

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST  
ISENBERG SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ACCOUNTING PROGRAM  
FEDERAL TAX RESEARCH  
SCH-MGMT 652  
SPRING 2023 – SYLLABUS  
Prof. <PROF\_FULL\_NAME>, CPA, MST**

**Professor** <PROF\_LAST\_NAME> **contact info:**

**Isenberg School N374**

**Phone:** <PHONE>

**Email:** <PROF\_EMAIL> (I have 48 hours to respond to emails)

**Office Hours:** M & W 1:00 – 2:00 and Tuesday 11:00 – 2:00 or by appointment

**1. REQUIRED TEXT: Federal Tax Research, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition, Sawyers and Gill. ISBN: 9780357705933**

You can rent this book from the publisher or elsewhere for \$69.49 at

<https://www.cengage.com/c/federal-tax-research-12e-sawyers/9780357366387PF/>

We will also be using the online tax research platform of Bloomberg Tax (BNA). I will enroll you in BNA. You will be assigned a username and password for the website: <https://www.bloombergtax.com>.

**2. Access to the class site on Blackboard**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Students will have the opportunity to develop their tax research skills through practical exercises. The class will expose students to primary sources, including the Internal Revenue Code, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations and the Court Cases, with sample case studies and the use of research and practice tools used by many tax practitioners. Students will also learn how to communicate the results of their tax research through various methods used by professionals. We will use BNA Tax to research various tax issues throughout the semester. Professionals and CPA's use this research site in practice.

We will also look at current topics and news in tax. There will be discussion about current tax trends and items in the news. We will review the not-so recently passed tax legislation, The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 and other recently passed legislation.

Prerequisite: Sch Mgmt 736 Taxes and Business Decisions (may be waived in certain circumstances)

**COURSE GOAL:** Students will have an understanding of the role tax research plays in accounting firms, industry and with the IRS. Students will also understand the benefit and application of tax research applications and the role they play in tax research.

Students will partake in a tax research case that once complete will provide the student with a certificate in tax research issued from BNA Tax.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD AND COURSE INFORMATION:**

### **General:**

As you may know from your previous experiences, successful class discussions depend upon active, effective participation of the student. You must get involved and take the primary responsibility for your learning. It is my expectation that you will accept and maintain the ownership of the class discussions. Both the student and the faculty member must establish a commitment to the process. On the student side, each of you must be committed to the “4Ps”:

1. **Preparation** – If the student does not read and analyze the class materials and attempt to solve the assigned problems, the discussion will mean very little.
2. **Presence** – If a student is not present, she or he cannot learn and more important, cannot add her or his unique thoughts and insight to the discussion.
3. **Promptness** – Students who enter the classroom late disrupt the discussion and deprecate the decorum of the process.
4. **Participation** – Each student’s learning is best facilitated by regular participation. More importantly, the student has a responsibility to share his or her understanding and judgment with the class to advance the group’s collective skills and knowledge.

The faculty member also must commit to the process by: (1) careful and complete preparation for the classroom experience, (2) concern and attention to the student, and (3) striving to make the course a satisfying development experience.

My expectation is that each of you is a developing professional. As is the case in the workplace, each of you is ultimately responsible for your individual success. I am very interested and willing to facilitate this process both in the class as well as outside the class. Please communicate with me immediately, if you are having difficulty understanding the material or if you are having any issues that affect your ability to attend class and fully participate. Email is probably the best method. With a reasonable amount of effort, this course can be very enjoyable and thoroughly mastered.

### **BNA Tax Research Case:**

To gauge your comprehension of tax research with BNA Tax there will be a tax research case. The case will consist of many real-life situation that will require you to answer various questions presented to you. You will need to figure out the issues at hand and answer the questions in each situation. You will need to support your answers with primary sources from BNA Tax. You will use your tax research skills to do this. Satisfactory completion of the case will result in a Certificate in Tax Research issued by BNA Tax. BNA will grade the assignment to see if you earn the Tax Research certificate from BNA. I will then go through BNA’s grading and assign a grade to the assignment for this class.

**Tax Memo and Client Letter:**

Towards the end of the semester, you will be presented a tax issue that a client has brought to your attention that will need to be researched. You will be required to research the hypothetical tax problem and prepare a tax research memorandum and client letter communicating the issue at hand and the proper treatment of said issue(s). While the names and faces have been changed to protect client confidentiality, the facts will be based on a unique and very current client tax problem.

**Class Participation:**

Students are expected to participate in meaningful discussions in this class. There will be questions asked on discussion boards about current topics or research items that you will post about on the discussion board. I am looking for a meaningful post from you. A post that is a few sentences is not going to cut it. You will not get credit for these posts. An integral part of the learning process in any tax course is attempting to apply theory to practice.

**Homework:**

There will be homework assignments each class. We will generally alternate between weeks of assignments from the text and assignments from BNA. During the text week the homework assignments will be assigned from the text. Other weeks we will use BNA to complete the homework assignments. I will grade homework assignments for accuracy so you can see how well you did and where you need to improve. You will receive full credit for submitting the homework assignment in your final grade.

**Quizzes:**

Quizzes will be administered to ensure students have an understanding of the material that is covered in class. Quizzes will generally consist of open-ended questions that you will need to answer using BNA. Other quizzes will consist of preparing tax file memos or client letters. The more of these type of assignments that you prepare the better you will be at doing them.

**EVALUATIONS:** The following will be the examination and grading policy:

<b><u>GRADE</u></b>	<b><u>POINTS</u></b>	<b><u>METHOD</u></b>	<b><u>POINTS</u></b>
A	93 – 100	Tax Research Case	25%
A-	90 – 92	Tax Memo and Client Letter	25%
B+	86 – 89	Homework	20%
B	82 – 85	Participation	15%
B-	79 – 81	Quizzes	<u>15%</u>
C+	75 – 78		
C	70 – 74		
F	Below 70	TOTAL	<u>100%</u>

- Students are expected to understand and maintain the highest level of academic honesty consistent with the University of Massachusetts policy; academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.
- As you would in your professional life, please arrive on time and ready to work.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY:**

Academic integrity is an essential component of any learning community. I want you to be successful in this course and there are many opportunities for assistance. Achieving grades that do not represent your own work is not true success. Stress, lack of sleep, demands beyond being a student and completing assignments at the last minute can contribute to poor decision making. If you find yourself tempted to cross the line I encourage you to speak with me so we can strategize, discuss ways you can enhance your own learning experiences and truly make you a successful student.

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible.

Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent ([http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/)).

**AI is prohibited: This course assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any substantive portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and using artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT.**

## **DISABILITY STATEMENT:**

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. For further information, please visit Disability Services (<https://www.umass.edu/disability/>)

## **RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY STATEMENT:**

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and

benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Important note: Given the sensitive and challenging nature of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. It is critical that each class member show respect for all worldviews expressed in class. It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions, please be respectful of others' emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences, and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
2. Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. Notify me of the issue through another source such as your academic advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue.