UC DAVIS
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

ACC 261-1—Communications for Professional Accountants

Fall 2024 Syllabus (Discussion Draft Only)
Monday 1:10-5:00 PM Room GH 1213

DISCLAIMER: This syllabus and the schedule of readings, assignments, and activities may be changed to maximize student learning needs and meet the course objectives.

Effective communication skills are critical to professional success. "This is really the ability to clearly articulate your point of view and the ability to create a connection through communication." Holly Paul, PriceWaterhouseCoopers

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Office Hours: Monday 11:30 AM- 12:30 PM or by appointment. Please email me to schedule an appointment.

Canvas: Students are required to have access to Canvas throughout the course. Regular course updates, information and schedules are posted to Canvas. Grades are posted through the Canvas gradebook.

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Required Texts and Preparation Materials: (all materials will be available in the Bookshelf tool in Canvas, included in the Equitable Access program)
- **Text:** *Business Communication: Process & Product* by Mary Ellen Guffey and Dana Loewy, 11th Edition, Cengage Learning. 9780357984215 Hardcover ISBN: 9780357984109
- **Text**: Simply Said Sullivan, Jay (2017, Wiley) ISBN: 978-1-119-28529-8
- **Harvard Business Publishing Simulation Course Pack** (link in the bookshelf tool)
- A downloadable **TEXTPAK** (link in the bookshelf tool)
- I may also post, periodically, materials for you to read, view, and/or analyze prior to the session in which we will discuss it.

Please obtain your materials above prior to the first day of class. On Canvas and within this syllabus you will hyperlinks that guide you to additional readings and videos.

Course Overview and Learning Goals
A key component to the accounting professional's success lies in their ability to communicate effectively in a way that provides clarity and influences decision-making. This is true regardless of where you ultimately land professionally, e.g., in a Big 4, national, regional or local firm, industry or government, to list a few. In this course we examine communication as a strategic tool

that will be vital for your future success. Moving beyond simply teaching public speaking or business writing, my goal for this course is to help you achieve *writing and speaking skills* in a way that places you and your audience on the same frequency, enabling you to be effective and influential. We will also place an emphasis on structuring and documenting audit workpapers and reports, understanding your audiences (investors, creditors, regulators, and other stakeholders), and consideration of ethical and regulatory responsibilities.

Course Design
To achieve these somewhat ambitious goals this course is designed with discussion modules and practical work during our class discussions and engagement. You can expect the entire four-hour block of "in-class" time to be interactive and engaging. To get the most benefit please come to class each week prepared and ready to engage with the professor and your peers. This course will enable you to develop professional communications skills for your upcoming career. You will find numerous opportunities to express yourself in both writing and oral presentations. You will also take a step forward in your powers of critical analysis, applying a critical thinking protocol.

Presentations
A competent speaker brings a foundation of eight basic skills to a presentation. Students enter this class with some of these speaking skills, but others need to be learned. For instance, some students speak too quickly (and usually know it) because they are 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, confident 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. These enable everyone to advance their skill level. Actual business writing is often reviewed in class. Your writing challenges will often involve real or simulated business situations and case studies. You will also be creating a situational memo.

Critical Analysis 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 do not. Numbers can mislead, so you will delve into bias, poor logic, and other challenges to sound analysis.

Recommendations

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, and is especially valuable to ESL students.

I am a prolific Announcement "poster." So, please keep an eye on Canvas and your email (assuming you have pushed Canvas announcements to your email).

Your Guide to Course Communication

- **Sensitive, personal, or confidential matters** should be directed to my email address—or, of course, speak with me via phone or on a Zoom appointment. There are set office hours, but I also can, at your request, often arrange customized times that fit both of our schedules.
- **Grades** will be posted in **Gradebook** on **Canvas**. Approximately 1) 35% of your grade is allocated between your various individual and team presentations; 2) 45% of your grade is allocated between your various individual and team written submissions; and 3) 20% of your grade is allocated to attendance, participation, and contribution (see below) (including peer review/assessments of your contributions.
- **All assignments** can be found on the Syllabus and **Assignments pages within Canvas**. All written assignments are due on time, but dates could change (perhaps be pushed out due to guest speakers or other circumstances). At my discretion, I may deduct points for significant or repeated tardy submissions. Assignments should be uploaded to the appropriate Dropbox in Canvas unless otherwise announced.
- **Student discussion groups** will analyze cases and take on other tasks including leading an informal discussion of assigned material during class sessions.

