ACCT 633
Advanced Issues in Financial Reporting
Syllabus – Spring 2019 (Module 3 - Arlington)

FACULTY INFORMATION

| Course Instructor | Bret Johnson  
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Enterprise Hall 110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office hours</td>
<td>By appointment or prior to class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Contact           | E-mail: bjohns37@gmu.edu  
|                   | Phone: (703) 993-8185 |

PREREQUISITES
Enrollment in MSA program or permission of MSA Director

PROGRAM LEARNING GOALS

Professional skills: Our graduates will demonstrate professional skills necessary for success in the public accounting profession.

- **Teaming & Leading** - Our graduates will demonstrate the team leadership and interpersonal skills needed to form, lead, and work effectively in diverse organizational teams.
- **Ethics and Professional Responsibility** - Our graduates will understand the importance of ethical conduct and the regulatory environment of accounting.
- **Professional Communications** – Our graduates will communicate effectively to professional audiences in both written and oral forms.
- **Analytical Decision Making** - Our graduates will demonstrate analytical decision-making skills.
- **Accounting Research** - Our graduates will effectively conduct and communicate accounting research

Technical skills and knowledge: Our graduates will demonstrate and apply technical knowledge of accounting and auditing.

Global perspective: Our graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the role of accounting in the global business environment.
**COURSE DESCRIPTION**
Students will gain knowledge and skills used to research and resolve complex financial accounting and reporting issues. Students will apply the research process to open-ended, novel accounting problems (including gathering relevant facts, identifying accounting issues, brainstorming solutions, then researching and communicating the issues and conclusions). Students will become proficient using research databases, such as the FASB Codification.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**
Upon completing this course, our students should:
- be competent in the technical material.
- possess the research skills to access, understand and apply relevant professional authoritative literature including the FASB Accounting Standards Codification.
- be knowledgeable about global business and trade as it applies to Financial Reporting Standards.
- be effective communicators, capable of recording, analyzing, interpreting, and communicating financial and non-financial information for users of such information in accordance with applicable professional authoritative literature.

**COURSE MATERIALS**
Lecture slides and other materials are available on Blackboard. You will need access to a computer that has basic business software like Microsoft Office Suite and Adobe Acrobat Reader. Please note that a fast reliable internet connection will be necessary to download course content and upload deliverables.

Readings:
- “Skills for Accounting Research” by Shelby Collins 3rd edition Cambridge Business Publishers. You may purchase this textbook either online or in the bookstore. You may purchase either the hardcopy or electronic version.
  - You do not need a course ID, just access to the textbook.
- Lecture slides and other materials available on Blackboard.

**COURSE POLICIES**
The course will be completed over approximately 8 weeks. Please refer to the most recent course schedule posted on Blackboard and any additional announcements for detailed information.

**Attendance and participation**: You are required to complete the assigned tasks on or before the due date and time mentioned in the course schedule. Please inform your instructor immediately if you are unable to complete any of the tasks within the mentioned due dates.
Deliverables: The course requires you to complete a set of individual and group work that includes readings, assignments and other projects. Individual work includes items such as readings, assignments, and a final exam. Group work involves participating in a team project and presentation. You may also discuss all individual assignments in study groups, however, each individual must submit his or her own deliverable. However, group collaboration is not allowed on the final exam.

Grading: The table below shows all assessment activities with corresponding due dates and grade weights. Note that the assignments are all due before the beginning of class on the due date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Description</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Grade Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Jan. 15</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Jan. 22</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>Feb. 5</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Research Project/</td>
<td>Feb. 19</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Feb. 26</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>All weeks</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
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Note: Assignments and Research Project deliverables submitted after the deadline will receive zero points. Any changes to assignments or schedule will be announced on Blackboard and via e-mail. You are expected to check the course webpage and email at least once every 24 hours. Inability to access the course webpage or failure to read e-mails cannot be an excuse for late submissions or non-completion of assignments. No make-up assignments are available in this course and the online final exam should be taken on the scheduled date.

Final course grade will be calculated as a weighted average of the grades you get throughout the module across all assessment activities mentioned above. The grade cut-offs are as follows (note that the minimum thresholds are fixed and must be met or exceeded without rounding).

