

WEST LA COLLEGE

***PLEASE READ EVERYTHING IN THIS SYLLABUS CAREFULLY. Please do not enroll in this class unless you are 100% certain you can comply with these class rules.***

Course Accounting 15- Tax Accounting I (Online)  
Section 8003  
Semester Fall 2015  
Time and Place ONLINE  
Instructor Ming Lu  
E-Mail Address Please **ONLY** use **ETUDES NG Private Messages to e-mail me after you gain access to ETUDES NG.** To do this :  
1. Go to Discussion and Private Messages.  
2. Then click on Private Messages.  
I usually respond within 48 hrs.

I do have a personal e-mail account—[wlacacct2@yahoo.com](mailto:wlacacct2@yahoo.com). However, you should **ONLY** use this to submit your group projects (see below for more details). Once class starts, I rarely check this e-mail account so do not expect me to respond to your e-mail anytime soon if you send me an e-mail to that address.

If the question relates to something that the entire class might like to know or if you think someone else in the class might also be able answer, then click on Discussion and Private Messages and post it under the discussion titled Questions. People in the class should feel free to respond to their classmates' questions. I will respond to the question usually within 48 hours if no one has answered the question or if the question was answered incorrectly by another student.

Office Hours ONLINE  
Text Prentice Hall's Federal Taxation 2016 Comprehensive  
by Rupert, Pope, and Anderson

**You must purchase the exact edition of the textbook. This is non-negotiable.** Students have asked if they can use an older edition. You cannot because I assign homework problems based on the new edition. Also, I may refer to specific examples from your textbook. Clearly, if you have a different edition, you won't be able to do the correct practice problems or follow along with the examples. Also, tax law constantly changes so we always need to use a new book each year.

I **HIGHLY** recommend you just buy the textbook from the college bookstore (instead of from another book vendor) for the following reasons:

1. So you know absolutely for sure you have right book.
2. If you buy the book via an outside vendor (i.e. Amazon.com), you run the risk of not getting your book shipped to you in time, or you may get the wrong one. If that happens, you will have to accept the consequences of your actions. You will not receive any special accommodations.
3. The bookstore sells the textbook in a customized bundle package along with MyAccountingLab (a special access code to do hw online). I believe the ISBN for the custom bundle pack is ISBN: **978-0-13-420642-4.**

If you wish to buy the textbook by itself, the ISBN is **978-0134104379**. However, you will then also have to purchase MyAccountingLab separately from the publisher online because you will need it in order to submit your homework online. I was told by the

publisher rep that MyAccountingLab (without the e-textbook) costs around \$75. Another option would be to purchase MyAccountingLab with the e-textbook which costs around \$130. However, keep in mind these prices might change.

Prerequisite Accounting 1 or equivalent with a grade of “C” or better  
If you have not taken Acct 1, you need to drop this class and take that class first.

Required Materials

1. Textbook—if you don’t have this, don’t take this class
2. Microsoft Office 2003 or higher version
3. Access to a reliable computer and internet connection. If your computer crashes or internet fails on an exam, you are personally responsible (see more details under Online Midterms & Online Final Exam)

Other Requirements

1. Familiarity with ETUDES NG
2. Ability to use e-mail and the internet
3. Daily access to the internet. You should log in at least once every 2 days (7 days a week).
4. Since this is an online course, students must be able to mostly learn on their own as well as be motivated to study on their own
5. You must commit a MINIMUM of 9 solid hours of self study per chapter.

## I. Online Lectures

These notes are posted under the Modules tab in ETUDES NG. There are 2 sets of notes for each chapter:

### a. Lecture Notes

These notes are presented in Power Point format. Ideally, you would read the book, lecture notes, and Instructor Comments. However, if you are tight on time, I would recommend you read the book and Instructor Comments (see below) and skip the Lecture Notes.

### b. Instructor Comments

You are probably alarmed by the quantity of material the textbook covers and why I even chose this it. Realize there aren’t that many introductory taxation textbooks out on the market. All of them are about the same price and are really expensive. They are all about the same level in terms of reader friendliness. I chose this book because it is most comprehensive book in terms of material coverage and has excellent examples so you can use it to look up all sorts of tax issues. Back when I was getting my Masters in Taxation degree, some of my classmates used this book as a reference to look up and help clarify material covered in our advanced taxation courses! Even my friends in the tax profession sometimes use this book as a “cliff notes” reference!

