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**SYLLABUS: ACCT 550T – Federal Tax Research and Professional Responsibilities**

Fall 2016 / Section # 14218D August 22 – Oct 14 Session 431

**Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:00 – 4:50 p.m. JKP 104**

This course covers tax law research methods; interpreting statutes, cases and rulings; communicating research results; administration and professional responsibilities of tax practice. Recommended preparation: introductory tax course.

**INSTRUCTOR:** Patricia Hughes Mills, J.D., LL.M.

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**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Tuesdays 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

**EMERGENCY** USC Emergencies: 213-740-4321

**NUMBERS**: USC Public Safety – Non Emergencies: 213-740-6000

USC Emergency Info Line: 213-740-9233

USC Information Line: 213-740-2311

KUSC Radio (91.5 FM)

**REQUIRED TEXT**: *Federal Tax Research*, 10th Edition.

Sawyers, Raabe, Whittenburg, & Gill

Cengage Learning (2015)

<http://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/en/US/storefront/US?cmd=CLHeaderSearch&fieldValue=9781285439396>

**NOTE: LAPTOPS WILL BE REQUIRED IN THE CLASSROOM ON THE DATES INDICATED IN THE SYLLABUS**

**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the various types of tax authority and explain their significance in determining client tax positions;
2. Demonstrate proficiency in various tax research platforms to find appropriate primary and secondary authorities when analyzing a tax issue;
3. Compare the relevant standards and professional responsibilities dictated by applicable governing bodies (IRS, AICPA, tax penalty provisions) for taking a tax position;
4. Discuss the procedure, options, and responsibilities for advising clients in a tax controversy matter; and
5. Research, analyze, and present an analysis of a sophisticated tax issue.

**PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES**:

The following are the five Student Learning Outcomes developed for this program by the USC Leventhal faculty and administration and filed with the AACSB, the accrediting body for accounting and business schools.  This course will deal primarily with learning outcomes #3 and #4, and to a lesser extent with learning outcomes #1 and #2.

***1. Technical, Conceptual, Problem-Solving***

Students will be competent in and be able to apply discipline-specific knowledge and skills in the fields of accounting or taxation. This learning outcome includes the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as an understanding of the strategic role of accounting and taxation in business organizations and society.

* MBT specific—Apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills related to taxation of individuals, flow-through entities, and corporations. Recognize potential opportunities for tax savings and tax planning.

***2. Professional Development***

Students will be able to communicate clearly and strategically, after considering the relevant audience, situation, and purpose of the communication. Students will demonstrate the ability to work productively with others to accomplish established goals.

* MBT specific—Convert complex and technical tax terminology into language that translates to non-technical audiences. Demonstrate strong interpersonal communication skills that build relationships with clients over time. Document exchanges with careful attention to word choice, tone, and accuracy.

**3. *Research/Life-Long Learning***

Students will be able to use relevant research databases and academic/professional literature to gain new knowledge and analyze business situations.

* MBT specific—Use computer-based and paper-based systems to thoroughly research tax codes, tax law, rulings and interpretations. Use knowledge to be able to adjust to changes in tax law over time.

**4. *Ethical Principles and Professional Standards***

Students will be able to apply ethical principles and professional standards in analyzing situations and making informed decisions.

* MBT specific—Demonstrate understanding of and apply consistently the ethical principles and professional standards related to the profession. Show the ability to express and follow rules of independence and the highest sense of professional ethics.

**5. *Globalization and Diversity***

Students will be able to demonstrate an international perspective and appreciation for diversity and cultural differences, along with their significance in global business.

* MBT specific—Explain key differences in taxing policies related to expatriates and the countries they live and work in. Reflect on cultural and ethnic differences in approaches to business and taxation policies.

**GRADING:**

SHORT RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS 210 points

PARTICIPATION 50 points

RESEARCH MEMO # 1 100 points

PROTEST LETTER 100 points

RESEARCH MEMO # 2 300 points

QUIZZES 240 points

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TOTAL POINTS 1,000 points

SHORT RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS (TAX RESEARCH PLATFORM EXERCISES):

* + Tax research platform exercises will be posted in Blackboard under the Assignments Tab and are due as indicated on the syllabus.
  + They should be submitted in a Word document under the “Assignments” tab in Blackboard, and will be returned with comments through Blackboard. Points will be deducted for assignments turned in late.

PARTICIPATION:

* Class attendance and participation is important in developing a coherent view of the materials covered in this course. It is expected that each student will be prepared for each class and will participate in the class discussion. **READINGS FOR THAT DAY MUST BE DONE PRIOR TO CLASS**.
* Each student must make a brief current developments presentation to the class on a tax topic of their choice one time during the semester. The current development should come from a current daily or weekly tax news service.

