ACC 380K.22 – Accounting/Auditing Research Design and Evaluation
Fall 2014 (02930)
Course Syllabus
(as of August 28, 2014)

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Course Web Page: via Blackboard
Class Time: T Th 8:00 – 9:30 a.m. (02930)
Class Location: CBA 4.332
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Course History, Objectives, and Overview:

This course was first offered for MA students at Iowa in 1972 and it has been adapted for PhD students at Iowa, Michigan, and Texas plus more than twenty-five Scholarly Consortia. It is now tailored for advanced Texas MPAs because of the importance of “evidence-based practice” for mandated financial reporting in the U.S. and global capital markets. The core of the course is constant, but its form has changed with national regulation and global capital markets.

Our purpose is to help you evaluate (as well as successfully formulate and conduct) scholarly research in financial reporting. We will apply the philosophy of science and scientific method to contemporary accounting and auditing problems. The course should be of immediate benefit by sharpening your skills of criticism of scholarly work of others and later by helping you avoid common pitfalls in developing your own research.

Questions you will be better able to answer by the end of the course include:

What is auditing (or accounting) research, anyway, and why should it matter to anyone?
How can I know if a particular researcher’s stated conclusions should be believed/trusted?
How can I find answers to life’s important A&A questions -- and be believed by others?
What A&A methods are best for my own firm?
What should be the nature and content of A&A standards -- in the public’s interest?

We will approach answering these questions by building your intuitive understanding of broad research concepts via three paragraphs and five boxes (the “3/5 format”) and then applying both to structure and analyze particular financial reporting problem solutions.
We’ll start Session 2 with a “blitz” of the entire course in 59 minutes --- you won’t get all of it, but you’ll get much of it, and will know where we are going. We’ll spend Session 3 with a more detailed application of the paragraphs and boxes to a single research paper and a problem.

The class is intended to be interactive because many current auditing issues are not straightforward and require synthesis of many differing views. Our present enrollment (24) is larger than anticipated, but still small enough for active participation and individual attention. Let’s explore what you believe will be most beneficial to you – so speak up about what you want.

**Readings, Preparation, and Assignments:**

Our readings are from two sources. One is “The Research Methods Knowledge Base” (3rd ed) by Trochim and Donnelly, available at the Co-op or online at AtomicDog.com. This set of materials provides a compact and very helpful synthesis of research concepts and methods. The other source is the scholarly, practice, and standards/regulatory literature. These readings will be free and placed on Blackboard under ACC 380K.22. You can add some as you wish.

After next week, we will spend most Tuesdays elaborating the “3x5 format” using research concepts detailed in Trochim and Donnelly. Most Thursdays will be spent applying the concepts to particular readings and topics in the current financial reporting environment, both U.S. and global. You will be responsible for some presentations of the research or proposals of others and also at least one original proposals of your own.

Our readings are the primary basis for discussions and are central to our two short exams covering terminology and concepts. Other assignments include research paper analyses and eight to ten shorter assignments.

*To prepare for class:* I suggest that you set aside a fixed block of time for reading *all* of the assignments—and then manage your time so that you get the main idea or thrust of each reading. What is being said, who is saying it, and what might be their motivation? You should quickly scan all readings for the essentials – try to get 80% of the ideas in 15% of the time required. You can come back later to get the details – after you know which ideas and concepts are most important for you!

For research papers, you *may* read every paper thoroughly and analyze it in detail. *Or,* you can scan the Abstract, Introduction, and Conclusion to identify the paper’s essence by adapting it to the 3x5 format and evaluate the specific incremental contribution of the work. If that is not enough to answer your questions, then read what you need for understanding. I usually find that scanning is not only cheaper, but is often more effective – because focusing on details may hide the essence of the research.

Primary readings will be available at least one week prior to class, but current developments may not be available until twenty-four hours before class—because some of our readings have not yet been written. In addition, a search engine such as *Google* will be essential for some assignments. All Power Point slides will be made available before or after class depending on topics covered.
Attendance:

Because of the advanced and interactive nature of our lessons, class attendance is especially important. Absences may be excused only if you notify me prior to class (emergencies excepted). Again, due to the nature of our course, participation during class is also important if you want full credit for your attendance.

Course Requirements and Grade:

There is no fixed curve for this advanced course. Course grades will be determined approximately as follows, but with special consideration for the third element:

- In-Class Contribution and short daily assignments: 1/3
- Two short Examinations: 1/3
- Research Proposal outlines and current practice issues analyses: 1/3

The in-class contribution assessment is based on active participation in class discussion of assigned questions and presentation of course material to the class.

McCombs MPA policies:

Academic Dishonesty:
The McCombs School of Business has no tolerance for acts of scholastic dishonesty. Such acts damage the reputation of the school and the degree and demean the honest efforts of the majority of students. 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://www.mccombs.utexas.edu/BBA/Code-of-Ethics.aspx.

By teaching this course, I have agreed to observe the faculty responsibilities described in that document. By enrolling in this class, you have agreed to observe the student responsibilities described in that document. If the application of that Policy Statement to this class and its assignments is unclear 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, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. You should refer to the Student Judicial Services website at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/ or the General Information Catalog to access the official University policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty as well as further elaboration on what constitutes scholastic dishonesty.

Classroom Professionalism Policy:
The highest professional standards are expected of all members of the McCombs community. The MPA classroom experience is enhanced when:
- Students arrive on time.
- Students minimize unscheduled personal breaks.
- Students are fully prepared for each class.
• Students respect the views and opinions of their colleagues.
• Laptops are closed and put away.
• Phones and wireless devices are turned off.

University Policy on Class Websites (i.e., Blackboard) and Student Privacy:

Password-protected class sites will be available for all accredited courses taught at The University. Syllabi, handouts, assignments and other resources are types of information that may be available within these sites. Site activities could include exchanging e-mail, engaging in class discussions and chats, and exchanging files. In addition, class e-mail rosters will be a component of the sites. Students who do not want their names included in these electronic class rosters must restrict their directory information in the Office of the Registrar, Main Building, Room 1. For information on restricting directory information see: http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi02-03/app/appc09.html.

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://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Campus Safety

Please note the following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety:

• Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
• Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
• Students requiring assistance in evacuation should inform the instructor in writing during the first week of class.
• In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
• 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.
• Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050
• Further information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: http://www.utexas.edu/emergency.