Attendance, Participation, and Contribution Factors: Without question this will be a highly interactive course. In fact, it is designed to be more about your learning than my teaching. To get the most out of it, you need to attend all the class sessions. But attendance is only the first step— while here you must participate. I hope you will not simply participate (e.g. speak in class) but will also truly contribute by helping further class discussions and foster the learning of others. Anything I ask you to do something which does not specifically have a grade associated with it is considered a portion of your participation grade. **I will use a mix of cold calls, warm calls, and volunteers to aid discussion.**

It is best to avoid missing class. But if you choose to miss class (or a portion of class), I urge you to do so with the least amount of impact on your learning experience and that of your fellow cohort members—remember they depend on you as you will depend on them. The further in advance you notify me and the TA of your need to be absent, the less impact any absence will have. **One pre-notified absence (48 hours or more in advance) will have no impact on your participation grade (assuming it does not conflict with an assignment for which you are presenting); a second absence will have a more pronounced impact.**

If you must arrive late, do so with the least amount of interruption. If I am speaking, slip in quietly. If a guest speaker or a peer is presenting, wait outside the classroom until there is a logical break (e.g., applause) before entering. Laptops are rarely needed in this class. I will notify you in advance if they are necessary; otherwise, leave laptops closed during class. Cell phones, pagers, iPhones, buzz saws, and other distracting electronic devices fall into this same category.

Please keep name placards visible during at least the first few classes and whenever we have guests. I strive to learn your names quickly, but please be patient.

Quizzes and/or In-Class Exercises: Approximately 8 @ 6 points each = 48 points There are a minimum of three unannounced quizzes and five in-class discussion exercises. If we do not do them all (or we do more for which points are awarded), the grading scheme will be adjusted accordingly. The lowest of these will drop.

Feedback and Grading in this Course: You will quickly begin to see that I love being able to provide feedback on your communication but am less enthusiastic about having to place a numeric score on your efforts. Yet, I recognize that in a university of UCD's caliber both components are needed. I do my best to provide a clear rubric for what is expected on each graded assignment. I grade you on how well you meet the factors of the rubric, not "how good of a speaker/writer you are" or "how much I liked what you delivered/wrote." When grades are assigned by the TA or grader, they are working on my instruction with the rubric provided.

Grading Scheme:

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69
A = 93-96	B = 83-86	C = 73-76	D = 63-66
A- = 90-92	B- = 80-82	C- = 70-72	D- = 60-62

Rights and Responsibilities: All participants in this course are expected to follow the UC Davis Principles of Community, which includes affirmation of the right of freedom of expression and rejection of discrimination. The right to express points-of-view without fear of retaliation or censorship is a cornerstone of academic freedom. A diversity of opinions with respectful disagreement and informed debate enriches learning. However, in this course, any expression or disagreement should adhere to the obligations we have toward each other to build and maintain a climate of mutual respect and caring.

Students are expected to abide by the University of California-Davis Code of Conduct found at **http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf**. The Code of Conduct has explicit explanations of violations (e.g. plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, etc.). Academic conduct violations will not be tolerated, and your instructor will not hesitate to turn violators over to Student Judicial Affairs. If you are uncertain about what constitutes an academic conduct violation, please refer to the code link or contact your instructor. There may be times where I will allow you to re-purpose your own material for a presentation or written assignment in this course, but I must know about this in advance of the assignment being submitted. Regardless, all work you submit must be original for this course or clear in its origination. If you have a question about an honor code issue the time to raise it is while you are preparing an assignment, not after. All material in the course that is not otherwise subject to copyright is the copyright of the course instructor and should be considered the instructor's intellectual property. Therefore, it is a violation of the Code of Conduct to post materials on other websites.

Use of Artificial Intelligence: While it should go without saying, I suppose it must be said. So here it is. The use of artificial intelligence to prepare any written submissions for this course is prohibited. We will discuss the appropriate parameters around this. I reserve the right to verbally "examine" or test students on their submitted work to combat this issue if needed. Any student who submits AI generated materials for credit in this course is subject to my discretion in terms of whether they will fail the course and all such students will be reported to the University administration—e.g. office of student affairs. Submitting AI-created work as one's own is, fundamentally, dishonest. As a professional, I consider it among our top priorities to graduate individuals of character who can perform admirably in their chosen discipline, all of which requires a set of core beliefs rooted in honor. By remaining enrolled in this course, you are attesting that you will not engage in this practice, will use AI ethically, and will abide by the honor code in place. There is a fundamental ethical problem with misrepresenting this type of material as your work, if you choose to attempt it, as well as the deeper problem of "cheating yourselves" by

entering the workforce without adequate writing skills, a quality that employers highly prize. Count on counter measure BOTs and software to improve detection of this dehumanizing strategy to beat the system. Yes, it will always be a race but ask yourself, if temped, who you want to be. Do not ask AI to answer that question for you—it may get it wrong. That is not to say that AI has no place in business communication—indeed it will be a predominate feature going forward—we must explore ways to use it efficaciously and ethically.