- A 93-100%
- A- 89-92%
- B+ 85-88%
- B 81-84%
- B- 77-80%
- C 70-76%
- F less than 70%

Assignments: The three assignments are designed to expose you to academic and technical accounting research, respectively, and provide background and practice on the skills that will be necessary to perform well during in-class case discussions, the research project, and the final exam. The instructions for these individual assignments will be posted on Blackboard (course website) at least one week prior to their due date. 20% of the score for each of the three assignments will be based on grammar and writing clarity, and the remaining 80% is based on the content (i.e., how well you met the objectives and expectations of the assignment).
**Group Research Project/Presentation:** You will work in a group of 2-4 students to prepare a written research report and a recorded oral presentation. You may choose your own groups if you communicate them to me prior to the Week #4 class. More information about this group project/presentation will be provided separately on the course website.

**Participation:** Class participation points will be earned in two ways: (1) participation in class discussions and (2) professionalism. It is critical that you learn to become involved in dialogue and speak up so you can represent yourself well in meetings and groups. A critical component of class participation and professionalism is the ability to listen to the thoughts and comments of your fellow students. Professional behavior and amiable attitude is expected. Walking in late, leaving early without permission, cell phone rings are examples of unacceptable professionalism and would affect your grade negatively. Focus on the quality, not just the quantity, of your comments (especially if they monopolizes the chance others have to participate), and take advantage of opportunities to be actively involved in both small group and full class discussions.

Assuming the participation grade is based on 10 points, you can earn one point each class period, dropping the lowest daily participation score (including if you are absent), and you can earn up to 5 points on the case discussion day (Week #6 class), when we put into practice the concepts we will be studying throughout the module.

**Group Work vs. Individual Work:** The following policies are applicable to individual and/or group assignments:

- Students may discuss assignments with fellow classmates. Feel free to bounce ideas off each other and brainstorm possible solutions.
- Students must submit their own original work.
- Plagiarism is considered cheating, and such actions will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is defined as "the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work." Plagiarizing the work of classmates, former accounting students, internet authors, websites, etc. constitutes cheating.
- Brainstorming and collaboration becomes cheating when students execute individual assignments together. Another example of cheating can occur towards the end of an assignment. A student who changes an assignment to largely conform to the answers/style/format of another person is cheating.
- Using answer keys, case solutions from the web, students' work from prior semesters, etc. constitutes cheating.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be administered online and may consist of multiple choice questions, short essay questions, case analyses, etc. More details will be provided closer to the date of the final exam.

- The final exam will be open-book and open-notes, however, you are not permitted to discuss the exam questions with anyone else.
- Using any unauthorized information on the exam is considered cheating (i.e., sharing another student's answers, etc.).
• Obtaining possible test questions through a test bank or obtaining case or problem solutions from web sources constitute cheating.

**General:** You may also want to take note of the following:
• Helping another student cheat constitutes cheating for all students involved.
• Students who are aware of cheating but fail to report it are in violation of the Honor Code and will be referred to the GMU Administration. These students can expect to receive the same sanctions as the students who cheat.
• It is impossible to document all possible methods of cheating. The policies above are guidelines to help clarify expectations, but they do not include an exhaustive list of cheating activities. The onus is on each student to complete all course requirements in an honest manner, and any questions about acceptable academic behavior must be addressed to your professor. Thus, ignorance is never an excuse for engaging in academic dishonesty.

**A Note on Writing Deliverables:** Double-space, use a standard 12-point font, and place 1-inch margins in all assignments. When you make references to assigned course materials, use the following bibliographic information at the end of the paper or in a footnote. Because good writing skills are so important in the business world, each of your deliverables should be clearly written and completely free of spelling and grammatical errors.

To cite and reference professional or academic sources, please use APA style. Specific instructions for in-text citations and referencing are found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 6th Edition or at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/.

**A Note on Course Presentations:** A great presentation is a reflection of the effort and time spent on planning the content and practicing the delivery. Some success tips include time management, avoiding too much text on slides, knowing your audience and maintaining audience interest, having a summary/takeaway slide and being mindful of grammar/spelling and overall slide design/structure.

