

ACC 366P/384 – Accounting Practicum Federal Taxation of Low Income Filers: Socio-Economic Forces

Wednesday 3:30-5:20 - UTC 4.102 - Unique #02470/ACC366 #02675/ACC384
Thursday 3:30-5:20 - UTC 4.102 - Unique #02475/ACC366 #02680/ACC384

Spring 2019 Syllabus Part I - UPDATED JAN 20th

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Office Hours: **After class in room UTC 4.102**

Volunteer service period: January 28 – April 15, 2019

Volunteer sites and operating hours are self-selected and may vary. Sites are on major bus routes and students may wish to coordinate carpooling. See www.communitytaxcenters.org for locations.

Practicum Description

Students at all levels are eligible—BBA students, MPA students, and MBA students. No accounting or tax background is necessary. The course integrates community service and academic learning as follows:

Community service involves at least 55 volunteer hours

- You will work with Community Tax Centers; a Foundation Communities' program (www.foundcom.org) that partners with the IRS to implement the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program for low income filers.

Last year, Community Tax Centers helped over 20,000 people and brought over \$35,000,000 into the Austin economy in the form of tax refunds and credits. This year we hope to increase those totals! This effort will require over 600 volunteers from UT and the greater Austin area.

PLEASE RECALL

***IN THE COMMUNITY YOU'RE THE FACE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
DO US ALL PROUD!***

Academic learning comprises a multi-disciplinary curriculum addressing socio-economic issues facing members of the low-income community.

- Topics will be presented by experts in fields such as low-income housing, public policy, economic development, a day in the life of an IRS Special Agent, and volunteering in the community. In addition, training and certification to perform this community service activity will be provided.

Community Service Requirements

For community service credit toward course credit, participants must complete the following community service activities.

- Register with Community Tax Centers as a volunteer.
- Complete an 8-hour basic training session (on January 25th or 26th) and 4 hours of advanced training (during class time on February 7 and February 14) offered through Community Tax Centers that covers tax law principles and how to use TaxSlayer software (**also referred to as IRS training**). You will also be required to take HSA (health savings account training online).
- Become certified as a tax preparer by passing both the basic and intermediate IRS certification tests and also completing the HSA training. Your user name to take the tests needs to be "last-name.first-name". Please use your last and first name as they appear on my official class roster.
- Self-select volunteer hours on Community Tax Center's web-based scheduler.
- Perform at least 55 hours of volunteer work as a tax preparer.

Classroom Procedures

Teams and team leaders. The instructor will divide ACC 366P/384 students into teams. Each team will be led by two or three graduate students. Team leaders will play a primary role in your in-class involvement and in your evaluation. Team leaders act as a job manager and carry substantial responsibility. In addition to orchestrating your team meetings and activities and evaluating you, they are your first source for inquiries and for feedback concerning in-class activities.

Guest speakers. The in-class segment of the practicum is primarily guest speakers or special presentations. Ample accounting content arises in the volunteer component. Hence the academic segment strives to put your experience in a broader context by discussing issues associated with the low-income community in the U.S. Distinguished guest speakers place an extra responsibility on us and also introduce some special considerations, including the following.

- Courtesy and attentiveness toward our guests is essential. *We are representing the University of Texas by our professionalism, involvement, politeness, punctuality, and all other aspects of our comportment!*
- Speaker characteristics may vary, including differing styles, abilities to engage, length of talks, depth of content, and the like. This is just one aspect of the pervasive diversity you will experience in this practicum and one over which there is limited control. In the end, it is everyone's responsibility to make this practicum a meaningful experience.
- There is a **no laptop/smartphone** policy during guest speakers, unless they ask you to use them.
- **Classroom protocol.** The in-class model is as follows:
 - The first 45 minutes of class-time we will have team meetings
 - The remainder of our class-time will be with guest speakers or class activity

Communications and e-mail on Canvas: The use of e-mail and Canvas is required for this course. When sending class-wide e-mails, I will use the e-mail addresses that are supplied to me on Canvas. However, any individual e-mails I send to you will be done via Outlook and those e-mail addresses are all McCombs addresses.

Any outside-of-class announcements that I make (e.g., syllabus changes, assignment changes, speaker date changes, etc.) will be sent to you via e-mail. It is possible that substantial content will be posted on Canvas or sent via e-mail. It is your responsibility to regularly check your e-mail (both your McCombs account and any other accounts that you might have set up for forwarding) and the class Canvas site.

