Case Studies in Accounting Practice
Spring 2013

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Office Hours
SSE 3445
W 1300-1500; and by appointment

COURSE GOAL AND DESCRIPTION
The goal of this course is to synthesize theory and application to prepare students for the
dynamics of real-world professional accounting practice: diagnosing problems and issues (often
in the face of significant uncertainty), analyzing relevant information, making responsible and
ethical decisions, and reporting decision results. The course uses a combination of books, high
quality articles, and cases to examine important and timely accounting and business issues
providing students the opportunity to hone their decision making skills.

PREREQUISITES
Advanced to Candidacy in the MSA Program.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)
The goals of the MSA Program are that students should be able to:

SLO 1  Compare, contrast, interpret, or criticize accounting and business decisions and
information using professional business communication.
SLO 2  Actively participate in team decision making.
SLO 3  Apply ethical judgment and professional standards in analyzing situations and
formulating accounting and business decisions.
SLO 4  Use relevant research tools and academic/professional literature to analyze or take a
position in accounting and business situations.
SLO 5  Address unstructured problems in the areas of accounting information systems,
financial reporting, or taxation.
SLO 6  Identify and discuss the significance of diversity and cultural differences in the global
business environment.

This course contributes to these goals through the following learning outcome statements:

LOS 1  Apply critical analytical thinking to identify and frame business problems for analysis.
LOS 2  Describe cultural, ethical, psychological, and regulatory factors that affect decision
making in accounting practice.
LOS 3  Recommend appropriate actions to address real-world problems in accounting practice.
LOS 4  Write persuasively to communicate decision results.
LOS 5  Apply oral communication skills to high quality professional presentations and group
discussions.
COURSE STRATEGY
This course has two interrelated components to achieve the learning outcomes.

- **Theory and Research.** A key part of this course is developing an understanding of important theories and research evidence relevant to accounting and business decision making. Readings for each class session are selected from high quality research journals and other publications to provide theoretical background and empirical evidence related to the topics examined in the course.

- **Case Analysis.** Diagnosis, decision making, and implementation are action skills of increasing importance to accounting professionals. The cases and class discussions in this course provide opportunities to sharpen these skills, marshal evidence, craft persuasive arguments, and develop courage to take risks and make decisions based on limited information.

COURSE MATERIALS

**Required materials**
- ACCTG 790 Case Packet (purchase at: https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/16671529)
- Articles list in the class session maps (available from SDSU research databases)

**Optional Resources**
Below is a set of highly recommended (and very popular) books that address decision making.


Below is a set of research-oriented books on decision making:

**GRADING AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES**

You earn points toward your grade in this class based on your performance on the items listed below. Keep track of your ongoing performance and please come and see me if you have any questions or concerns. Although letter grades maybe important to some of you in the short-run, the true measure of success in this course is what you learn that you can apply to your future as accounting professionals. Thus, I encourage you to invest in yourself, work hard, and do the best you can on all elements of the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Grade %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Contributions</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Analyses</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Case Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Exam 1</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Exam 2</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Standard letter grades (including pluses/minuses) will assigned. I have no intention of curving grades in this course. There will be NO make-up assignments. You must attend class to turn in assignments, unless you have a legitimate reason (discussed in advance) supported by valid documentation.

**Class Contributions.** Your contribution to class discussions is an invaluable part of your learning experience, and the experiences of the other students in the class. Contributions include responses to queries posed during our discussions, questions that you ask related to our discussions, or presentations of case analysis conclusions. Contributions are evaluated each class session using a 3-point scale (0=none, 1=satisfactory, 2=meaningful).

**Case Analyses.** Cases are the basis for our class discussions each week. The reason for having you submit a case analysis each week is to hone your decision making and writing skills. All case analyses are reviewed. I will provide you detailed feedback and scores on four (4) case analyses (randomly selected) over the semester using the *Case Analysis Rubric*; you will be able to drop the lowest of these scores from your final grade calculation. I will “check-in” on the rest (i.e., perform a brief review). See Appendix A for assignment instructions.