*All submissions should be saved as “Last name_first name_assignment name” for individual assignments and as “Group name or number_assignment name” for group assignments before submission through SafeAssign on Blackboard.*

**A Note on Team Grades and Free Ridership:** All team members will get the same grade on the group assignment unless at least two people in the team decide to change to a peer performance appraisal system. Under such a system, members will rate one another's contribution for the team assignment, and individual grades will be adjusted (both upward and downward) based on these ratings. If you decide to go with the peer performance appraisal system, prepare a document to that effect signed by at least two members of your team to be submitted with the team assignment, and I will contact you for your evaluation of your fellow team members’ contributions. You cannot decide to do peer performance appraisal after you receive your grade. You must tell me and hand in the document with signatures when the assignment is due.

**COURSE WEBSITE**
The course website is your online classroom. It is located in the university’s course management system, Blackboard. Here you will perform many learning activities: see readings and assignments, interact with the instructor and your peers, work in groups, and much more.

To access your online classroom, follow these steps:
1. Type “mymason.gmu.edu” into your browser address line
2. Type your Username
3. Type your Password
4. Click Login.
5. New users see a Welcome page that invites them to create a profile. You can choose to create a profile later.
6. Existing users see the My Institution tab.
7. Click into the Courses tab to see your online courses for the term.

When you are ready to leave the classroom, click the logout button in the upper-right corner of the screen.

If Blackboard is not functioning as expected, or you are unable to connect to Blackboard or content within Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu for assistance.

**FASB CODIFICATION WEBSITE**
The FASB website ([http://fasb.org/home](http://fasb.org/home)) is your primary source for authoritative guidance for technical accounting research.

- To log into FASB codification, go to [http://aaahq.org/ascLogin.cfm](http://aaahq.org/ascLogin.cfm)
  - Username – AAA52638
  - Password – T59pNrQ

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**
You are expected to have read the assigned readings before each lecture and come to class ready to participate in the discussion. You are encouraged to complete all the “Now You Try” exercises in the assigned chapters, however, they will not be handed in. The amount of effort you put into studying the assigned materials before attempting classwork will determine the quality of your responses to questions, as well as how much you learn about the course topics. I encourage you to not only read the assigned materials but to analyze them carefully. Think about each reading from both a conceptual and a practical perspective.

**Communication:** Students must use their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class and correspondence with the instructor. See Masonlive to obtain your personal GMU e-mail account. Mason policy requires faculty to communicate exclusively through the Mason email system. This means your instructor can respond to email from your Mason account only and cannot respond to emails you send from your personal or work email. The instructor will periodically send electronic messages to the entire class using the listserv formed by the MSA program or via the Blackboard communication system. You are fully responsible for checking your e-mail regularly and for
any information communicated to the class via e-mail. You should always feel free to communicate with the instructor via e-mail.

I will try to respond to emails and questions within 24 hours during the work-week (Monday through Friday). Students who anticipate missing a deliverable due date for religious reasons should inform the instructor of their anticipated absences during the first two weeks of the module. You can find the University semester schedule and religious holidays at academic calendar and religious holiday calendar. If you have an emergency that precludes you from meeting any deadline, please inform me as soon as possible to schedule a make-up date. You will also be required to provide documentation for why you were unable to complete the assignment or exam by the due date. If it is not an excused reason, you will receive a zero. There are very few excusable absences for assignments and exams. Please plan ahead.

**Honor System and Code:** Mason is an Honor Code university. Please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the Mason Honor Code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

Attached to the syllabus is the uniform set of Recommendations for Honor Code Violations for graduate programs in the School of Business adopted by the faculty in Spring 2016.

**School of Business Standards of Behavior:** The mission of the School of Business at George Mason University is to create and deliver high quality educational programs and research. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni who participate in these educational programs contribute to the well-being of society. High quality educational programs require an environment of trust and mutual respect, free expression and inquiry, and a commitment to truth, excellence, and lifelong learning. Students, program participants, faculty, staff, and alumni accept these principles when they join the School of Business community. In doing so, they agree to abide by the following standards of behavior:

- **Respect** for the rights, differences, and dignity of others
- **Honesty** and integrity in dealing with all members of the community
- **Accountability** for personal behavior

Integrity is an essential ingredient of a successful learning community. Ethical standards of behavior help promote a safe and productive community environment, and ensure every member the opportunity to pursue excellence. School of Business can and should be a living model of these behavioral standards. To this end, community members have a personal responsibility to integrate these standards into every aspect of their experience at the School of Business. Through our personal commitment to these Community Standards of Behavior, we can create an environment in which all can achieve their full potential.

