

**ACCOUNTING 731**  
**Tax Research**  
**Fall 2007**

**Instructor:** Dr. Raquel Meyer Alexander  
**Meeting Time & Days:** T,TH 4:00-5:15  
**Office:** SU 315F  
**Phone:** 864-7318  
**Office Hours:** TTH 3:00-4:30 and by appointment. Emails are always welcome.  
**Text:** West's Federal Tax Research, Sixth Edition

**Course Objectives:**

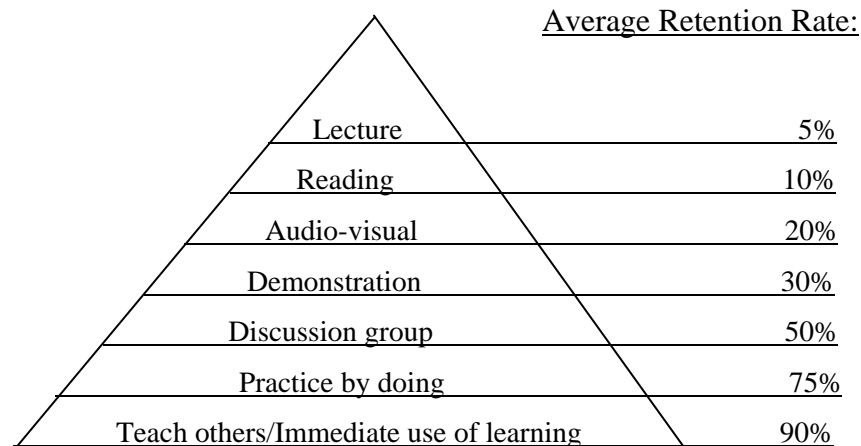
This course is an introduction to tax research methodologies. After completing this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Locate and provide citations to tax authorities such as Internal Revenue Code, U.S. Treasury Regulations, and judicial decisions using professional tax services,
- 2) Analyze tax issues and prepare a tax memorandum in good form, and
- 3) Identify professional standards from Treasury Circular 230 and Statements of Standards of Tax Practice.

Tax Research Methodology is the single most important graduate tax class you will take. This course is the foundation for both your future tax classes and your future career. Successful tax professionals spend most of their time performing tax research/consulting tasks and thus, tax research is an essential skill. However, tax research is quite difficult to learn and even more difficult to master. As with all applied learning courses, the only way to learn tax research is by doing. Therefore, you will receive learning opportunities through case summaries, research projects, homework assignments that are as important as class lecture. The semester will culminate with a service learning project in which you provide tax assistance to a university organization.

This course is designed to move students to a deeper understanding of tax issues, tax research skills and writing skills. Because research shows that lecture and reading have a low retention rate, you will be asked to perform other activities with a greater level of interaction. These activities will include demonstration through class presentations, practice by doing through research projects and homeworks, and teaching others through the service project.

The following figure identifies the average retention rate for various types of learning.



Source: National Training Laboratories-Bethel, Maine

Service learning is similar to an internship in that both are at the base of the pyramid with the highest retention rates. However, internships primarily benefit the student while service learning through volunteering benefits the community as much, if not more than the student volunteer. Through this project, you will have the opportunity to shape another person's financial future and provide real value to an underserved population.

### **Grading:**

Research Cases (Group and Individual)	30 %
Presentation	10 %
Term Paper	15 %
Participation	10%
Homework	15 %
Quizzes	20%

### **Cases:**

Research cases demonstrate the mastery and synthesis of several important skills. Completing a research case includes identifying the tax issue, finding and analyzing relevant authorities and communicating the results.

The research case will be evaluated based on tax content. Are the relevant tax issues identified? Do the solutions discuss the relevant authorities? Are the recommendations analyzed?

The research case will also be evaluated based upon style. The solution must be in the correct form (i.e., file memorandum or client letter). The content must be clear, concise, and accurate. The tone must be professional and formal. Finally, the document must not include grammatical errors or incomplete citations.

Research cases must be typed, stapled on the left corner and include a cover sheet with your name and the case name.

Cases are due by **9:00 a.m.** on the class discussion date indicated on the attached schedule. There are **no allowances** made for late work except extreme circumstances (death in the family, etc.).