**Team Case Presentation.** You will present one of the assigned cases for the class with a group of no more than four people. The goal of this presentation is to provide you an opportunity to summarize the case information and prepare a high quality professional presentation. Presentations are evaluated based on: (1) quality of the presentation using the *Presentation Evaluation Rubric*, and (2) contribution to the final product based on the *Team Case Peer Evaluation*. See Appendix B for assignment instructions.

**Case Examinations.** There are two case exams during the semester. Each will require you to analyze a novel business case (i.e., one not already covered) and prepare a written case analysis. Exams are closed-note and will be completed in-class during the scheduled class session. Exams are evaluated using the *Case Analysis Rubric*. 
COURSE STRUCTURE AND PEDAGOGY
Each class session covers articles and/or cases focused on a common theme. Below is the format and general timeline for each class session:

- Discuss current news and overview of the session topic: 15 minutes
  - This time is used to introduce the topic and discuss relevant real-world business situations and current events that make understanding the topic important.
- Directed class discussion: 45 minutes
  - Class discussion is systematically directed to synthesize the session readings.
- Break: 15 minutes
- Directed class discussion (continued): 75 minutes
  - Presentation and class discussion of the case for the session.
- Synergy—what we learned from the class session as a whole: 10 minutes

HOW TO MAKE THIS COURSE A SUCCESS
Below are three recommendations for making this class a success (for all of us):

- **Preparation.** Read the assigned articles and cases; but equally important, spend time thinking about what you read, formulating questions, challenging assumptions, considering alternative viewpoints, and developing recommendations.
- **Participation.** You must be present to share your unique insights about the topic at hand. Ask questions about things that don’t make sense to you. Share your related experiences. Do not be overly concerned with whether you have the “correct” answers or “great” questions. You and your classmates will often learn more from thoughtful questions and responses that are related to the discussions as we work together to sharpen your understanding.
- **Enthusiasm.** Analysis and decision making are essential to professional accounting practice. The more you invest in this course, the more you will get out of this course and position yourself for success in business.

RESPONSIBILITIES

**Your responsibilities** are to prepare diligently and help develop the intellectual content of the course by contributing to class discussions and expanding on your classmates’ contributions. You are encouraged to seek help from a friend or visit me during my scheduled office hours if you have any questions about the course material. Meetings during my office hours will be much more productive if you come well prepared. Whenever possible, try to write out your questions and, preferably, map them into the learning outcomes for the course. In addition, be familiar with the definitions and notation related to a topic even if you are having conceptual difficulties. Most importantly, don’t tell me that you understand something when you are still perplexed.

**My responsibilities** are to prepare diligently, to guide the class discussion, to ensure an equitable distribution of “air time” (the time students speak in class) so that you will perceive yourself as an equity holder in the learning process. I will also provide you with a structured organization for learning and presenting, but that is flexible enough to encourage improvisation in the learning process.
CONDUCT

Professional conduct is built upon the idea of mutual respect. Such conduct includes:

- **Attending the class.** Each class benefits from the attendance and participation of all students. You are responsible for all material covered and announcements made during classes missed. Late arrivals are disruptive and show disrespect to those who are on time.

- **Minimizing disruptions.** Cell phones should be turned off during class. You should not leave and re-enter the class and avoid engaging in side conversations during class.

- **Focusing on the class.** While you may take notes on laptops, do not use laptop computers or hand-held devices for other tasks while in class. Activities such as Internet surfing, updating Facebook, and answering email are very impolite and disruptive to me and your classmates.

- **Respect.** You should act respectfully toward all class participants. This means giving people time to explain their thoughts and arguments, encouraging others to participate in class, and being professional when hearing or responding to a comment you do not agree with.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The *SDSU Standards for Student Conduct* ([http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html](http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html)) states that unacceptable student behavior includes *cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty that are intended to gain unfair academic advantage*. Unprofessional conduct adversely impacts your fellow students, the accounting faculty, the School of Accountancy, SDSU, and the accounting profession. The Lamden School takes academic honesty very seriously and vigorously enforces University policy related to any such infractions. Thus, any student suspected of academic dishonesty will be reported to the SDSU Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities; if found responsible for academic dishonesty, the student will **receive an F in ACCTG 790**.