Student Evaluation

	Undergraduate	MPA
Completing IRS Certifications	10%	10%
Tax Center Evaluations & Completing Volunteer Hours	30%	30%
Daily Grades Including Speaker Write-ups	20%	NA
Significant Impressions Paper and discussion	10%	10%
Instructor's Discretionary Evaluation	15%	15%
Thesis Paper **	15%	NA
Grading /Group Leadership/ plus thesis paper or additional 8 hours	NA	35%
Total	100%	100%

**Undergraduate students not wishing to earn a grade higher than a B can opt out of writing the thesis paper. There is no extra-credit work, make-up or other mechanisms for evaluating course performance beyond the activities described in this syllabus.

Completing IRS Certifications (10%)

- For this class, you are required to pass the basic, advanced, and HSA IRS certification online tests in a timely manner. The website address to complete the tests will be given during our IRS Training sessions.
- Your user name used for the tests should be "last-name.first-name". Please use your last and first name as they appear on my official class roster.

*** See the Daily Schedule for due dates. ***

Daily Grades Including Speaker Write-ups (20%)

Your team leaders will evaluate you every class based on the following scale: (Do not use half points)

- 2 = excellent
- 1 = satisfactory
- 0 = unsatisfactory, absent, partially absent, or unprofessional

In order to earn all 20% for this component of your grade, your daily grade average must be 1.0 or higher. Your evaluation will be based on the following criteria, which by their nature, contain elements of subjectivity.

(A) Daily Grades / Class day without a speaker

- The quality and quantity of your contributions in class.
- Your attendance in and punctuality to class.
- Other subjective criteria the group leaders see fit
- Your behavior with me and other students.

(B) Daily Grades / Class with a speaker

- The quality and quantity of your contributions in class.
- Your willingness and effectiveness to articulate questions during the speakers' sessions.
- Your attendance in and punctuality to class, whether it begins with your group meeting and/or the speaker's presentation.
- Other subjective criteria the group leaders see fit

Speaker write-ups

For days with a speaker: By 3:00 on the day of class, you are to submit at least a 250 word write-up of the current week's speaker's topic. Your write-up will be rated by your team leaders. To earn a grade of "2", your speaker write-up must be of high quality and at least 500 words. Factors that might play into the rating of each speaker write-up might include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Topicality/Interest/Clarity of Expression
- Relevance to the topic, and
- The quality and quantity of relevant underlying research (include reference sources)

All speaker write-ups MUST be e-mailed to your group leaders in a Word document. (Group leaders – Word counts the number of words in the document for you, thus there is no need to manually count yourself.) Speaker write-ups in any other form (ex. hand-written, etc.) will not be accepted.

Please note that copying material from a website without attribution for your speaker write-up constitutes cheating under The Code of Conduct for the McCombs School of Business. Further, even with full attribution, a cut/paste job does not constitute your work for this purpose.

All team leaders of the group must meet and assign one grade for the day for each undergraduate team member. Each undergraduate's daily grade is due to the course TA, Alex King, via e-mail by 11:59 PM the day of class (one email per group). I highly recommend meeting right after class, determining these grades, and send them to Alex King before you leave the classroom. Students that are caught sleeping, laying their head down, texting, talking, not paying attention, or acting unprofessional during a speaker should receive a zero for that day. Graduate students will be graded based on attendance only for this category. Please list your attendance on your daily email to Alex King, the course TA.

Significant Impressions paper and discussion (10%)

You are to complete a two-page Significant Impressions paper of the three most impressionable aspects of your volunteer experience that is due at the beginning of class on your registered class day – April 16th, 17th or 18th. Group leaders will facilitate a team discussion during our last class session. Following the team meetings, team members will make a brief presentation to the entire class summarizing the top two-to-four experiences among your team members.

At the conclusion of this class session you will hand-in your Significant Impressions paper to the team leaders for evaluation. The instructor will also evaluate this paper. This is your take-away from the volunteer experience so there are no right or wrong answers. At the same time, meaningful thought and effort should be put into your ideas. The evaluation you receive on this paper will be based on factors such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Thoroughness of your ideas. They may tie to cited research or our guest speaker's comments, but this is not necessary.
- Quality of grammatical expression and organization (use headings if useful).
- Your attendance in class that day and your participation in the group and class presentations

The Significant Impressions paper should:

- Be no longer than two pages (8.5" x 11"), double-spaced,
- Have one inch margins, and
- Use Times Roman 12 font.