Unfortunately, the down side is because it is so comprehensive, students who are taking tax for the first time will be overwhelmed if you try to fully understand every single page of your book. This textbook covers more material than what is on the taxation portion of the CPA exam. Believe it or not, if you were to read and fully understand every page in this textbook, you would know almost everything covered in a Masters in Taxations degree!

Thus, I wrote my Instructor Comments notes to compliment the textbook. You should read these notes as you are reading your textbook. Basically, I comment on which areas of the textbook you should focus more of your studying time on. Aside from the instructor notes, your assigned hw problems are also geared more directly to the topics I want you to understand more fully.

## II. Grading Breakout

Exam (1st highest)	100	34.48%
Exam (2nd highest)	100	34.48%

Exam (see below)	0	0.00%
Tax Memo (Group Project)	25	8.62%
Tax Return (Group Project)	25	8.62%
Syllabus Quiz	10	3.45%
Homework (see below for more details)	30	10.34%
Total	290	100%

Your letter grade will be assigned based upon the following percentages:

90% or more.....A
80-89%.....B
70-79% .....C
60-69%.....D
Less than 60%....F

At the end of the class, if you are 1 point off from getting the next grade letter (89, 79, or 69), I will do you a favor and just give you that point. This is for 2 reasons:

1. I use a series of Excel formulas to calculate your overall class grade. I bump up your grade to account for any rounding I may use in my formulas
2. Though it is highly unlikely, I may make a minor mistake in your grading. This grade bump is to make up for a mistake just in case.

However, just because I am doing this, please do not ask me to bump up your grade if you are 2 points off (meaning those students who make an 88, 78, or 68).

### Online Midterms & Online Final Exam

I give students 3 exams (2 midterms and 1 final exam). All my exams will be online so you don't have to worry about coming to campus.

1. Test dates are posted on the calendar. For each exam, you are allotted 3 days. You can take the exam anytime during the 3 day period. Please look at the calendar at the start of the semester. **IF YOU REALIZE THESE DAYS DO NOT WORK FOR YOU, PLEASE DO NOT EVEN ENROLL IN THE CLASS.**
2. All your exams will be timed. However, unlike other online accounting classes that I teach, I do give students a little more time than normal on taxation exams. I mentioned before that this book and class covers a lot of material. To make it more fair to students, I give students a reasonable amount of time to look up answers to questions in their textbook. Even so, my tests do have a strict time limit. Its best you treat this online class like a regular class and study ahead of time for exams. Basically, if you are not familiar with the material and are looking at the book and notes for the first time while taking the exam, you will run out of time and do poorly.

You will have 3 hours to take each exam. The exam will be 25 multiple choice questions worth 4pts each. If you run out of time before you submit the exam, you get a 0. **NO EXCUSES WILL BE ACCEPTED.** Therefore, I recommend you submit your exam 5 minutes before the time expires.

Also, since my exams are timed, you should not try to cut corners by trying to read the book/my notes at the same time you are taking the test. You will never be able to finish on time. It's best you treat this online class like a regular class and study in advance. **Each exam will close at 11:00pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> date.** If you wait until 10:15pm to take the test and it closes, then you will get a 0. Lastly, I may have programmed each exam to accept late submissions so I can see the time people actually submitted the exam. Even if the computer allows you to submit after 11pm of the last day, I will still give you a 0. A submission that is late by even 1 minute

(i.e. 11:01pm) is considered late and equal to a 0. Bottom line, don't procrastinate and don't wait until the end to take the exam.

3. Exams are open book and open notes, but not open friend or neighbor—meaning you can't work with others.

4. You are allowed access into the exam 1 time. That means if you click to get in, you cannot re-enter the exam again. Unfortunately, I cannot (even if I wanted to) reset student exams if you “accidentally” enter an exam. So if you mess up, you get a 0. Therefore, my advice to you is to **NOT EVEN CLICK ON THE Assignments, Tests & Surveys tab** until the moment you actually want to take the exam.

