

# **Tax Planning and Research**

**Accounting 5310**

**Spring, 2013**

**Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. to 9:20 p.m.**

**Classroom BLB 073**

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**Office Hours:**

**Mondays and Thursdays – 5:30-6:30**

**Wednesdays 6:00-6:30**

**or by appointment.**

## **Syllabus**

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES:**

A critical element to your tax training is the ability to distinguish and then evaluate the tax implications of *relevant* facts, determine the key tax issues (questions) and then address those issues through effective research. Your job will be to use your background and experience to resolve the issue(s) through an analysis of whatever data is available.

Research involves three major components. The first is the ability to focus on the key issues associated with the relevant facts. The second is the ability to determine which of the numerous primary and secondary authorities to use in researching the issue and coming to a conclusion. The third component involves your ability to communicate what you have researched coherently and concisely to the various parties interested in the conclusion(s). As a corollary to the above, the course will examine the processes for processing, reading and interpreting a tax law. As time allows, we will examine federal tax procedures and penalties in relation to research.

By the end of this class, the student should be able to perform the following tasks:

- Identify, locate, apply and interpret primary and secondary tax authority (including treatises as well as trade and scholarly publications) to determine the federal tax effects of particular business transactions.

- Provide appropriate citations to the primary and secondary sources of the tax law including the Internal Revenue Code, Treasury Regulations, court cases and other guidance published by the U.S. Treasury.
- Locate pertinent tax authority by performing electronic research in data bases such as RIA Checkpoint, BNA Tax Portfolios and Westlaw/LexisNexis.
- Provide proper written communication and documentation of the results of any tax research.
- Be able to orally communicate in an effective manner the results of any tax research and make client recommendations that are both practical and correct from a tax research standpoint.

**TEXTS:**

Required - Barbara H. Karlin, Tax Research 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall 2009).

Optional – May, Claire and May, Gordon, Effective Writing: A Handbook for Accountants 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall 2008).

**OTHER RESOURCES:**

Georgia State University M. Tax Writing Website: <http://www2.gsu.edu/~accerl/>  
IRS website: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

**GRADING:**

Writing skills – self-test	5%
Chapter problem assignments	20%
Mid term exam	10%
Case Studies	45%
Oral Presentation	10%
Final Exam	<u>10%</u>
	100%

Tax research is most effectively learned by practicing it in a hands-on environment. These assignments are geared towards assisting the student in the learning process.

Writing Skills – Self-Tests Each student is to complete the lessons on writing skills and the related self-tests. The lessons are on the Georgia State University Masters of Taxation website at: <http://www.gsu.edu/~accerl/> (~accerl, in lower case!). This takes 5 to 10 hours to complete, so start now!

Chapter problem assignments will introduce the student to the various types of tax authority in a step-by-step fashion. The problem assignments will need to be typed in 12 point font and will be discussed at the beginning of class per the schedule. If the student has not turned his/her chapter problem assignment by the time the class discussion begins, the student will receive a 0 for that assignment.

Mid term and Final exam will review concepts that have been discussed in previous lectures. The format will be announced prior to the exam.

Case Studies will be assigned from the textbook and will build upon each other. It is therefore essential that the student keep up with the work from week to week. Case Studies will need to be typed in 12 point font. These studies must be turned by the beginning of class on the assigned due date. If a case study is turned in after the first 30 minutes of class, there will be a 10% penalty based on the maximum number of points available. If the paper is not received via e-mail by midnight of the assigned due date, then there will be an additional 10 % penalty for each subsequent 24 hour period.

Group Project and Oral Presentation will take place during the last class period of the semester. Students will be assigned a group and a case study. Each group will have 20-30 minutes to present the results of their tax research. Your group members will have the opportunity to rate you as part of your grade for the group projects. ***NOTE: I reserve the right to lower an individual's grade for the group project or projects if there is creditable evidence that the individual is "freeloading" off of his group and is putting forth very little effort. This lack of professionalism can result in possibly the loss of a letter grade up to a zero for the assignment.***

Please note, collusion among groups for assignments will be construed as cheating. For each project, please attach a signed statement that the work submitted is solely your own and you have neither given nor received assistance. Projects without signed statements will not be graded. Attach the following signed statement to group projects: **The attached work submitted is solely our own and we have neither given nor received assistance. Participating members include...** List all members and their signatures. Attach the following signed statement to individual projects: **The attached work submitted is solely my own and I have neither given nor received assistance.**

### **GRADING SCALE:**

A = 100 - 90 %

B = 89.99 - 80 %

C = 79.99 - 70 %

D = 69.99 - 60 %

F = 59.99 points and below

The instructor reserves the right to place on the curve the final point totals before assigning the student's final grade in the class.

**ABSENCES BASED ON RELIGIOUS BELIEFS:**

A student who misses an examination, case study, exercise, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day will be given the opportunity to complete the work missed within 15 days following the due date of the assignment, test, or other project missed. To be eligible for such a make-up, the student must notify me in writing of classes scheduled on dates he or she will be absent to observe a religious holy day. Notification must be made within the first 15 (fifteen) class days through either a written correspondence, personally delivered, acknowledged and dated by me or written correspondence sent certified mail, return receipt requested to me. Failure to follow the rules provided above within the time frames listed will result in the absence being considered unexcused.

**EXAMS:**

- A. Each of the Exams is required for this course.
- B. When you take an Exam, the grade will be recorded and CANNOT be dropped.
- C. If you miss an Exam, a zero will be recorded.
- D. There are three circumstances in which a student may be permitted to take an exam at a different time:
  - 1. **DOCUMENTED MEDICAL REASON:** If you miss an Exam for **your Medical** reasons the following must occur: **you** (or your spouse or your parent) **must communicate with me within 18 (eighteen) hours of the missed Exam, and you must subsequently provide a written doctor's excuse.** The written doctor's excuse must include a telephone number at which I can reach the doctor's office to confirm the validity of the excuse. I will not inquire about private medical information, but rather time affirmation. **If** the doctor's written excuse and paperwork are in order **then** the student may take the exam at a time to be scheduled as soon as possible. Remember that any UNT student may visit the UNT Health Center for medical assistance.
  - 2. **UNT TRAVEL:** If a student misses one of the scheduled exams because of official UNT travel, then the student may take the exam at a time to be scheduled as soon as possible. Documentation from a UNT official must be provided in advance of the absence.
  - 3. **DEATH OF IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBER:** If a student misses one of the scheduled exams because of the death of an immediate family member then the student may take the exam at a time to be scheduled as soon as possible. Please inform me within **48 hours** of the missed exam. The student will be required to

submit the obituary notice or other appropriate documentation to support this claim.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The following are **NOT** on the list of three items noted: car trouble, vacation travel, travel scheduled by someone other than yourself, weddings, work responsibilities, illness of spouse or child.

- E. The Exam dates are listed in the attached course schedule. Please be advised that the dates are subject to change. Any change will be announced in class.
- F. I do not discuss any aspect or content of exams (either past or future) by phone or email. Nor do I discuss the grading of the exams by phone or email. Please visit me during office hours.**

**EXAM RULES:**

- A. Cellphones must be turned off and put away. You may not place them on your desk during the exam. If your cellphone rings during an exam, you will be docked a full letter grade.
- B. Photo ID: Bring UNT ID or Driver's License with you to class every day. As you turn in your exam I will check your ID.
- C. No books or notes can be used during exams. Please do not bring these items with you to the exam. All material you bring in with you must be placed at the front of the room.
- D. I reserve the right to seat and/or re-seat any student before and/or during the exam.
- E. At the end of exams when I call "Time" I will collect all outstanding exams and leave the room. If you do not relinquish your exam upon my departure from the room, a non-replaceable zero (0) will be recorded for your exam grade.
- F. During the exam you should keep your exam pages covered to discourage others from looking at your work.
- G. There is a potential, but not a guarantee that any given exam may be curved based on class performance. You may review your exams and ask for an explanation of the answer; however, if you contest the grading of the questions, your test may be regraded with an actual grade awarded for all your tests both prior and remaining. You will then give up any benefit of a curve for that exam and any past and future exams for this course.

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [www.unt.edu/csrr](http://www.unt.edu/csrr)

### **CHEATING:**

Because honesty and integrity are such an important part of an accountant's attributes, you should be aware that failure to perform within the bounds of these ethical standards is sufficient grounds for discontinuance in this course. Students who violate University rules on scholastic honesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including failure in this course and possible dismissal from the University. The entire UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline can be found in the *UNT Policy Manual*, [Vol. III, #18. 1.11](#), and in the [Student Handbook](#). Please also be aware of the University's new academic integrity policy which may be found at:

<http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>

**WITHDRAWALS:** University policy relative to withdrawals will be followed. The drop policies are important to your academic career, and it is your responsibility to discuss the ramifications of dropping a class with your **advisor**. I do not have sufficient knowledge of your program to advise you of the impact of dropping a class. Be especially cognizant of the last drop day and obtain any appropriate signatures, approvals, etc. in advance of the deadlines. You may obtain information about dropping classes from your academic advisor or the Registrar's office.

**Friday, 2/22/2013:** Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the semester with a grade of W for courses that the student is not passing.

**Tuesday, 3/26/2013:** Last day for a student to drop a course with the consent of the instructor; W or WF may be assigned.

### **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA):**

If you are a student who requires accommodations in compliance with the ADA, please consult with me during the **first week** of the semester. As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodation" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. UNT's Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) is responsible for verifying and implementing accommodations to ensure equal opportunity in all programs and activities. Any disclosure by a student of their need for accommodation is recognized to be extremely sensitive, and all relevant conversations and other communications will be kept protected and confidential and disclosed only on a need-to-know basis. Your responsibility is to inform me of the existence (but not the nature) of the disability during the first week of the semester **and** to provide me with the ODA's **written documentation** authorizing the specific accommodation. The ODA will advise me of the accommodation to be made, and I will follow their directions. If part of your accommodation requires your taking the Exams at the ODA, you must complete and present the appropriate paperwork on a timely basis.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH THE PROFESSOR:**

- A. I will be readily available during office hours barring any exigent emergencies or faculty meetings. If you have other classes during my office hours, please let me know and we will attempt to make alternative arrangements.

- B. When leaving me a phone message, please speak clearly and s-l-o-w-l-y. Identify yourself, the course and section in which you are enrolled and your phone number. I return phone calls during my scheduled office hours. I do not return phone calls in the evenings or on weekends. So, if you need to communicate with me at times other than my posted office hours please use email.
- C. If you email me, do not assume that I received your email unless I confirm receipt. Unless otherwise indicated, I will reply to emails Monday-Friday.
- D. If you have essential questions or have issues to discuss, please do not leave it to the last minute. It may not be possible for me to pick up your voicemail or e-mail in time to respond to you in time.
- E. Do **not** email me using Blackboard Vista. Rather email me at:  
Allison.mcleod@unt.edu

**CANCELLATION OF CLASSES:**

In the event that weather or other conditions are such that normal campus operations could be impeded, the administration of UNT will determine whether classes will be canceled or delayed. Such information will be provided to the local broadcast media. I will post an announcement at Blackboard Vista.

**YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS:**

Please make certain to update your email address within the UNT system. **YOU MUST CHECK THIS E-MAIL ADDRESS FREQUENTLY!** I send important announcements including final exam locations through the UNT/Blackboard system and you are responsible for any information that is sent through this medium. The fact that you did not read your e-mail from me will not excuse any missed exams or assignments.

**YOUR UNT PASSWORD:**

Please make certain that you reset the options within the UNT computer system so that you are alerted when it is time to change your password. Otherwise you may be disallowed from using the UNT system, but you won't know why. Set the system so that you will be alerted to change your password.

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

Please read the materials before class. Schedule subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class. It is the student's responsibility to obtain this information from a classmate.

DATE	ASSIGNMENT
January 17	Introduction; Chapter 1 lecture.

January 24	Go over Chapter 1 Problems; Chapter 2 lecture ; assignment of 1 <sup>st</sup> Case Study; library overview and RIA training (tentative). Writing assessment due.
January 31	Go over Chapter 2 problems; Chapter 3 lecture; Discuss research progress.
February 7	Go over Chapter 3 problems; Chapter 4 lecture; Research time; 1 <sup>st</sup> Case Study due (Individual). Assign 2 <sup>nd</sup> Case Study (individual).
February 14	Go over Chapter 4 problems; Chapter 5 lecture; Discuss research progress.
February 21	Mid-term Exam (Chapter 1-4).
February 28	2nd Case Study due; Go over Chapter 5 problems; Chapter 6 lecture.
March 7	Financial Accounting Research Training (Dr. L. Sun); Assignment of 3rd Case Study (Financial Accounting project).
March 14	SPRING BREAK
March 21	Financial Accounting Research Training (Dr. L. Sun).
March 28	3rd Case Study (Financial Accounting project) due. Go over Chapter 6 problems; Chapter 7 lecture; Assign 4 <sup>th</sup> case study(group).
April 4	Chapter 8 lecture; Discuss Case Study progress.
April 11	Extra credit quiz; 4 <sup>th</sup> Case Study Due; Discuss Case Study; assign 5th Case Study (Group); Group meetings.
April 18	Extra credit quiz; Discuss Case Study; Group meetings.
April 25	Extra credit quiz; 5 <sup>th</sup> Case study due; assignment of 6 <sup>th</sup> Case study (Group) – Oral presentations.
May 2	6 <sup>th</sup> Case study – Oral presentations due.
May 9	FINAL EXAM – 6:30-9:20 (Chapter 5-8 and other research topics)

\*\*Please note that this schedule is subject to change.