RESEARCH MEMOS AND PROTEST LETTER:

* + Research memo and protest letter topics and instructions will be posted in Blackboard under Assignments and are due as indicated on the syllabus.
  + Research memos and the protest letter will be evaluated based on content as well as on the effectiveness of your communication. This includes grammar, spelling, organization, and other essentials of effective communication.
  + All research memos and the protest letter should be submitted in a Word document under the “Assignments” tab in Blackboard, and will be returned with comments through Blackboard. Points will be deducted for assignments turned in late.

QUIZZES:

* + Three short quizzes will be given in class as indicated in the syllabus. You will have one hour to complete the exam. Makeups will generally not be given. **Quizzes are closed-book.**

**GRADING POLICIES:**

This course adheres to the USC Leventhal School of Accounting and Marshall School of Business grading Standards for graduate programs. In general, final course grades at the graduate level in a core course average approximately B+ (3.3) but may vary based on class performance. For elective courses, the class average is usually higher (approximately 3.5), which is between a B+ and an A-. You must receive a C or better to pass a required class, and you must have an overall B average (3.0 minimum) in order to graduate from USC. The graded elements of this course are listed in this syllabus along with information about how they will be evaluated.

**ACADEMIC CONDUCT**

Students enrolled in any class offered by the Leventhal School of Accounting are expected to uphold and adhere to the standards of academic integrity established by the Leventhal School of Accounting Student Honor Code.  Students are responsible for obtaining, reading, and understanding the Honor Code System handbook.  Students who are found to have violated the Code will be subject to disciplinary action as described in the handbook.  For more specific information, please refer to the Student Honor Code System handbook, available in class or from the receptionist in ACC 101.

**PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus*in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus*and university policies on scientific misconduct,<http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

**SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute*[http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali](https://mail.marshall.usc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=_F2OgbbJUE2u40Qe99K1Zvo7QiTK5tEIGpfO0a82BTitSwC-utV__PvxCva-f6bV_8ZWSLRchJk.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fdornsife.usc.edu%2fali), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\_index.html](https://mail.marshall.usc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=_F2OgbbJUE2u40Qe99K1Zvo7QiTK5tEIGpfO0a82BTitSwC-utV__PvxCva-f6bV_8ZWSLRchJk.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fsait.usc.edu%2facademicsupport%2fcenterprograms%2fdsp%2fhome_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.

If an officially  declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information*[*http://emergency.usc.edu/*](https://mail.marshall.usc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=_F2OgbbJUE2u40Qe99K1Zvo7QiTK5tEIGpfO0a82BTitSwC-utV__PvxCva-f6bV_8ZWSLRchJk.&URL=http%3a%2f%2femergency.usc.edu%2f) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity*<http://equity.usc.edu/>or to the *Department of Public Safety*<http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>.  This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men*<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

**STATEMENT ON RETENTION OF PAPERS FROM THE CURRICULUM OFFICE**

According to the *Guidelines on Documents Retention*, University policy requires that final exams and all other grade work which affected the course grade be kept for one year.  Other papers or work that instructors hand back but that students fail to pick up can be held for one month.

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| **August 23** | **MODULE 1: Introduction / Tax Research Methodology** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Explain the role of tax research in the profession * Explain the governing standards of professional responsibility for giving advice in the tax profession * Identify the sources of primary and secondary authority * Delineate the steps of the tax research process |
| **Readings** | * Text Chps. 1 and 2 |

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| **August 25** | **MODULE 2: RIA Checkpoint Tax Research Platform**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Access RIA Checkpoint and use basic functionality * Identify and access primary and secondary authorities with RIA Checkpoint * Research primary and secondary authorities using RIA Checkpoint platform * Analyze a tax issue using RIA Checkpoint |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp 6 * See posted materials (Blackboard Course Materials Module 2) * Set up personal RIA Checkpoint Account [see Blackboard Class Materials for instructions] |
| **Assignment completed in and due at end of class** | * **RIA Checkpoint Research Assignment** |

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| **Aug 30** | **MODULE 3: Constitutional and Legislative Sources**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Describe the legislative process for new tax laws and amendments * Examine the role of legislative history in interpreting tax laws * Locate the statutory sources of the tax law * Analyze the legislative history of an IRC provision |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp. 3 * See posted materials (Blackboard Course Materials Module 3) |
| **Assignment completed in and due at end of class** | * **Legislative Research Assignment using RIA Checkpoint** |

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| **Sept 1** | **MODULE 4: Administrative (IRS) Sources**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Identify the various types of IRS pronouncements and their significance * Describe how to locate and interpret the precedential value of administrative sources of tax law * Explain and use the elements of common citations for Regulations and other IRC pronouncements * Research and analyze a tax issue based on IRS pronouncements |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp. 4 * See posted materials (Blackboard Course Materials Module 4) |
| **Assignment completed in and due at end of class** | * **Administrative (IRS) Sources Research Assignment using RIA Checkpoint** |

