019

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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. You 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. You will have the opportunity to progress quickly from your existing 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. You'll also answer in writing two questions similar to those in the BEC section of the CPA exam.

Critical Thinking Series

This component will enhance your ability to analyze business matters 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 protocol from the Foundation for Critical Thinking provides a helpful structure for analyzing complex matters. Insights from Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman will provide a real-world way of discussing how we think...and often don't. 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 during the quarter.

Required Materials

THE THINKER'S GUIDE TO ANALYTIC THINKING, published by the Foundation for Critical Thinking. This 60-page booklet is available from the UCD bookstore, the foundation's online bookstore, or Amazon.

A downloadable **TEXTPAK**, accessible in study.net.

Google "Purdue Owl" to reach the online Purdue Owl Language Lab; add this to your toolbar. It offers immediate consultation on grammar, spelling and more.

Your owner's manual for ACC 261

- In the first class, you will be shown a unique email address just for this class. **Send all homework, attendance issues, and administrative matters** to this email address. The TA checks it daily. **Your email subject line** should contain your name and a key word or phrase—for example, "Lee, McGregor case," or "Lee, scheduling conflict." The TA notifies the instructor as warranted.
- Sensitive, personal, or confidential matters should be directed to the instructor's email address—or, of course, speak with him.
- **Grades** will be posted in **Gradebook** on Canvas. Final letter grades are typically adjusted; see **Grading** at the end of this syllabus.
- **The weekly assignments** can be found in the 10 modules for this class in the Modules within Canvas. All written assignments are due on time. At his discretion, the instructor may deduct points for tardy submissions.
- **Student discussion groups** will analyze cases and take on other tasks. Discussion group members will be posted in the Class 1 module in Canvas. At the end of the quarter, group members 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). The participation grade is also affected by attendance (see note at the end of the syllabus), peer

evaluations, and volunteering in class to advance discussions. Knowledge of the readings and other factors the instructor deems appropriate can affect this grade.

Often there is a wide spread in the participation grades. To earn the maximum grade, regularly volunteer to advance class discussion, make an outstanding contribution to your discussion group, and be very engaged in class. A student who doesn't volunteer insights in class, contributes very little to a discussion group, and/or is distracted with electronic devices during class activities, will earn far fewer points.

Please bring name cards to display in class throughout the quarter.

FOUNDATION CLASSES:

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Classes: You will give a brief oral presentation in either class 2 or 3. These display baseline skills and receive evaluations from peers and the instructor. Also, The Writing Staircase (in Canvas, within the Modules) and critical thinking will receive a good deal of attention. You also will tackle your first case, "How Much Is Sweat Equity Worth?"

PROGRESSIVE CLASSES:

4th Class—You will give your second talk, in split groups with TA assistance. Each student will build a persuasive argument about an interesting tax policy in any nation and write a related report. We'll also review actual business announcements, analyzing their style and effectiveness.

5TH Class—You will analyze a classic Harvard case, "McGregor's Ltd. Department Store." There is a related writing assignment. Logical fallacies will be introduced. We'll also introduce PowerPoint styles that go beyond the data-heavy PPT formats that accounting firms use.

6th Class—You will give a third talk, describing a change to the U.S. tax code you would like to see. We'll focus on how to explain numbers in an interesting, comprehensible way. We'll also examine the writing demands called for in the CPA exam, including a sample BEC test item.

7th Class—Teams of two will give engaging three-minute PowerPoint presentations, employing advanced skills learned in a PowerPoint self-tutorial. Teams choose an informative, entertaining topic affiliated with money.

8th Class— Student teams will compete in an effort to climb Mount Everest in a popular Harvard simulation. It taxes your skills in teamwork and leadership. Each team member assumes a different role, as one might on an audit team and or in other endeavors in a firm. If you're unable to work together well and efficiently, your team will stumble.

9th Class—This final talk will require an “ask” for investment capital, a loan, a purchase, or something equivalent. Afterward, we will delve into an ethical puzzler—office decision-making in real time, with selected role-playing.

10th Class—Student discussion groups will deliver PowerPoint presentations about the collapses of various major corporations such as Enron, WorldCom and Global Crossing. Each collapse involves accounting issues. A challenge from the CPA exam’s BEC section will end the class, with a limited amount of time to write an answer to a prompt.

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. This will be explained in class 1.

- Class 4: Tax policy essay (20 points)
- Class 5: McGregor announcement (20 points)
- Class 6: Policy talk (20 points)
- Class 7: Team PowerPoint presentation (30 points)
- Class 8: Essay (15 points)
- Class 9: Persuasive talk (25 points)
- Class 10: PPT presentations by discussion groups (25 points)
- Class 10: Sample Exam Question (20)
- Overall Participation: (Earn up to 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.

Because the morning and afternoon sections of ACC261 will be nearly identical, ordinarily students can shift to an earlier or later section to accommodate scheduling conflicts. However, the TA should be notified beforehand.