The following examples illustrate how the *SDSU Standards for Student Conduct* apply to this course:

- **Exams are individual work only.** No collaboration of any kind is allowed.

- Collaboration is permissible and encouraged on any group assignments. However, the *final write-up* of cases or other assignments should be exclusively your own. For example, after discussing a case in your study (or other) group, you should *form your own opinion and submit your own analysis*. Also, do not contact prior ACCTG 790 students to get insight on a particular case. Do you own work.

- **Cases are set in time and for some it may be possible to research the actual outcomes. This activity is strongly discouraged because it undermines the learning opportunities from the course. We will talk in class about what happened subsequent to the case setting.**

- **All course materials, especially copyrighted cases, are for your use only. It is a violation of the student conduct policy to share these materials with other class members or others outside the class, especially future ACCTG 790 students.**

- **If at any time you are unclear about the any aspect of your responsibilities pertaining to the student conduct policy, please contact me rather than make assumptions.**
MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

All scores and some class materials will be posted on the Blackboard course site ([http://blackboard.sdsu.edu](http://blackboard.sdsu.edu)). Work for this class requires the use of word processing (e.g., MS Word), spreadsheet (e.g., MS Excel), and Internet (e.g., Firefox) software applications. Also, you must have your own email account and check it on a regular basis. Make sure that you have the correct email address listed in Blackboard. All communications will be sent to the email address listed in Blackboard.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Any student with documented special needs or circumstances should notify me at the beginning of the semester so the necessary accommodations can be arranged. In addition, please feel free to meet with me during office hours or by appointment to discuss any issues or concerns you may have regarding the class.

CHANGES

You are expected to check your email and the Blackboard site for any changes to the course. If you are not in class when changes to the course or schedule are made, you are still responsible for complying with the changes. Changes can be made any time at the discretion of the instructor.

CLASS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Sessiona</th>
<th>Assignmentb</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23-Jan</td>
<td>Session 1: Decision Making: Problem Framing and Objectives</td>
<td>Resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-Jan</td>
<td>Session 2: Decision Making: Alternatives, Consequences, Tradeoffs, and Traps</td>
<td>Job Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Feb</td>
<td>Session 3: Decision Making and Case Analysis</td>
<td>CA Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>13-Feb</td>
<td>Session 4: Subprime Crisis and Fair Value Accounting</td>
<td>CA 1, CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Feb</td>
<td>Session 5: Lehman Brothers and Repo 105</td>
<td>CA 2, CP</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-Feb</td>
<td>Session 6: Audit Standards and Practice in China</td>
<td>CA 3, CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Mar</td>
<td>Session 7: Nonfinancial Performance Measurement</td>
<td>CA 4, CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Mar</td>
<td>Session 8: Integrated Reporting and Assurance</td>
<td>CA 5, CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td><strong>Case Exam 1</strong></td>
<td>Exam 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Mar</td>
<td>Session 9: Negotiation Analysis</td>
<td>CA 6, CP</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-Apr</td>
<td>Spring Break (No class)</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-Apr</td>
<td>Session 10: Tax Policy and Planning</td>
<td>CA 7, CP</td>
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<tr>
<td>17-Apr</td>
<td>Session 11: Analysis and Interpretation of Deferred Tax Assets for Banks</td>
<td>CA 8, CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Apr</td>
<td>Session 12: IPO Process and Equity Valuation (pre- and post-IPO)</td>
<td>CA 9, CP</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-May</td>
<td><strong>Case Exam 2</strong></td>
<td>Exam 2</td>
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*a See the Session Maps in this syllabus for the reading and case assignments.

*b CA = Case Analysis; CP = Case Presentation