

Course Syllabus: Problems in Financial Reporting

Professor Brian Bushee

Fall 2010

Course Overview

This course is designed to increase your ability to extract and interpret information in financial statements. We will focus on using the disclosures in a firm's annual or quarterly report to determine its accounting policy for a particular type of transaction and to determine how that policy choice both affects its primary financial statements and reflects the underlying economics of the firm. This course should also improve your ability to use financial statements as part of an overall assessment of the firm's strategy and the potential rewards and risks of dealing with the firm (as an investor, creditor, supplier, employee, etc.).

An important objective of the course is to provide experience in doing research to solve problems in real financial statements. Much like the real world, you will be expected to solve problems with minimal guidance on exactly how to proceed. Rather, you will be expected to use resources such as the textbook, notes from your intro class, and examples on the course WebCafé to learn the fundamental mechanics so that you can apply them to the problem at hand. Thus, this course assumes a solid understanding of basic financial accounting (i.e., ACCT 620/621).

Course Materials

WebCafé: This site includes all cases (except HBS cases), practice problems, lecture slides, exam material, and any optional notes and articles on each topic. Note that no material will be distributed in class. Please download anything you need prior to class.

Study.Net: The two HBS cases used in the course are available on Study.Net.

Textbook (optional): GAAP 2010: Handbook of Policies and Procedures by Siegel, Levine, Quershi, and Shim, CCH. This is not a traditional textbook, but rather an excellent summary of accounting rules and procedures grouped by topic. I do not expect you to read this cover-to-cover. Rather, this book should serve as a supplemental reference source when the webCafé material does not provide sufficient background or explanations.

Preparation for class: Class sessions will focus on case discussions in which we will address both mechanical accounting issues and important analytical and strategic issues. I expect you to use the resources on the WebCafé and/or textbook to attempt the cases prior to class. I will not provide lectures that show you how to work problems and then expect you to work the same problems. Instead, I want to use class time to help you understand difficult issues in solving the case and to highlight the important takeaways from the case. The bottom line is that, if you do not adequately prepare for class, you will have trouble following the discussion.

Course Registration Policies

Due to the historically heavy demand for the course, I have instituted the following course registration policies:

- After the auction ends, only students registered for the course will be allowed to attend class. No auditing or “sitting-in” will be permitted.
- I will not approve any drop requests after the fifth class (September 22). If you hold a seat on this date, you must take the course for a letter grade.
- I will only approve out-of-auction section swaps if someone is willing to counterswap into the section. Both parties will receive the out-of-auction penalties noted on the [Grad Division website](#). Otherwise, section swaps must be resolved through the auction. Note that the registrar will not allow students to be registered for multiple courses at the same time.

Grading

Your course grade will be determined as follows:

Class Participation (Individual)	20%
Cases (5 out of 8) (Group)	15%
Group Project (Group)	30%
<u>Take-home Exam (Individual)</u>	<u>35%</u>
Total	100%

Class participation: I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the cases for that day. I will call on students that volunteer to participate and try to avoid cold calling. After each class, I award each student up to three points based on the quality on their class participation that day. I give points for anything that positively contributes to the class discussion, such as an attempt to reason through a problem (including “wrong” answers), a pertinent question, or a relevant fact from the case. There is no bonus for quantity of comments in a class. *Please note that if you do not speak in class at all during the term, 20% of your final grade will be a zero, making it difficult to get an A in the class.*

Group formation: Please form groups of 4 to 5 students before the 3rd day of class. Students who have trouble finding a group will be assigned to one by me. Members of the group can be registered in any of the three sections of my course. Once your group is finalized, please sign up on the WebCafé as an “A”, “B”, or “C” group, which determines your case assignments.

Cases: Please submit answers to 5 of the 8 cases marked with your group's letter in the schedule that follows. I will award each submission up to three points based on effort and completeness, rather than on accuracy, so make sure you attempt to answer all questions. Your grade will be based on your 5 highest case grades: you can submit more than 5 of the required cases, and have the lowest grades dropped, or you can choose which 5 cases to submit.

