ACCT 4815 - Estate Planning

Fall 2026 Syllabus, Section 01, CRN 41193,

Credit hours: 3

Public Instructor Information

Instructor Title: Karen S. Cohen, CPA, Part-time instructor
Instructor Professional Qualifications: MBA in Business Administration with Finance Concentration, 1990, Youngstown State University; BS in BA with major in Accounting, 1989, Youngstown State University.
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Course Description

4815. Estate Planning. A study of estate and gift tax law including tax return preparation. Emphasis on the importance of estate planning and the devices available for use in such planning, and effective uses of lifetime gifts, trusts, life insurance, pension plans, profit sharing, and other fringe benefit plans. The effects of state inheritance tax and property laws upon estate planning will be included. Prereq.: ACCT 4813 (C or better), 2.5 GPA. 3 s.h.

Course Readings

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Required	Estate Planning, 14th Edition	Michael A. Dalton and Thomas P. Langdon	978-1-957511-35-1 paper; 978-1-957511-36-8 ebook

Using an earlier edition of the text may be possible, as many larger concepts have not changed from year to year. However, using an older edition will require extra caution when learning new laws and annual exemption amounts that do change from year to year.

This is intended to be a face-to-face course. We will only meet via Webex if circumstances beyond our control intervene and require this. I plan to email you periodically, using your YSU email account and/or Blackboard, to provide supplemental information.

The course readings are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, research developments, current events, and/or to ensure better learning.

Course Schedule

Day	Date	Reading(s)	Proposed Topic	Due/To Prepare for Class
Tue	8/25	Chapter 1 - Introduction to estate planning	Basic framework of this course.	Read chapter before class; prepare to discuss it, syllabus, and semester project.
Thu	8/27	Chapter 2 - Basic estate planning documents	When and why various estate planning documents can be used.	Read chapter before class. Discussion emphasis will be placed on the four basic estate planning documents.
Tue	9/1	Chapter 2 - Continued		Bring a Will to class and be prepared to discuss it.
Thu	9/3	Chapter 3 - Types of property interests	Discuss how legal titling of property affects the disposition of the asset in an estate.	Read chapter, selection an ownership type and explain example to class. Discussion of Stanley Pigeon example will be assigned for next class.
Tue	9/8	Chapter 3 - Continued		Discuss Shayla Sapia and Stanley Pigeon examples in class.
Thu	9/10	Chapter 4 - The probate process	What happens if there is no plan?	Read chapter. How do assets end up in Probate? Should we avoid Probate? Ted and Alice discussion example will be assigned.
Tue	9/15	Chapter 4 - Continued		Ted and Alice recap discussion in class. Review for Test #1.

Thu	9/17	Test #1	Today's classtime will be spent in completing the first test of the semester, in class.	Review all materials to date, including Chapters 1-4 of textbook.
Tue	9/22	Chapter 5 -The gift tax	Lifetime giving to individuals and trusts	Read chapter. At what point, and by whom, will gift tax be paid on a gift?
Thu	9/24	Chapter 5 - Continued		Be prepared to explain gift tax to a client.
Tue	9/29	Chapter 6 - The estate tax	Estate tax is the tax that may be levied on a decedent's assets that are owned at date of death	Read chapter. Think about how to plan in an everchanging tax environment.
Thu	10/1	Chapter 6 - Continued		Be prepared to explain what happens to digital assets at death.
Tue	10/6	Chapter 7 - Transfers during life and at death	When is the best time to transfer a particular asset?	Read chapter. Is there any type of asset that does not require estate planning?
Thu	10/8	Chapter 7 - Continued		Be prepared to explain Medicaid planning.
Tue	10/13	Chapter 8 - Trusts	Implementing trusts during life and at death	Read chapter. Who needs a trust?
Thu	10/15	Chapter 8 - Continued		Be prepared to discuss a variety of types of trusts.
Tue	10/20	Chapter 8 - Continued		Continued discussion of trusts. Review for Test #2. We will discuss semester projects.
Thu	10/22	Test #2	Today's classtime will be spent in completing the second test of the semester, in class.	Review Chapters 5-8, review concepts from earlier chapters.
Tue	10/27	Chapter 9 - Charitable giving	Charitable giving during life and at death	Read chapter. We will discuss the chapter and outside examples of charitable giving strategies.
Thu	10/29	Chapter 9 - Continued		Be prepared to discuss which charities you would recommend supporting and why.
Tue	11/3	Chapter 10 - The unlimited marital deduction	A powerful deduction that can eliminate estate tax at the passing of the first spouse	Read chapter. We will discuss the risk and reward of a double step up in basis.
Thu	11/5	Chapter 11 - Life insurance	Uses and types of life insurance used in estate planning	Read chapter. We will discuss examples of viatical settlements.
Tue	11/10	Chapter 11 - Continued		Be prepared to discuss when life insurance is needed and why.
Thu	11/12	Continued discussion of materials	Semester project presentations may begin	Teams of 1-2 students will present an estate plan for a real or fictitious client.
Tue	11/17	Chapter 12 - Special elections and postmortem planning	Planning that can be undertaken after the passing of a client to obtain a better result for the family	Read chapter. Semester projects continue. We will discuss the topics covered in the chapter.
Thu	11/19	Chapter 12 - Continued		Semester projects continue. We will discuss Disclaimers and when to use them.
Tue	11/24	Chapter 13 - Generation skipping transfers	Can we make gifts to "skip people" to avoid estate tax at each generation?	Read chapter. Semester projects continue. We will discuss the most common aspects of generation skipping transfers encountered in planning.
Thu	11/26	Thanksgiving Day - NO CLASS		
Tue	12/1	Chapter 13 - Continued		Semester projects continue. We will discuss how trusts provide ways to avoid the generation skipping transfer tax.
Thu	12/3	Review for final exam		Semester projects continue. Wrap-up discussion for course.
Tue	12/8	Final exam - Test #3	Official time is 3:15 to 5:15PM	Review Chapters 9-13, review concepts from earlier chapters.

The course schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better learning.