Dr. Sachs' Welcome Letter for Fall, 2012 Online CAOT Students

ONLINE Computer Applications Classes

FA12 begins August 27, 2012 (but you can and should do preparatory work before that).

Dr. Steven Mark Sachs
Professor of Computer Applications Office Technology, Counseling, and Psychology

Welcome to our Computer Applications Office Technology Online Class for the Fall, 2012 Semester!

Hi. I am Dr. Steve Sachs, and I will be your online instructor. I am happy you have chosen to enroll in this course, and I am looking forward to working with you this semester. This letter is relevant to both CAOT 82 online students and to CAOT 85 online students. (It is not relevant to CAOT Hybrid students.)

In CAOT 82, we will examine the major applications in Microsoft Office 2010, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access.

In CAOT 85, we will delve into the most-used “spreadsheet” software in the world: Microsoft Excel. We will study the 2010 version.

For some classes, there will also be a small segment on basic computer use. However, students taking online courses are expected to already have considerable computer literacy.
Caveats

Hybrid-Class Students (different from online-class students)
This letter is not relevant to my Hybrid class. It is exclusively for Online-only classes.

PC vs. Mac or Apple
This course teaches the Microsoft Office 2010 "PC" ("Personal Computer") version of software. IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO TAKE THIS COURSE USING A "MAC" OR "APPLE" OR MINI-LAPTOP COMPUTER. LAVC does not teach the Mac version of MS Office. While the online exams and online assessments in the SAM system (see below) could be effected with a Mac, the textbook work cannot be done on a Mac properly unless you have expensive, battle-tested, bulletproof Mac PC emulation software. I cannot recommend any such emulation software; I recommend that you stay away from it.

Screen Resolution

The Syllabus, which is available at [http://www.SachsAcademics.com](http://www.SachsAcademics.com), will direct you to ensure that your screen resolution is 1024x768 for optimal display. You should use this resolution any time you use Microsoft Office unless you have a super-resolution screen that can do higher numbers. There is a resource (in the Etudes system -- see below) that teaches you how to change the resolution for PC-type computers, in case you don't already know how.

You Need Your Own SAM Code and Your Own Individual Computer. They are Not to be Shared.
Sometimes students try to "share" textbooks, computers, and other resources. Bad, bad idea. For one thing, exams have time limits, and there is just enough time for one person to complete each exam. So having your own computer for exclusive use is vital. For another thing, if you don't have your own, individual SAM code (with which you will be creating a unique SAM online account), you will not be able to take any of the exams and you won't have access to the online training. Also, the book is a resource you will need to refer to frequently, and trying to share it would really backfire. Get your own bundle, and work on your own, separate computer, and ensure that you have high-speed internet access, even if you're living with someone else who's taking the same class at the same time.

General Note
This online course will be taught 100 percent online. All quizzes, tests, and assignments will be completed online. There are no required on-campus meetings. While you will enjoy greater flexibility in scheduling your study time, you will need to be solidly self-motivated and disciplined in setting your study schedule and completing course requirements. All assignments, tests, and quizzes will be completed according to a specific timeline that is visible within the
online software. There are notations in the *Syllabus* and in the Etudes Announcements that will help you understand those timelines.

**Textbook BUNDLE (not an individual textbook)**

You will need to obtain a specific textbook “bundle” that includes several elements. This bundle is available at the Los Angeles Valley College bookstore. You can order it from the bookstore online at [http://www.lavcbookstore.com](http://www.lavcbookstore.com). You should get the bundle as soon as you can, but check with the bookstore to see if it’s in stock if you are shopping long before the semester starts. Here’s the bundle information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Textbook Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Bundle ISBN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAOT 82</td>
<td>Shelly/Cashman</td>
<td>Microsoft Office 2010 Introductory</td>
<td>Course Technology/Cengage</td>
<td>1133072623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAOT 85</td>
<td>Shelly/Cashman</td>
<td>Microsoft Excel 2010 Complete</td>
<td>Course Technology/Cengage</td>
<td>1133073220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The textbook bundle includes: (1) the book; (2) 180-day full version of Microsoft Office 2010 Professional software; and (3) a packet with the unique SAM Access code (see below) you will need for the course. Although the software and the SAM access codes could be purchased separately (not from the LAVC bookstore), I understand that they are significantly more expensive if not purchased in the bundle.

