ACCT 312-01 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance I

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Instructional Syllabus
ACCT 312-01: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance I
Spring 2017

Instructor: David Randolph
Course time: 6:00 – 9:30 p.m., Mondays, January 9 through April 24
Course location: ALT 108 and Cintas Center Banquet Rooms 1 & 2
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Mobile Phone: 859-486-0795
E-mail address: randolphd1@xavier.edu
Office: 237 Smith Hall
Office Hours: Monday 11:45 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Tuesday & Thursday 2:30 p.m.—3:00 p.m.
Other times by appointment, drop-ins welcome.

Textbook: Course materials will be provided.

Prerequisite for ACCT 312: Completion of ACCT 311 (or its equivalent) with a grade of B or better

COURSE OBJECTIVE:
The IRS’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) has been in existence for many years as a means of assisting lower income taxpayers with answers to their tax questions and in preparing their income tax returns. This course will provide a review of the basic tax rules that were covered in Accounting 311 as well as supplementing that topical coverage with state income tax issues and technical aspects of individual tax preparation and compliance, including electronic filing. The student will have the opportunity to increase his/her communication skills and teamwork skills through the experience of reviewing fellow student prepared tax returns and keeping a journal of his/her experiences. Students will gain exposure to a broad cross-section of the local population as well as acquire knowledge of the general population’s understanding of the tax laws and the problems that they face in complying with its provisions. The course is designed to give students an experiential learning experience while providing a valuable service to the community consistent with the Jesuit tradition of service.

LEARNING GOALS:
- Critical Thinking

Learning Goal: WCB graduates will be able to think logically, reason quantitatively, and utilize appropriate analytical techniques and technology when evaluating and making decisions.

Corresponding Objectives:
- (1) WCB students will collect, evaluate and synthesize information in order to accurately prepare tax returns
- (2) WCB students will evaluate and communicate this information to the taxpayers
- (3) WCB students will work on these returns both individually and in teams.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
The first class meetings will be training sessions. Students must receive a passing grade on all test materials as provided by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the State of Ohio Department of Taxation in order to be eligible to perform VITA services (this is true of all VITA volunteers and is not unique to Xavier). If you fail the federal and/or state tests you may take a retest but your maximum grade on a retest will be 70% of possible points. If you fail the retest, you will be disqualified from participating in the VITA program and the remainder of this class.

Students must perform a minimum of 21 hours of service in tax return preparation and/or review, in addition to marketing activities, and administration. This will require that you be on-site at the tax preparation room, engaged in tax return preparation, review, or administration of the program, at least seven of the eight scheduled meetings. Evidence of marketing activities must be submitted. Students will keep a daily journal of experiences at the VITA site. A reflection paper will be due at the final class meeting. This reflection paper (not just a summary of number of people assisted and types of returns prepared) should contain your comments and thoughts on what you may have learned, problems encountered, things you would do differently, mistakes you realized you made, insights about people’s attitudes on the tax law and the IRS. The journal will summarize your work on individual days, while the paper should discuss how the overall VITA experience affected you.

Determination of Grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation for filing season</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes in class (3 @ 30 pts each)</td>
<td>90 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Filing Assignments (3 @ 80 pts each)</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRS Advanced Certification Test</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publicity and Administration</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execution</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filing Season</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taxpayer Tax Return Preparation</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Journal</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,000 points possible</td>
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</tbody>
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Grades will be assigned based on the percentage of total points earned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>900+ points</th>
<th>A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>840 - 899</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>780 - 839</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700 - 779</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 700</td>
<td>F</td>
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1 Note: this provision does NOT mean that you can elect to miss one of the scheduled meetings; it instead allows for the possibility of one missed class due to illness or other verifiable excused absence, while clarifying that students who are not satisfactorily available on Monday evenings—do to varsity sports commitments or work commitments, for example—are not eligible for course credit.
### TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