The instructor will offer only the following research assistance, beginning on the third day following assignment of the research problem:

- Clarification of facts
- Identification of issues

No drafts will be reviewed and no analysis will be endorsed prior to the submission date.

Each student is responsible for the research on the case assigned as well as the completion of the research memo. Stated another way, each individual case is not a team project. It is an individual project, and I am looking for the product of your work. Accordingly, I request that you please include the statement, "This is my own work," on the cover page of each case solution and sign it. Any access of any student's solution or research path is considered unauthorized assistance and is a violation of the academic dishonesty policy. Any group discussion or work on individual cases is also considered a violation of the academic dishonesty policy. All violations will be treated in accordance with University guidelines. Students that **give** or receive help are treated the same under the University guidelines. The *minimum* penalty for academic dishonesty is an "F" in the course. The instructor will not make offers in compromise.

### **Class Preparation:**

Performance in this (and all classes) corresponds with preparation. Therefore, participation grades and quizzes are used to provide an incentive to keep current with class discussions. Each student is expected to attend all classes and positively contribute to case and class discussions.

Participation grade is also affected by your ability to provide feedback and develop review/manager skills. As such, each student will be asked to provide positive, constructive feedback to other students throughout class. To help develop these skills, each feedback session will start with one specific, positive comment. Vague comments such as "this was good," or "the presentation was awesome" are not sufficient. The feedback should include at least one area that needs improvement before it can be sent to the client. Finally, the feedback opportunity will conclude with at least one more specific, positive comment. Note that feedback need not be limited to two positive comments. Two serves only as the minimum.

Quizzes may be given at the beginning or end of class. No late quizzes or other assignments will be accepted for any reason.

**Homework Assignments:**

Homework assignments are designed to facilitate preparation and encourage discussion. Assignments are planned in conjunction with the daily class topics, and thus, each assignment should be prepared before class. Homework assignments will be collected at the beginning of the class period on the dates indicated on the attached schedule. Because we will review the assignments in class, please bring a second copy for your notes. I will not return homework assignments. Grades assigned based on effort, completeness, and accuracy. No late assignments will be accepted for any reason.

**Paper:**

The final project for this course will be a 10 page paper. The topic can be of your choosing but you must submit a proposed topic to Dr. Alexander via email by 10/31/06. The paper must be double-spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman with one (1) inch margins. The paper is due November 29 at 9am. You will present a summary of your research during one of the last three class periods. Sign-up will occur on a first-come basis on Blackboard.

**Presentations:**

In addition to the final paper presentation, you will be responsible for leading the class discussion on tax cases and other assignments at least once during the semester. You may also be asked to present as part of the class service learning project. Your grade will be based on both content and form.

**Honor Code:**

The School of Business Assembly has adopted an Honor System proposed by its students and faculty to promote academic integrity and has enacted an Honor Code. As a student in a School of Business class, you will be protected by and expected to conduct yourself in accordance with this system. For a complete description of the system see the School of Business Website (select *Student Services* and then, *Student Toolbox* and then, *Business School Honor Code*, which is located under the heading *Policies and Procedures*). The Honor Code is required reading for students in all business courses.

**Other:**

Students with disabilities who wish to request special accommodations are encouraged to contact me during office hours or by appointment. All other students should expect to receive consistent treatment.

**Copyright:**

Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. On request, the instructor will usually grant permission for students to audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not

be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

**Classroom Environment:**

The scope and content of the material included in this course are defined by the instructor in consultation with the responsible academic unit. While the orderly exchange of ideas, including questions and discussions prompted by lectures, discussion sessions and laboratories, is viewed as a normal part of the educational environment, the instructor has the right to limit the scope and duration of these interactions. Students who engage in disruptive behavior, including persistent refusal to observe boundaries defined by the instructor regarding inappropriate talking, discussions, and questions in the classroom or laboratory may be subject to discipline for non-academic misconduct for disruption of teaching or academic misconduct, as defined in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities (CSRR), Article 22, Section C, and the University Senate Rules and Regulations, Section 2.4.6. Article 22 of CSRR also defines potential sanctions for these types of infractions.