**DIVERSITY**

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs,
policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. These goals apply to online learning at George Mason University equally as it does to classroom learning.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

**RESOURCES AND SUPPORT**

**Course support:** Preparedness is a major facilitator for a heightened learning experience in any course. For help on Blackboard tools like Collaborate, Kaltura, Respondus Lockdown Browser and other resources, please refer to courses support or tutorials for additional information. If you encounter any difficulties accessing Blackboard or your course you can reach the Technical Help Desk at the following email: courses@gmu.edu.

**Library resources:** The Libraries at George Mason University strive to provide the best possible collections of research resources and scholarly materials in all formats for our users throughout the university community, supporting the University’s goals of learning, teaching, and research. The School of Business has a dedicated librarian liaison and more information is available at library resources. The University Libraries also provides resources specifically for distance students, including the ability to e-reserve materials. For more information on these services and the process to e-reserve texts, see http://library.gmu.edu/distance.

**Writing center:** The George Mason University Writing Center is committed to supporting writers in the Mason community and offers free writing support to Mason students. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just as you would sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means you set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the Online Writing Lab (OWL).

**Student services:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at (703) 993-2474 or see their website at http://ds.gmu.edu/. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. Please take care of this during the first week of the module and inform the instructor immediately.

Mason offers counseling and psychological services that can provide assistance if you find yourself overwhelmed by life, want training in academic or life skills, or the like.

**University policies:** The University Catalog is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty and staff conduct in university affairs.
Information regarding weather related changes in the University’s schedule (e.g., closing or late opening) will be provided on the GMU website and via MasonAlert. Changes to schedule or deliverable due dates, if any, will be communicated via email and on Blackboard.

Mason Student privacy is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and is an essential aspect of this course.

Copyright: Any audio or visual recording of lectures, reuse or remix of course materials, or further dissemination of course content is not permitted without prior written consent of the course instructor and George Mason University unless the recording is part of an approved accommodation plan.

Disclaimer: Any changes to assignments or course schedule will be announced on Blackboard and/or via e-mail. Inability to access the course webpage or failure to read e-mails cannot be an excuse for late submissions or non-completion of assignments.
### SCHOOL OF BUSINESS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HONOR CODE VIOLATIONS

*Approved Spring 2016
Graduate Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Violation</th>
<th>First Offense</th>
<th>Second Offense</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism, lying, cheating on an assignment, homework, or including other’s work as your own</td>
<td>An F in the class</td>
<td>An F in the class and dismissal from program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egregious Violation [e.g., stealing an exam; passing on confidential course material; cheating on an exam, project, or otherwise violating specified rules for an exam or project; etc.]</td>
<td>An F in the class and dismissal from program</td>
<td>An F in the class and dismissal from program</td>
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# TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #1: Jan. 8</th>
<th>Topic: Overview of Accounting Research; Background on the Regulatory Environment and SEC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collins Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week #2: Jan. 15</th>
<th>Topic: FASB Codification Introduction; The Research Process</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collins Chapters 2 and 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>• Assignment 1</td>
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<th>Week #3: Jan. 22</th>
<th>Topic: Creating Effective Documentation; Using Nonauthoritative Guidance</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collins Chapters 4 and 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>• Assignment 2</td>
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<th>Week #4: Jan. 29</th>
<th>Topic: Scope and Recognition</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collins Chapter 6</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week #5: Feb. 5</th>
<th>Topic: Measurement; Fair Value</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collins Chapters 7 and 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>• Assignment 3</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #6: Feb. 12</th>
<th>Topic: Case Discussions</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assigned Cases</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week #7: Feb. 19</th>
<th>Topic: IFRS; Staying Current with Emerging Accounting Guidance</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collins Chapters 12 and 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due:</td>
<td>• Group research project write-up and video presentations</td>
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Final Exam (online): Tuesday, Feb. 26

*Changes to the schedule, if any, will be announced both in class and via email (Blackboard).