Your Significant Impressions paper will be rated by your team leaders. The same 0-3 scale will be used: (Do not use half points)

- 2 = excellent
- 1 = satisfactory
- 0 = unsatisfactory, not turned in or turned in late

In order to earn all 10% for this component of your grade, your significant impressions paper grade must be 1 or higher. However, do not take this to mean there is no advantage to writing a paper that earns a grade of 2. At the end of the semester if you are on the borderline of a grade cutoff (ex. A and A-, A- and B+, etc.) a score of 2 on your Significant Impressions paper could very well be the deciding factor in your final grade.

GRADUATE STUDENTS. *The leadership role you are being asked to play in this activity is the following (you also must write a significant impressions paper too):*

1. *Group leaders will facilitate a discussion within their team addressing the team's experiences. Following this team meeting, designated member(s) from your team will take a few minutes to share with the entire class key experiences among your team members*
 2. *At the conclusion of class, undergraduate students will submit their Significant Impressions paper to the team leaders for evaluation by you on a numeric scale of 0-2 (use the grading standards as stated above.) All team leaders will evaluate the papers independently. Please clearly mark all team leader grades on the front page. All team leaders should also use different color pens to write comments throughout the paper. I anticipate the vast majority to be scores of 1, with only obvious outliers being 0's and 2's. Evaluations should be made based on the quality of insight and impression.*
 3. *Your evaluation of the students' Significant Impressions papers will be turned into the course TA, Alex King by noon on Monday, April 23 for evaluation. You need to keep these grades in your own semester gradebook.*
- At the conclusion of class, graduate students will submit their Significant Impressions paper to Alex King for grading.*

Instructor's discretionary evaluation (15%)

The instructor will rely upon all assessment inputs from team leaders and independent evaluations as indicated above and below. In the event the instructor has additional information, or assesses a student's performance differently than others, he maintains the right to exercise discretionary decision making when assigning final grades. Absent additional or contradictory insights, the instructor will allocate these discretionary points in a manner consistent with the overall evaluation for all activities. This grade category will be heavily influenced by your volunteering performance and what occurs in the tax centers (including how you represent the University of Texas).

Community Tax Center (CTC) site manager evaluations and completing volunteering hours (30%)

CTC Evolutions

Site managers will provide input to the instructor regarding **each student's**:

- Quality of work, attitude, professionalism, and punctuality. Unless instructed otherwise, talking or texting on cell phones is NOT permitted at ANY time when in the tax centers, even when you are not with a client. If you need to take or send an emergency call or text, please step outside briefly to do so.
- Effectiveness of CTC client interface and comportment, including adhering to the dress code below
- Quality of interaction with site colleagues, and did you bring the proper materials with you
- Proper dress – When you are at the Community Tax Center sites, you are not only representing the University of Texas and Foundation Communities, you will also be providing a customer service. Please dress appropriately when you show up to volunteer.
 - Acceptable dress consists of business casual, jeans, and UT t-shirts. Please note that the only t-shirts allowed are UT t-shirts. All other t-shirts are NOT allowed. Fraternity and sorority t-shirts are NOT considered UT t-shirts per this syllabus, and are thus NOT allowed.
 - Unacceptable dress: Non-UT t-shirts, fraternity or sorority t-shirts, shorts, yoga pants, leggings as pants, workout clothes, hats, pajamas and flip-flops. This is not necessarily a complete list.

Downtime in between clients or when client volume is slow should be spent asking your site manager which administrative tasks can be helped with or done. Downtime or idle time should NOT be spent studying for other classes, texting, using social media or viewing the internet on your phone or computer, etc.

Completing Volunteer Hours

Each undergraduate student must complete 55 hours of volunteer work as a tax preparer plus any bonus hours (discussed later in this syllabus) the student might have accrued. Graduate student requirements are discussed later in this syllabus.

Thesis paper (15% for undergraduates)

To earn a course grade of “B+”, “A-“, or “A” you must write a rigorous thesis paper pertaining to a speaker related topic, whether proposed formally or informally by the speaker, your team leaders, the instructor, or you. This paper is not required for a grade of “B” or below, but it is required for a grade above a “B.” The topic must be approved by your team leaders by Thursday, April 4th. The thesis paper is due at noon on Friday, April 27th in 4M.202. Thesis papers must also be uploaded to Canvas by noon on Friday, April 27th. The thesis paper should:

- Be no longer than 10 pages (8.5” x 11”), double-spaced, (not including exhibits and works cited)
- Be no shorter than 8 pages (8.5” x 11”), double-spaced,
- Have one inch margins,
- Use Times Roman 12 font type,
- Your thesis statement must be clearly stated at the end of your first paragraph.
- Use MLA citation format

Papers will be evaluated by your team leaders and by the instructor based on, but not limited to, the following:

- Thoroughness and credibility of research, authority, and citations,
- Relationship to guest speaker topics,
- Quality of arguments and conclusions,
- Quality of organization, and
- Quality of grammatical expression.