For a more complete discussion of textbook alternatives, I recommend that you read the "Textbook and the Bundle" section of the TEXTBOOK area of the *Syllabus*. You'll find this in the Table of Contents at the far left of your screen once you have chosen your class' individual *Syllabus* on top menu of the website.

**SPECIAL TEXTBOOK NOTE FOR CAOT 85 STUDENTS**

Our textbook, entitled *Microsoft Excel 2010 Complete*, covers a little more information than we will be covering in the class. It's a fine textbook. But I want you to know that there is an even more "comprehensive" book in the same series, entitled Microsoft Excel 2010 *Comprehensive* (ISBN 9781439079010). If you want to obtain and keep a very complete reference for Excel, you may opt to buy this version. It does not come in a bundle; you’d need to buy the additional components separately. This *Comprehensive* book contains everything in the *Complete* version plus lots more. It would be appropriate for an advanced Excel class (which LAVC currently does not offer).
Software

Free Adobe Reader and Adobe Flash Player Software
For many of the files you'll have to read in this class, your computer will need to have free Adobe Reader software installed. You can download this free, safe software here: http://get.adobe.com/reader/. You will also need Adobe Flash Player from the same company, which you can get here: http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer. I recommend taking care of this right now.

SAM
For this class, you will need to create an account in the SAM system. This system will be used for all exams and for online training as well. To create the SAM account, you will need a special, one-time-use code that will be included in your textbook bundle. Therefore, you will not be able to create your SAM account until you have purchased and received your own textbook bundle.

To create your SAM account, you will need a SAM code from the textbook bundle PLUS you must have the Institution Key. Our SAM Institution Key is: T2054479.

This is nice: There are student training videos on how to use SAM. Go through them early and be really ready! Here's the URL to get you there (you'll need to scroll about halfway down the page to see the student videos; the instructor videos are on top and won't be useful to you): http://www.cengage.com/tlconnect/client/product/selfTrainingVideos.do?productId=49. (You may have to copy and paste the URL into your browser to get the link to work.)

You should create your SAM account as soon as you get your textbook bundle (and its SAM code), long before the semester begins if possible.

You can read about SAM System Requirements by clicking HERE.

Read and Digest the Syllabus, First Steps, and Readiness Checklist Documents. These are Parts of the SachsAcademics.com Website.

If you're reading this online, you're probably already on the website. But if you're looking at this on paper, you’ll find the Syllabus, First Steps, Readiness Checklist, and tons of other stuff at the following URL:
Click on CAOT CLASSES at the top, then read First Steps right away. This will help you get ready and will help explain the Syllabus. Every word is critical in the Welcome Letter (you're reading that now), the First Steps document, and the Syllabus. You should obtain and read these in fine detail as soon as you can, if possible even before the semester begins. You will be referring back to the Syllabus many times over the semester.

**Virtual Valley Resources**

There is a great Virtual Valley website for all online students (if you’re taking a class online from LAVC, you are a part of “Virtual Valley”), and you should check it out thoroughly. Here’s the URL:  [http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/index.html](http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/index.html). An especially important part of that site can be reached by clicking on the STUDENT RESOURCES drop-down near the top of the page; then click on Things You Need to Know. Please take all the stuff there very seriously.

There’s also an “Online Learning Success Self-Paced Tutorial” on the right side of the Virtual Valley web page; I’d look through that too, if you have the time.

I would also like to recommend extremely strongly that you take the Readiness Assessment to make sure you’re really ready for an online class. Although it is part of another college’s web site, you are free to take it, and you should. You can find it here: [http://www.foothill.edu/fga/pre_assessment.php](http://www.foothill.edu/fga/pre_assessment.php).