#### Date  Topics and Assignments

##### JAN 9

1. In-class – discuss the Publicity and Administration Assignment. Sample deliverables are available on Canvas (titled “marketing plans”).
2. **Homework:** develop a publicity plan proposal – **Due on or before Jan 23rd** - proposals accepted/approved on a first-come, first-serve basis.
3. In-class – review Volunteer Training Guide (hereafter “VTG”) (blue handout)
4. In-class – VTG Step 1.2:
   a. Create a testing platform account.
   b. Username: `FirstnameLastname` (e.g. DavidRandolph)
   c. Password: `FirstnameLastinitial` (e.g. DavidR@XU)
5. **Homework:** Review Volunteer Standards of Conduct – SUMMARY (yellow handout)
6. **Homework:** VTG Step 1.3 – Complete Volunteer Standards of Conduct Test, print both your certificate of completion and your test score – **Due Jan 23rd**

   ~ Note, after you have submitted your answers, you will receive summary of your results and can “close the course”. Then, from the VITA/TCE Central website you should be able to click “Pass” to obtain and print your score and click “Print Certificate” to print your certificate of completion. If necessary, use “PrtSc” to print your score (e.g., make sure % correct is visible on screen, press “PrtSc”, then open a Word document and press “Ctrl V” to paste the screenshot)

7. **Homework:** VTG Step 1.4 – Review “Intake Interview and Quality Review.pdf” file available on Canvas or at [http://www.linklearncertification.com](http://www.linklearncertification.com)
8. **Homework:** VTG Step 1.4 – Complete Intake/Interview & Quality Review Test, print both your certificate of completion and your test score – **Due Jan 23rd**
9. In class – review IRS Publication 4012
10. In class – discuss IRS Publication 6744
11. In class – VTG Step 2b:
    a. Create a TaxSlayer Practice Lab account.
    b. Username: `FirstnameLastname` (e.g. DavidRandolph)
    c. Password: `FirstnameLastinitial` (e.g. DavidR@XU)
    d. SIDN: S43010029
    e. Security Question: “pet’s name?”
    f. Security Answer: “fido” – all lower case
12. In class – Practice with TaxSlayer software. Pub. 6744, Basic Scenario 7 (pp. 31-39)
13. **Homework:** Tax Filing Assignment #1 – **Due Jan 23rd**

##### JAN 16

**No class – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

##### JAN 23

**Due**
- Quiz #1
- Tax Return Assignment #1
- IRS Volunteer Standards of Conduct Test (certificate and test score)
- IRS Intake/Interview & Quality Review Test (certificate and test score)
- Publicity Plan (only your proposal is required, not execution of the plan)

*Jan 23rd, continued next page...*
TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

JAN 23 – continued

1. In class – review Quiz #1
2. In class – Practice with TaxSlayer software
3. Homework: Tax Return Assignment #2 – Due Jan 30th

JAN 30

- DUE – Evidence of execution for Publicity and Administration Assignment
- DUE – Quiz #2
- DUE – Basic Exam (IRS certification)
- DUE – Tax Return Assignment #2

Affordable Care Act
Tax return assembly process

FEB 6

- QUIZ #3
- VTG Step 3.3 – Complete and print Form 13615
- DUE – Advanced Exam (IRS certification)
- DUE – Marketing Evidence
- DUE – Tax Return Assignment #3

TaxSlayer test returns done in class
Review tax return assembly process & instruction sheets

FEB 13

Meet in Cintas Center
20 Meet in Cintas Center
27 Meet in Cintas Center

MAR 6

No class – Spring Break
13 Meet in Cintas Center
20 Meet in Cintas Center
27 Meet in Cintas Center

APR 3

*Meet in classroom – prepare returns for taxpayers unable to come to campus.
10 Meet in Cintas Center
17 Meet in Cintas Center
24 Meet in classroom. DUE – Reflection paper and journal.

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All dates and assignments in this syllabus are subject to change at the sole discretion of the Instructor. Verbal notification during any regularly scheduled class period, or email, will be considered sufficient notification to effect such change under this syllabus.