GRADUATE STUDENTS. *Your role with the thesis papers is to:*

- Approve topics.*
- Serve as a sounding board, advisor, and potential recommender of topics to your team members.*
- Provide the following evaluation:*
 - Rank each thesis paper. The best thesis paper should be ranked #1.*
 - Assign a letter grade (A-F; +/- may be used if you desire) to each thesis paper.*
- All team leaders will read all team members’ papers and clearly indicate their grade on the first page. Please use different color pens when making comments.*
- All graded papers must be submitted to class TA, Alex King, by noon on Friday May 3rd.*

Grading /Group Leadership (Graduate Only 35%)

This will include, but is not limited to:

- Accurately and timely sending me the daily grades by the deadline stated above
- Grading speaker write-ups appropriately and the quality of your evaluation of undergraduate thesis papers
- At the end of every class that has a group meeting you and your co-leader will turn in to me your lesson plan for that day. Lesson plans should be no longer than one page, double-spaced, have one inch margins, and use Times Roman 12 font. Handwritten lesson plans will not be accepted.
- Your completion of a rigorous thesis paper as described above **OR** completing an extra 8 hours of volunteer time.
- The quality of your role, if requested in students’ feedback on their thesis paper.

Important Notifications

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

Diversity and Inclusion

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed and that the diversity that students bring to this class can be comfortably expressed and be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit to all students. Please come to me at any time with any concerns.

Religious Holy Days

Per the UT Austin General Information Catalog, you must notify me "as far in advance as possible" (I expect at least 14 days advance written notice) of your pending absence due to the observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss an examination or other assignment in order to observe a religious holy day, and you notify me appropriately, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/attendance/>.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

In the Assignments section above, you can find specific guidance regarding individual and group work for each of the evaluation elements in this course.

The McCombs School of Business has no tolerance for acts of scholastic dishonesty. The responsibilities of both students and faculty with regard to scholastic dishonesty are described in detail in the BBA Program's Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty at <http://my.mcombs.utexas.edu/BBA/Code-of-Ethics>. By teaching this course, I have agreed to observe all faculty responsibilities described in that document. By remaining in this class, you agree to observe all student responsibilities described in that document. If the application of the Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty to this class or its assignments is unclear to you in any way, it is your responsibility to ask me for clarification. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, which could include failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University.

Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: copying work on tests or assignments, representing (copying) the work of another person as your own or allowing another person to represent your work as their own, collaborating without authorization with another student during an exam or in preparing academic work, using or having on your desk unauthorized material or aids to complete a quiz, group exercise, or exam (e.g., cheat sheets, solutions, programmable calculators, cell phones, etc.). You should refer to the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct> to access the official University policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty and more on what constitutes scholastic dishonesty.

Dishonesty harms other students, the integrity of the University, and the value of our academic brand, so policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. All acts of academic dishonesty receive significant penalties and are reported to Student Judicial Services and attach to your record. This record is consulted as part of application processes at UT (e.g., study abroad applications) and after (e.g., law school and MBA applications, which generally require you to provide access to this record). **IT'S NOT WORTH IT!**

Campus Safety

BCAL: For concerns about individual behavior, call the Behavior Concerns Advice Line: 512-232-5050.

BE SAFE: See campus safety information at <http://besafe.utexas.edu/safety-tips-apps>.

- Up-to-date information regarding university operation and emergency procedures can be found at: <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.
- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when an official announcement is made.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember, the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring evacuation help should inform the instructor in writing the first week of class.
- Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Privacy in Canvas

Information in Canvas is protected by your UTEID login. Please be aware that if I teach multiple sections of this course I will use a merged Canvas site for all sections. This will allow students in other sections to see that you are enrolled in the course and send you email from within Canvas. However, they will not actually learn your email address and no other personal data will be revealed through Canvas. If you have any concerns, please contact the ITS Help Desk at 512-475-9400 for help removing your name from the view of other students.