Accommodations: UC Davis is committed to educational equity in the academic setting, and in serving a diverse student body. If you are a student who requires academic accommodations, please contact the Student Disability Center (SDC) directly at sdc@ucdavis.edu or 530-752-3184. If you receive an SDC Letter of Accommodation, submit it to your instructor for each course as soon as possible, at least within the first two weeks of a course.

Safety and Emergency Preparedness: UC Davis has many resources to help in case of emergency or crisis. While reviewing campus Emergency Information, you may want to register for UC Davis Warn Me and Aggie Alert, which will give you timely information and instructions about emergencies and situations on campus that affect your safety. If there is an emergency in the classroom, please follow my instructions.

Student Wellness: You are encouraged to practice self-care so that you can remain focused and engaged, which might mean getting a drink of water or leaving to use the restroom. Please be respectful of others by minimizing distractions when practicing self-care. Graduate education can be overwhelming at times but know that you are not alone if you are feeling stressed. Please reach out for support if you need it. You can visit Virtual UC Davis to find resources related to health and well-being, academics, basic needs (food and housing) and more.

Now, together let's take the elephant down one bite at a time…

Agenda

September 30	
Topics: • **Syllabus Review, Getting Acquainted and Questions** • **Introduction to Business Communication in Accounting** • **View and Discussion of Ted Talk— Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are (Ted Talk)** • **Writing Exercise: Baseline Memo**	**Due Dates:** • **Reading: Chapter 1- Business Communication in the Digital Age Due Sep 30** • **Read The Characters of the Story (Study.net Reading Prior to Class October 7)** • **Read Accountants as Communicators (Study.net Reading Prior to Class October 7)**

October 7	
Topics: • **Written Communication Fundamentals** • **Accountants as Communicators** • **Analyzing and Anticipating the Audience** • **View and Discussion of Ted Talk— Death by PowerPoint** • **Team Project Discussion and Teams Assigned**	**Due Dates:** • **Personal Communication Assessment Baseline Memo—Due October 13** • **Reading: Chapter 4- Planning Business Messages** • **Individual Writing Assignment Draft 1 (Bring 3 copies to class for discussion on Oct 14)**

October 14	
Topics: • **Business Writing for Accountants** • **View and Discussion of Ted Talk— How to Speak So That People Want To Listen** • **In-Class Exercise: Positive and Neutral Messages** • **Peer Review of Writing Assignment Draft 1**	**Due Dates:** • **Reading: Chapter 8- The Writing Process for Positive and Neutral Messages** • **Read The Theory of Thin Slices (Study.net Reading Prior to Class October 14)** • **Read Anchors (Study.net Reading Prior to Class October 14)** • **Grammar Exercise No. 1 Due October 20**

October 21	
Topics: • **Oral Communication Skills** • **Creating Effective Business Presentations** • **Preparing Engaging Multimedia Presentations** • **Team Presentation Topic Selection and Planning Workshop**	**Due Dates:** • **Reading: Chapter 14- Business Presentations** • **Submit Team Presentation Topics for Approval Due October 28** • **Individual Writing Assignment 1 Due October 28**

Agenda, con't

October 28	
Topics: • **Finalize Topics for Individual Oral Presentations** • **Video Presentations and Visual Communication** • **Midterm Check-In and Writing Workshop**	**Due Dates:** • **Read Simply Said Prior To Class October 28** • **Grammar Quiz 2 Due October 27**
November 4	
Topics: • **Advanced Writing Techniques** • **Four Essential Principles to Successful Persuasive Messages** • **Understanding Persuasion in the Contemporary Workplace**	**Due Dates:** • **Reading: Chapter 10- Persuasive and Sales Messages**
November 11	
Topics: • **Veterans Day- No Class**	**Due Dates:** • **Individual Writing Assignment 2: Persuasive Proposal—Bring three draft copies of your draft to class on 18th for peer review feedback**
November 18	
Topics: • **In Class Exercise: Persuasive Presentation Workship and peer review of Writing Assignment 2** • **Group Work and Collaborative Communication** • **Effective Collaboration in Teams** • **Strategies for Managing Group Dynamics**	**Due Dates:** • **Reading: Chapter 2- Professionalism: Team, Meeting, Listening, Nonverbal, and Etiquette Skills** • **Individual Writing Assignment 2: Persuasive Proposal Due November 24**
November 25	
Topics: • **Mount Everest Simulation** • **Final Team Presentations**	**Due Dates:** • **All Team Presentation materials and Visual Aids Due November 25 Prior To Class** • **Team Business Report/ Memo Due November 25** • **Peer Reviews/ Assessments of Three Persuasive Presentations Due December 1**

Agenda, con't

Dec 2	
Topics: • **Final Team Presentations Cont. If Needed**	**Due Dates:** • **Personal Reflection on Everest Simulation Due December 6** • **Individual Peer Assessments of Three Team Project Presentations Due December 6**