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| **Sept 6** | **MODULE 5: Judicial Interpretations**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **QUIZ # 1**  **2:00 – 3:00** | **On Modules 1-4** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Describe the court system and appeal options for tax litigation * Compare the reasoning for litigating in alternate courts |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp. 5 * See posted materials (Blackboard Course Materials Module 5) |

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| **Sept 8** | **MODULE 5: Judicial Interpretations (con’t)**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Explain and use the elements of common citations for case law * Analyze an issue using judicial precedent |
| **Assignment completed in and due at end of class** | * **Case Law Research Assignment using RIA Checkpoint** |

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| **Sept 13** | **MODULE 6: Writing a Tax Memo** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Identify typical communications of the tax professional * Analyze and compare effective and ineffective research memorandum * Research and analyze a given tax issue * Demonstrate technical memoranda writing skills |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp. 11 * See posted materials (Blackboard Course Materials Module 6) * Read, print, and bring to class the *Carpenter*, & *Keenan*, & *White* cases |

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| **Sept 15** | **MODULE 7: Citators and Tax Periodicals**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Explain use of citators and tax periodicals in tax research * Apply use of citator to primary authority * Demonstrate use of citator as a research tool * Demonstrate use of tax periodicals as research tool |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp. 6 pgs 218 – 227 |
| **Submit by Midnight Thursday Sept 15th** | * **Research Memo #1** |

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| **Sept 20** | **MODULE 8: CCH IntelliConnect Tax Research Platform**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Access CCH IntelliConnect and use basic functionality * Identify and access primary and secondary authorities with CCH IntelliConnect * Research primary and secondary authorities using CCH IntelliConnect * Analyze a tax issue using CCH IntelliConnect |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp 7 * See posted materials (Blackboard Course Materials Module 8) |
| **Assignment completed in and due at end of class** | * **CCH IntelliConnect Research Assignment** |

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| **Sept 22** | **MODULE 9: IRS Practice and Procedure** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Explain the IRS audit and appeal process * Compare client options upon audit * Develop professional responsibilities in representing clients before the IRS * Apply the concepts by preparing a client protest letter |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp 13 * See posted materials (Blackboard Course Materials Module 9) |

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| **Sept 27** | **MODULE 10: Penalties and Standards of Tax Practice** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Identify various taxpayer and preparer penalties * Analyze and compare return position standards * Compute interest on underpayments and identify the statute of limitations for assessment * Using the applicable professional standards, analyze and discuss a tax issue based on conflicting authorities |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp. 14 * See posted materials (Blackboard Course Materials Module 10) |
| **Submit by Midnight Sunday Oct 2nd** | * **Protest Letter** |

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| **Sept 29** | **MODULE 11: Tax Planning**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **QUIZ # 2**  **2:00 – 3:00** | **On Modules 5 – 9** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Identify types of tax planning opportunities * Analyze tax planning transactions * Apply the applicable standards for legitimate tax planning |
| **Readings** | * Text Chp 12 * See posted materials (Blackboard Course Materials) |

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| **Oct 4** | **MODULE 12: State Tax Research**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Apply the tax research process to state and local tax issues * Identify the major features of state tax services * Research and analyze a state tax issue using one of the tax services |
| **Readings** | * Text pgs 324 – 352 * See Posted Material (Blackboard Course Materials) |
| **Assignment completed in and due at end of class** | * **CCH State Tax Research Assignment** |

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| **Oct 6** | **MODULE 13: BBNA Tax Research Platform**  **BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Access BBNA Tax Service and use basic functionality * Identify and access primary and secondary authorities using BBNA platform * Research primary and secondary authorities using BBNA platform * Analyze a tax issue using BBNA |
| **Readings** | * Text pgs 280 – 288 * See Posted Material (Blackboard Course Materials) |
| **Assignment completed in and due at end of class** | * **BBNA Tax Research Assignment** |

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| **Oct 11** | **MODULE 14: Comprehensive Research Memo** |
| **QUIZ # 3**  **2:00 – 3:00** | **on Modules 10 – 13 and Review** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Use totality of research and analytical skills to address a complex tax issue * Research and prepare a comprehensive written technical memorandum |
| **Classroom activity** | * Independent research * Individual feedback meetings |
| **Submit BEFORE CLASS ON OCT 13th** | * **Research Memo #2**   See Blackboard for scenario and instructions |

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| **Oct 13** | **MODULE 15: Wrap-Up** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | * Discuss and analyze Research Memo # 2 |