**More Course Information**

Here is a special Welcome Video. If you cannot see it directly below this paragraph, go here to see the Welcome video directly:  [http://youtu.be/UCVTkTfORgY](http://youtu.be/UCVTkTfORgY). (Watching it on a smartphone or other wireless device may incur some delays since it has to download a lot of stuff to play a video; you also may incur connection charges from your internet provider if you have a limited account.)
Etudes Login

The main course communications website will be available shortly through a system called ETUDES. You should log on at your first opportunity using the username and password described below. You will be able to get into this system once the college populates Etudes with student information; sometimes they don’t do that until a couple of weeks before the semester begins.

Make sure you have a working e-mail address, and ensure that the LAVC Admissions Office knows your e-mail address. A link to the Etudes website and information regarding your LAVC username and password can be found at the following URL: http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/studentLoggingInOnline.html. After you know how to log in to Etudes online, you can get to the Etudes directly site by going here: http://www.myetudes.org. (Note 1: There is an Etudes iPhone/iPad app. Note 2: Although the Logging In Online page says that ETUDES is where “… you will perform all of your class work,” that is not accurate. Much more class work will be done in SAM, as you will learn once you read very carefully through our entire class Syllabus.)

Once you are “into” your account on the Etudes system, have a look immediately on the left side, and click on and read the Announcements and Syllabus sections. Then go to the Resources section, and download and/or print and read and digest everything there. Don’t skip anything! These will all help get you started on your adventure.

Please don’t be put off by the volume of written material there is to download and digest. My approach is to explain as much as possible so there are as few questions – and the lowest amount of confusion – possible. The volume of support and informational material will decline after the semester begins. Of course, at that time the volume of instructional material will increase!

Know that there are computer labs available on campus if you do not have internet access or if you have technical problems. The most appropriate lab for you is in the Business/Journalism building, room 103. If you want to use the on-campus lab(s), you'll need to have your student ID card with you. Check with the Admissions office about how to get one. You are never required to come on campus for this class, though, and you don't need to have you student ID card with you just to set foot on the campus.
Major Exam Timing: Certain Sunday Evenings Must be Available. Read this CAREFULLY please.

All Major Exams (except for the Final Major Exam, which, for Fall, 2012, will take place on the first day of Final Exams -- a Monday) will take place somewhere within the time window between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. on certain Sunday evenings. Once you go onto the classes website and click on your class across the top of the page, you can find and click on SCHEDULE to see all upcoming significant dates, including the Sundays when there will be Major Exams. If you cannot take exams during these date/time combinations, then you should not maintain your enrollment in this class since you cannot pass without taking the Major Exams. THE TIMING OF THE MAJOR EXAMS IS SET INVARIA BLY. If you have an "emergency" at the time of one of these, you will simply need to skip that exam. No make-ups, no re-scheduling. Extra-credit, optional BUMPS CORE Projects (you'll read about them in the Syllabus) MAY take place on Mondays following some but not all Pre-Final Major Exams, typically during the same 7-10 p.m. time window.

Required Communications for ONLINE Students: Extremely Important!

Early in the semester, you will see an Announcement in the Etudes communications software that will require you to send me a pre-written Affirmation. The Affirmation basically says that you will not use any resources, other than your brain and hands, when you take any of the exams. IF YOU DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR AFFIRMATION WHEN REQUIRED, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE ANY EXAMS AND WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE WITH THE COURSE. Please watch and respond to all of the Announcements very carefully and appropriately. You will be able to preview the Affirmation text in the Syllabus.

From time to time, you will also see an Announcement in the Etudes communications software requiring you to send me an "I am In!" message. This is my way of taking roll, since, in an online course, there is no traditional "roll call." IF YOU DO NOT SEND ME THE "I AM IN" MESSAGES WHEN REQUIRED, YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE WITH THE COURSE. Please watch and respond to all of the Announcements very carefully and appropriately.

Are You Ready?
You're now ready to read the First Steps document (and the Readiness Checklist) and the online, linked Syllabus. These are all at SachsAcademics.com. I am looking forward to an enjoyable semester with you and I wish you good luck in the course.

All the best,

Dr. Steven Mark Sachs
"Professor Steve"
Professor of Psychology, Computer Applications Office Technology, and Counseling

rev 07162012/1517