Tentative Syllabus
Financial & Budget Fundamentals for Communicators
James K. Gentry, Ph.D.
jgentry@ku.edu
June 2 – Aug. 8
785-218-4755, cell

Week 1, June 2
The economy today

Week 2, June 9
The economy today

Week 3, June 16
Understanding markets

Week 4, June 23
Understanding markets

Week 5, June 30
Understanding financial statements

Week 6, July 7
Understanding financial statements:

Week 7, July 14
Understanding financial statements

Week 8, July 21
Understanding financial statements

Week 9, July 28
Management and metrics

Week 10, Aug. 8
Budgets and budgeting
Required Reading

We will not have a required book for this class. Instead, I will give you a number of readings and tutorials along the way.

Recommended

For terminology, the best online source generally is www.investopedia.com. In print, “Dictionary of Finance and Investment Terms” by Downes and Goodman or a similar dictionary.

For a regular understanding of the world of business, The Wall Street Journal, print or online. Other excellent sources include The New York Times, Seeking Alpha, The Big Picture, The Economist, etc.

Goals of this Course

This course will give students the ability to:
- Understand how a company operates as a business.
- Understand many of the rapid changes in the international economy.
- Find and understand important SEC documents and other important sources of information on public companies.
- Understand a public company’s financial statements.
- Compare public companies’ financial conditions.
- Analyze and draw informed conclusions about a public company’s financial condition.

Determinants of Course Grade

“Your country” paper 15%
Current issues paper 15%
“Your company” reports 15%
“In-class” quiz 15%
Company comparison exam 20%
Budget assignment 5%
Class participation 15%

Components of Course Grade

“Your country” paper. You will choose from a list of countries that I will give you and will write a short paper – primarily examining economic issues – on the country. Format and length will be provided.

Current issues paper. You will choose from a list of current issues that I will give you and will write a short paper on the topic. Format and length will be provided.
“Your company” reports. With my assistance, you will pick a public company to follow for much of the semester. You will prepare a weekly report on that company over part of the semester. I will give you the subject and deadline for each week’s report.

Your first report will be what the company says about itself. Possible sources for the report include the annual report, 10-K, press releases, etc.

Other likely reports that could be assigned:
- What the business press says about the company (at least four sources).
- What analysts and “experts” say about the company (at least three sources).
- At least four key findings in the company’s 10-K.
- How does your company use social media? Specifically, for media relations, does it use Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.? For investor relations, does it use

“In-class” quiz. You will take a quiz on financial market terms and concepts. The quiz probably will be after the fourth week of class.

Company comparison exam. You will analyze and compare two companies’ financial statements and answer a series of questions about the statements. The exam probably will be the ninth week of class.

Budget assignment. You will examine the financial statements of a public company or non-profit and will answer a series of questions. Format and length will be provided.

Class participation. You will have extensive opportunities for discussion.

Rubrics for Determining Grades for Each Assignment

Students will have two basic types of assignments. Here is the grading model for each type of assignment:

Writing assignments:

Writing assignments include the “your country,” current issues, “your company” and budget reports. Writing assignments are graded based on content and quality of writing. Content includes: An assessment of how well the content fulfills the stated assignment, uses sources and demonstrates thought. Writing includes: Fundamentals such as grammar and spelling, organization and flow. Content makes up 70 percent of the grade and writing makes up 30 percent.

Analytical assignments:

In-class quiz: The quiz will be graded based on student’s ability to show an understanding of markets.
Company comparison exam: The exam will be graded based on the student’s ability to examine financial statements, perform a common size analysis, and to use this information to compare two companies. Company comparison exam will be graded based on student’s ability to do the math, provide a coherent analysis and write well. The components are 40 percent based on math, 50 percent based on analysis, 10 percent based on writing.

In addition, class participation will be graded as follows:

Students will be expected to be engaged in discussions and to demonstrate their grasp of the material over the semester. Students who are totally engaged demonstrate a strong grasp of the material will receive 15 points. As participation and demonstration decrease, the student’s point total decreases.