5. If you want to use my class notes, I suggest you first print them out before you take the exam. That way you can have them in front of you for reference. If you try to jump around between screens, you might accidentally exit the exam. In that case, your exam will be adversely affected.

6. There are no make-up exams since you can use any time during the 3 allotted days to take your test. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> day should really be the “make-up” day in case you are sick. So you should always aim to take the exam on the 1st day in case something happens.

7. Each exam is randomly generated from a computer database with lots of questions. Although students will each have differently generated tests, the level of difficulty will generally be the same based on the programming.

8. This has rarely happened, but a student might have his/her computer/internet crash in the middle of the exam. Note, you can still go back in. However, the clock on the ETUDES server still keeps on running. Thus, if you previously already used 30 minutes on the exam and it takes 5 minutes to log back in, ETUDES will claim you have already spent 35 minutes on the exam. Unfortunately, if you crash or accidentally exit out of ETUDES with only a couple of minutes left, probably won't be able to get back in because your time will have expired. Most computer crashes are not related to ETUDES, but rather to a student's own computer or internet connection. That is why I have in my class requirements above that students must have “Access to a reliable computer and internet connection.”

9. After you take your exam, you will not see your finalized grade posted (which includes “flex points” mentioned below) until 1-2 days after third testing date. I will post an announcement when the scores are finalized. Prior to my announcement, whatever score you see in your grade book may not be your finalized score.

10. After you see your finalized exam score, you will see your exam questions along with the answers to exam questions you answered correctly. You will not be able to see the correct answers to the exam questions you answered incorrectly. The reason I do this is to get students to go back and rework their exam questions to figure out their mistakes. If you still absolutely cannot figure out why you missed a couple of exam questions, you can e-mail me up to 3 exam questions via ETUDES Private Messages. Each student's exam is randomly generated. So you need to e-mail me the exact questions you are inquiring about.

**PLEASE BE AWARE YOU CANNOT E-MAIL ME MORE THAN 3 QUESTIONS YOU MISSED. Also, you will not be allowed to discuss your exams with other students. If you find this to be unacceptable, please do not enroll in this course to begin with because I will not change this policy.** Realize if you absolutely cannot figure the answers to more than 3 exam questions even after the exam is over, you probably have not been studying hard enough for the class. You need to go back and seriously review your chapter materials again. My former students have all complied with this policy.

## **When it comes to exams, I will do you all 2 favors:**

### **1. FAVOR #1**

Again, you will have 3 exams. You should really take all of these exams. However, I will allow you to drop 1 exam grade to account for any unexpected events that may come up (i.e. you have a computer, internet, or ETUDES issue, you accidentally exit out of the system and can't get back in, you get sick for more than 3 days, you have a family emergency, worked related issues, personal problems, or anything else that is beyond your control).

If it just so happens, that you did well on your 2 midterm exams, then you can luck out by not taking the final exam. If you choose to and are able to take all 3 exams, I will count your 2 highest exam scores (as shown in the grading breakout).

### **2. FAVOR #2**

For each exam, I will give everyone 4 extra points. These are called "flex points." These points are meant to account for if you have an exam question that is

- a. Vague or poorly written
- b. Programmed incorrectly
- c. Graded incorrectly due to a computer glitch
- d. Any other kind of error on my part

In most cases, your exam questions should be fine. So if you ever have an exam where you have more than 4 points worth of "bad" test questions, please do not ask me for additional points because on the next exam you will still get 4 flex points even if there are no "bad" questions. If you think about it, you are really getting 8 flex points from the 2 highest exams that count towards your overall grade. It is very unlikely anyone will have 8 points worth of "bad" questions over 2 of your highest exams.

Please note that if you do catch "bad" exam questions, you are more than welcome to let me know by sending me an ETUDES Private Message so I can investigate it. It's just that I won't add back any points because I am already giving you all these flex points.

### Tax Memo (Group Project)

The primary purpose of this assignment is to help students learn to do tax research, write a tax memo, and work with others via distance communication. I will let you know more about this later in the course. I will also assign your groups later in the course. Groups will be assigned based on class performance. You will have the same group members for both the tax memo and tax return projects.

### Tax Return (Group Project)

The primary purpose of this assignment is to help students learn to do a simple tax return and work with others via distance communication. I will let you know more about this later in the course. Groups will be assigned based on class performance. You will have the same group members for both the tax memo and tax return projects.

### Homework

It is VERY important that you spend a good amount of time working on problems from the textbook consistently on a weekly basis. Accounting is all about repetition and practice. Some students run out of time on exams, because they are too slow. That's because they did not spend enough time working on problems for practice. Thus, spending a great deal of time working on problems is the key to doing well on the exams and mastering accounting. My past students who made A's all stated that they spent a good of their time doing problems for practice.

### A. Accessing MyAccountingLab

Homework must be completed and submitted via MyAccountingLab. On the first day of class, I will post information in my class announcements area on how to register for MyAccountingLab. If you bought your book via the new bundle package at the WLAC bookstore, you can use that MyAccountingLab access code that was included in the bundle. Otherwise, when register, there will option for you to purchase either the MyAccountingLab without e-textbook or MyAccountingLab without e-textbook.

### B. Completing HW in MyAccountingLab

Please note in the class calendar the due dates and times for the required hw assignments for each chapter. Please note that hw is due before 11pm. Late submission of hw (even by 1 minute) always equals a 0-- regardless of the reason. Please do not ever e-mail me asking for a hw extension, makeup, or to give you partial credit for late hw. Thus, to insure you get your hw in on time and to account for any unexpected situations, I highly recommend you always complete and submit your hw in advance. Do not attempt to work on or submit your hw a few minutes before the 11pm deadline because will grade could be adversely affected.

### C. How Homework is Scored

Each of the 10 hw assignments will be worth 3 pts for a total of 30 possible points for this course. In reality, everyone should be aiming to get 100% on all the assigned hw. However, because I assign a different number of hw problems for each chapter in MyAccountingLab, the total points for each chapter will vary. Thus, I plan to score your hw in this manner...

MyAccountingLab auto grades the hw and you should see how you did on your hw no later than after the hw due date/time. As long as you get 75% of the total possible points for that chapter, I will give you 3 pts for the hw assignment. If you get less than 75% of the total possible points, you will get a 0 for the assignment.

Here is an example. Peter works on Ch. 14 hw which has 5 problems worth a total of 5 pts. His hw is partially correct and MyAccountingLab gives him 4 pts. What I will eventually do is record 3 pts for his Ch. 14 hw in my ETUDES gradebook, because he got more than 75% of his hw correct ( $4/5 = 80\%$ ). Unfortunately, if Peter only earned 2 points in MyAccountingLab, I eventually would record 0 pts for his Ch. 14 hw in my ETUDES gradebook.

I will periodically transfer the scores from MyAccountingLab into ETUDES after each exam date. For example, Ch. 1-7 scores will be transferred over after Midterm 1.

There is another reason I am counting hw that is 75% or more complete as 100% complete. That is to account for the possibility that there might be some minor issues or bugs with MyAccountingLab.

D. When it comes to hw, I provide students the following accommodations/favors:

#### **FAVOR #1**

A few of you might delay in getting your textbook or MyAccountingLab access code during the first week of class. Also, you may have added late or there may other issues that may hinder you during the 1st week of class. Therefore, I will not count the first hw assignment (Ch. 1 HW). So you really now only have 13 graded hw assignments. If you did do your 1st hw assignment that is great, but I cannot let you use it to make up for another missed assignment later on.

#### **FAVOR #2**

I realize on rare occasions:

- Something might come up to prevent you from completing your hw on time (i.e. illness, work issues, personal issues, etc.)
- You might turn it in late by a few minutes
- You just accidentally forgot to submit it

- d. There may be some sort of computer, internet, or MyAccountingLab malfunction that prevented you from submitting your hw or prevented the grade from being recorded accurately
- e. You might not be happy with the grading system for that chapter
- f. Anything else that is beyond your control that I did not mention above

Therefore, I will do you all a favor and allow students to miss 3 hw assignments (besides the one I mentioned above for Favor #1)—meaning I will just grade 10 out of your 13 hw assignments (other than the 1st hw). If you submit more than 10 hw assignments on time, then I will drop your 3 lowest scores. Even though I allow you to miss 3 hw submissions, I HIGHLY recommend you seriously spend time doing all the problems for practice. That is the only way you can learn and do well on your exams.

## E. LISTING OF HW PROBLEMS FOR EACH CHAPTER

### Ch. 1: An Introduction to Taxation

33, 39, 41, 44, & 48

### Ch. 2: Determination of Tax

Ch. 29, 35, 39, & 50

### Ch. 3: Gross Income: Inclusions

38, 43, 47, & 50

### Ch. 4: Gross Income: Exclusions

7, 34, 35, 39, 40, 42, & 43

### Ch. 5: Property Transaction: Capital Gains and Losses

34, 36, 38, 44, 45, & 48

### Ch. 6: Deductions and Losses

33, 34, 35, 38, 45 & 53

### Ch. 7: Itemized Deductions

35, 37, 40, 46, 50, 53, 56, & 57

### Ch. 8: Losses and Bad Debts

42, 48, 49, & 56

### Ch. 9: Employee Expenses and Deferred Compensation

49, 50, 53, 55, 57, 62, 63, 65, 70, 72

### Ch. 10: Depreciation, Cost Recovery, Amortization, and Depletion

27, 28, 29, & 32

### Ch. 11: Accounting Periods and Methods

1, 3, 37

### Ch. 12: Property Transaction: Nontaxable Exchanges

26, 29, 32, 35, 40, 43 & 45

Ch. 13: Property Transaction: Section 1231 and Recapture  
32, 33, 35, 41, & 49

Ch. 14: Special Tax Computation Methods, Tax Credits, and Payments of Tax  
42, 46, 50, 52, & 59

### Logins to Etudes

You should log into ETUDES AT LEAST once every 2 days (7 days a week) to see if there are any new announcements, postings, assignments, updates, etc. You are responsible for all announcements that I may make—so you must stick to at least logging in every other day. If you miss something because you haven't been logging in every other day, you will not be given any special accommodations. **Also, I reserve the right to drop anyone in this class at any time if you do not actively log in every 2 days—particularly during the first week of the semester.**

In the past, there have been cases of fraud and other student abuse taking place in online classes. For example, there have been students who enrolled in an online class purely to get the units to qualify to get financial aid money, but had no intention of actually learning the course material. Because of this, I reserve the right to drop anyone from the course who is not substantively participating in the online coursework throughout the semester. Substantive participation means you are logging into the course periodically, consistently making a good faith effort in completing your homework assignments, and making a good faith effort in taking your quizzes/exams.

### Syllabus Quiz

I give this quiz at the start of the semester to test to see if you read this syllabus in detail. Accounting is all about being detail oriented. You MUST take the syllabus quiz to test to see if your computer is configured properly to take exams in Etudes. If something is wrong, I can work with you to help fix the computer configuration. **If you do not take the syllabus quiz and your computer configuration turns out not to be set properly when you take your first exam, your grade will be adversely affected.**

### Online Class Participation/Discussion Board

Some online professors require students, as an assignment, to post messages in the discussion board each week. However, I do not require my students to do this because I know many of you work full and have family obligations. I know your time is limited. Thus, with the time you do have, I really want you to spend it:

1. Reading and rereading your book
2. Reading and rereading my notes
3. Doing and redoing homework problems for practice

Students can only master tax accounting if they focus on the above items. Based on my teaching experience, for accounting classes, having students make postings does not help student learn the material better compared to actually doing problems on pencil and paper. Again, because many of you are very busy and have a limited amount of time, you are much better off using this time to study. As you can see, I do have a discussion board and areas where you can post messages if you want. It's just that I will not grade you on this.

Students who post inappropriate messages in the discussion board section or send inappropriate e-mails will have points deducted or will be dropped from the course.