Cases must be submitted to the Assignment Submissions subfolder in your Team Folder on WebCafé prior to 12:00 pm on the day of the class. Late assignments will receive a grade reduction. Submit only one write-up per group, and include the names of all group members and the sections of the course in which each member is registered. *Making use of suggested case*

solutions from prior years or copying the case write-up of anyone outside your group will constitute cheating and could result in all group members receiving a grade of F for the course.

Group project: Please submit the group project to the Assignment Submissions subfolder on the WebCafé by **11:00 pm on Monday, November 8**. The project assignment can be found on the WebCafé.

Take-home exam: A take-home exam will be posted to the WebCafé by **9:00 am on Wednesday, December 15**. You will have up to six days to work on the exam, which must be handed in by **4:00 pm on Tuesday, December, 21**. You must submit the exam electronically.

You must work on the take-home exam individually. You are not permitted to discuss the exam with anyone else, including other students, former students, and people in the real world. However, you are permitted to use any written resource, such as your notes, the textbook, information on the company you find on the web, etc. More details on this exam will be provided as the time gets closer.

F policy: In the past, students have received failing grades for the course. If you score below 50% of the total points for either the entire course or the final exam, I am likely to give you a grade of F. There are two types of students that have failed the class in the past: (1) those who did poorly in ACCT 620/621 and (2) those who do not put any time in the course. If think you are or will be in either category, I strongly recommend that you do not take this class.

In addition, I have failed students in the past for cheating on the take-home exam. I reserve the right to fail students for any actions I consider to be cheating, as I discussed above. Please read these sections carefully and let me know if you have any questions.

Grading disputes: All grading disputes must be appealed within one week following the return of the assignment or exam. To have a case or exam re-graded, please submit the original case or exam (with no modifications) and a written description of your disagreement with the initial grade. I reserve the right to review the entire case or exam; thus your grade could go up *or* down. For group work, every member of the group must agree to the request for regrade.


Office Hours (1317 SH-DH): By appointment. Please contact me via e-mail (bushee@wharton.upenn.edu) to schedule office visits.

ACCT 742: Case Summary and Hand-in Schedule Fall 2010



Date	Topic	Case	Groups Hand-in
W 09/08	Course Introduction	Enron	
M 09/13	Ratio Analysis	Blue Earth Technology	
W 09/15	Earnings Quality: Nonrecurring Items	FenceAlign	
M 09/20	Earnings Quality: EPS, Pro Forma	Intuit	
W 09/22	Cash Flow Quality	Upsilon Capital Partners	A
M 09/27	Revenue Recognition: Gross vs. Net	Merck	B
W 09/29	Expense Recognition: Matching	Pre-Paid Legal	C
M 10/04	Deferred Taxes	General Motors	A
W 10/06	Asset Securitization	Oakwood Homes	B
M 10/11	No Class: Fall Break		
W 10/13	No Class: Fall Break		
M 10/18	Subprime Issues	New Century Financial	C
W 10/20	Intangibles and Goodwill	The Shaw Group	A
M 10/25	Long-Lived Assets: International	Land Securities Group	B
W 10/27	Fair Value	Morgan Stanley	C
M 11/01	Long-term Debt: Market vs. Book	Royal Bank of Scotland	A
W 11/03	Repos and Leverage	Lehman Brothers	B
M 11/08	No class: Group projects due	Submit by 11:00 PM	
W 11/10	Contingent Liabilities	Intel	C
M 11/15	Leases: Lessees and Lessors	IBM	A
W 11/17	Pensions and OPEB	CBS	B
M 11/22	Stock-Based Compensation	Cisco	C
W 11/24	Intercompany Investments	Coca-cola	A
M 11/29	Variable Interest Entities	Citigroup	B
W 12/01	Foreign Currency Translation	Eye Pass Worldwide	C
M 12/06	Derivatives	Ford	ABC
W 12/08	Interim Reporting	Fairmont Global	ABC
W 12/15	Take-home exam begins	Posted on webCafé	
T 12/21	Take-home exam due	Submit by 4:00 PM	