### Extra Credit

I do not like to give out extra credit because if you really studied this class, it should be fairly manageable. So I recommend you just focus your exams, group projects, and turning your assignments in on time to improve your class grade. I have had students who did poorly on exams early on later ask me for large amounts extra credit to boost their scores. The answers from me will always be “no.” If you are doing that poorly on exams, it means you do not know the material. I cannot allow you to pass the class if you don’t fully understand the material. That is why I almost never give extra credit.

### III. Academic Honor Code

This college assumes that students will pursue their studies with integrity and honesty; however, when students are caught cheating or plagiarizing, a process is followed that may result in severe consequences. Please refer to the college catalog for the expanded explanation of this process, as it will vigorously be implemented should this conduct occur in work related to this class. **BASICALLY, DO NOT CHEAT!**

### IV. Dropping the class

If you decide to drop the course during the semester, you must do the following:

1. Let me know with a brief e-mail via ETUDES Private Messages.
2. Officially drop yourself with the school’s admissions and records office. If you do not do this properly, you will get an F in the class. Remember, it is still your own responsibility to drop yourself properly from the class with the school.

### V. Learning Disability

Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disabled Students Programs and Services located in HRLC 119, phone number 310-287-4450 as soon as possible to better ensure such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Therefore, if you know or feel you have a medical learning disability, you need to do the following:

1. Contact the school learning disability center to address immediately at the beginning of the course AND
2. Let me know at the start of the class about your situation

The center has a formal process of diagnosing and evaluating your disability. If you qualify, the center will then contact me about the situation and recommend certain accommodations for you.

### VI. Late Adds

Student should sign up for the class before the first day of class. Anyone who adds the class on the first day of class or after the first day of class is considered to be a late add and is personally responsible for all announcements, assignments and points missed. That means if you wish to add the class late and an assignment due date has passed, you will just get a 0 and cannot make it up.

### VII. Comment About Tax Classes

When it comes to my tax courses, I want to make things clear about some items at the start of class.

1. This is an introductory course. We will cover a variety of topics related to individual taxation. However, since this is only a 3 unit course, we will just cover the basics but not go into too much depth. It is impossible to go in depth for every single topic in this book, because this book covers everything in a Masters in Taxation degree which takes 1-2 years! I know there may be 1-2 people in the class are superstars or people who are already working as tax professionals. If you are such a person and want to learn lots of material in great detail, you need to enroll in a tax class in a masters program. Again, I structured this class for "regular" students who are taking introductory tax for the first time.

2. This class is NOT about how to fill out tax returns--although I will allow you to work on a tax return assignment. This is an educational class that will teach students to understand tax concepts. You need to understand how taxes work before you can be able to work on tax returns. For the most part, we will be learning tax from an academic perspective. If you just want to learn how to complete tax returns and fill out forms, you should take tax classes from H&R Block. The website is

<http://www.hrblock.com/corporate/income-tax-course/index.html>

3. For those students who are taking this class for the CPA exam, my tests are not as hard as the CPA exam tax questions. But if you study hard, you should know the material well enough to do well on the individual tax portion of the CPA exam. Even so, I recommend you take a CPA review course in addition to this course before you take the CPA exam.

4. Although I encourage people to e-mail me questions, please do not e-mail me questions that are beyond the scope of this course. Remember, this is a simple introductory academic course. I had 1-2 students in the past ask me complex questions that required research on my part. They basically did this because the questions related to their work or personal taxes. If you have questions like these, you really need to hire a tax professional (and pay them hundreds of dollars per hour)--not your instructor. Also, if I do provide any answers, please do not keep me liable to what I say. None of my past students had a problem with this.

#### VIII. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

A. *Quantitative Reasoning: Identify, analyze, and solve problems that are quantitative in nature.*

1. *Various class assignments and group projects will be used to assess students' ability to master basic individual taxation.*

2. *Students will have assignments to assess their ability to analyze and interpret tax rules and regulations.*

3. *There will also be a tax return project that will assess their taxation knowledge to completing real world returns and providing consulting advice.*

B. *Technical Competence: Utilize the appropriate technology effectively for informational, academic, personal, and professional needs.*

*Students will utilize website tools to complete a group tax return project. They will also learn to utilize web based communication to work with their team members.*