ACCT 742: Topic and Assignment Schedule Fall 2010

Note: GAAP = GAAP 2010 Handbook

1	W	09/08	Course Introduction “Enron, intelligence, and the perils of too much information,” by M. Gladwell
2	M	09/13	Ratio Analysis Case: Blue Earth Technology
3	W	09/15	Earnings Quality: Nonrecurring Items Case: FenceAlign GAAP: Chapter 9; Chapter 8, p. 8.02; Chapter 1, p. 1.09
4	M	09/20	Earnings Quality: EPS, Pro Forma Case: Intuit Practice Problem: Evanston Precision Systems GAAP: Chapter 1, pp. 1.54-1.64
5	W	09/22	Cash Flow Quality Case: Upsilon Capital Partners Practice Problem: Psilos Corp. GAAP: Chapter 6
6	M	09/27	Revenue Recognition: Gross vs. Net Case: Merck
7	W	09/29	Expense Recognition: Matching Case: Pre-paid Legal Practice Problem: Zeeland
8	M	10/04	Deferred Taxes Case: General Motors Practice Problems: Caterpillar, NOL GAAP: Chapter 15
9	W	10/06	Asset Securitization Case: Oakwood Homes Practice Problem: Berger Finance GAAP: Chapter 17, pp. 17.24-17.29
	M	10/11	No Class: Fall Break

☺	W	10/13	No Class: Fall Break
10	M	10/18	Subprime Issues Case: New Century Financial GAAP: Chapter 3, pp. 3.13-3.16, Chapter 17, pp. 17.24-17.29
11	W	10/20	Intangibles and Goodwill Case: The Shaw Group Practice Problem: Wieland Group GAAP: Chapter 11; Chapter 3, pp. 3.71-3.79; Chapter 2, pp. 2.13-2.16
12	M	10/25	Long-Lived Assets: International Differences Case: Land Securities Group Practice Problem: Riedl Realty GAAP: Chapter 3, pp. 3.34-3.40; Chapter 18
13	W	10/27	Fair Value Case: Morgan Stanley Practice Problem: Essig Bancorp GAAP: Chapter 10; Chapter 4, pp. 4.09-4.20
14	M	11/01	Long-term Debt: Market vs. Book Case: Royal Bank of Scotland Practice Problem: Metro-Golden-Mayer GAAP: Chapter 4; Chapter 10
15	W	11/03	Repos and Leverage Case: Lehman Brothers Practice Problem: Three Banks GAAP: Chapter 17, pp. 17.24-17.29
☠	M	11/08	No class: GROUP PROJECTS DUE by 11:00 PM
16	W	11/10	Contingent Liabilities Case: Intel Practice Problem: V.G. Miller Corp. GAAP: Chapter 4, pp. 4.21-4.25; Chapter 8, pp. 8.12-8.15
17	M	11/15	Leases: Lessee and Lessor Accounting Case: IBM Practice Problem: Wal-Mart, Xerxes GAAP: Chapter 13

18	W	11/17	Pensions and OPEB Case: CBS Practice Problem: Smith Inc. GAAP: Chapter 14
19	M	11/22	Stock-Based Compensation Case: Cisco Practice Problems: Fairfax, Gibbon GAAP: Chapter 1, pp. 1.13-1.33
20	W	11/24	Intercompany Investments Case: Coca-Cola Practice Problems: P & S, General Electric GAAP: Chapter 12, pp. 12.01-12.26
21	M	11/29	Variable Interest Entities Case: Citigroup Practice Problem: Synthetic Ventures GAAP: Chapter 12, pp. 12.26-12.29
22	W	12/01	Foreign Currency Translation Case: Eye Pass Worldwide Practice Problem: Hyperaño Co. GAAP: Chapter 16
23	M	12/06	Derivatives Case: Ford Practice Problem: Klossner Candy GAAP: Chapter 17, pp. 17.01-17.24; Chapter 8, pp. 8.18-8.19
24	W	12/08	Interim Reporting / Course wrap-up Case: Fairmont Global GAAP: Chapter 7, pp. 7.01-7.07
	W	12/15	Take-home exam begins, posted on webCafé by 9:00 am
	T	12/21	TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE at 4:00 PM