

ACCT 5200
Professional Ethics and Corporate Governance
Course Syllabus
Fall, 2013

I. Professor:

Dr. Mary B. Curtis, PhD, CPA, CISA

Office: Business Leadership Building 385N

Office Hours: Tues 3:00 – 6:00, Thur 11:00 – 12:30; Additionally, you are welcome to stop by any time I am in my office or to contact me for an appointment.

Office Telephone: (940) 565-4366 E-Mail: Mary.Curtis@unt.edu

II. Course Objectives:

This course will examine professional ethics from both a philosophical and business perspective. My objectives for you in this course are:

- a. Increase your awareness of and ability to recognize ethical dilemmas in accounting,
- b. Increase your understanding of the ethical attitudes of others around you,
- c. Provide a basic understanding of the conceptual foundations from which action can be taken, and
- d. Provide a decision-making guide that can be utilized in personal and professional decision-making.
- e. A later segment of the course will be devoted to an examination of *Codes of Professional Conduct* issued by companies and professional organizations, with emphasis on the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy.

III. Text Material:

Moral Leadership and Ethical Decision Making, by Cherrington and Cherrington, 1st edition, CHC Forecast, Inc., 2000. (ML)

Additional Sources of Selected Readings:

Open Compliance and Ethics Group, an organization dedicated to the reform of corporate governance.

The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, *Code of Professional Conduct*

The Texas State Board of Public Accountancy, *Rules of Professional Conduct*

IV. Course Activities and Expectations:

- a. *Participation (25 points):* This is a discussion class. The primary mode of learning in this course involves exploring your beliefs and personal standards, discussing those with others, and active listening when others share their ideas with you. Therefore, all class members are expected to actively participate in discussions. Class participation consists of class attendance, preparation, interactions with your team as well as candid input on the issues addressed in the class and your opinions about the questions and case material we discuss. More information related to the grading of participation is available on Blackboard.

I encourage you to express your views on the subjects we discuss. Your views are just that, ***they're your views!*** By expressing your views and indicating why you hold those views you will either become stronger in those views or you will see reasons for a reconsideration of those views. In either case, you will have benefited from such discussions. The concepts of ethical behavior and personal values are subject to a great deal of variation among individuals. Your opinions may differ dramatically from those of other students, and it is imperative that we learn to disagree without being disagreeable. The purpose of this course is to help you intelligently assess your ethical behavior and personal values. Since there are no correct or incorrect answers to the questions we will discuss, the evaluation of your participation is not based on agreeing with the instructor or any other member of the class. Also, since you can't participate if you're not in class, failure to attend class will serve to reduce your participation score.

Questions for each chapter that will be used to guide your reading, and may be used for class discussion, are presented on Blackboard. Additionally, cases with questions will be assigned for each week. An effective way to improve your participation grade is to prepare for these questions in advance.

Participation can also take place on-line. On Blackboard, you will find a Shared Learning discussion board for sharing your ideas. One of your class participation expectations is that you prepare and present at least one story (article, video/podcast, etc) for posting. When you post, include a summary of the article and an explanation of how it is related to the class. Comments on other's postings are considered a contribution to Shared Learning, although to a lesser extent.

- b. *Class Activities (25):* One or more cases will be assigned each week, in addition to reading materials (See VII. Weekly Assignments, below). The answers to these cases are to be turned in only at the beginning of the designated class. Late submissions cannot be accepted. If you will miss class, you may submit this assignment prior to the start of the class via email. This assignment can be hand-written, as long as it is legible. Make yourself a copy of what you plan to turn in, because this material will be discussed in class and you may want your solution to refer to during discussion; *since I only give credit for submissions received at the beginning of class, you cannot keep the copy you want me to grade for your reference during class.*

Questions on the reading assignments will be posted on Blackboard. These should be completed in preparation for class discussion, but need not be turned in.

We will also have in-class activities and possibly even quizzes as components of your grade. These cannot be made-up if you are absent from class.

- c. *Exams: (75 points each):* We will have three exams this semester. The exam material will be taken from materials assigned, including textbook, other readings, and cases; class discussions; in-class activities; and Shared Learning postings.
- d. *Case (50 points):* One major case will be written-up and submitted during the semester. In developing your solution, be careful to thoroughly address each question. This case is due October 29th. This assignment should be type-written, 12-point Times New Roman type, double-spaced and one-inch margins, use appropriate format as described in an acceptable writing style manual (including citations, where allowed), and printed one-sided with a cover sheet. Your name should appear only on the cover sheet. If the assignment includes a set of questions, you should type in each question, in bold, prior to each answer presented.

Summary of Course Grade:

Course activities will carry the following weights:

Case	50
Class Activities	25
Class Participation	25
First Examination	75
Second Examination	75
Third Examination	<u>75</u>
Total Points	325

V. Summary of Course Coverage:

Weeks 1 – 11	Ethical Reasoning and Moral Judgment
Weeks 12 – 15	Corporate Governance and Codes of Conduct

VI. Weekly Assignments

Reading and case or question material is assigned for each class meeting. You are expected to thoroughly read all assigned materials and prepare to discuss these. Additionally, you are required to hand in a written response to every case assigned during the semester (see tentative class schedule). Answers to these weekly assigned cases or questions may be hand written (I must be able to read your writing) or typed. These case submissions will be graded either acceptable or unacceptable.

VII. Course Communications

All students are expected to activate their Eaglemail account provided by the university. Eaglemail is the official e-mail account and e-mail contact for all students at UNT. Communications regarding this course will be made through Blackboard or as a reply to a personal email you may sent me. Any information in this syllabus may change, and the

notification will be made either in class or via email. Therefore, you are expected to check your Blackboard email on a regular basis. When you email me through my UNT email account, please put ACCT5200 in the subject line so that I can recognize that the email came from a student, who receive my highest priority.

VIII. Late Assignments and Make-Ups

No late assignments will be accepted - all materials due in class must be turned in within the first 5 minutes of class – materials may be turned in prior to class via email if you will not be attending class. If you email an assignment, make sure your name is included in the document, not merely in your email.

No make-up of any examination will be given unless the reason for your absence meets the university definition of an excused activity. The instructor must be notified prior to the exam in order for a missed exam to be eligible for make-up.

IX. Being Late to Class or Missing a Class Meeting

Much of the important learning in the class and coverage of a majority of the material on which you are tested takes place during class. This includes but is not limited to class discussions and videos, and the videos are not generally available outside of class. However, class attendance is completely up to you. If you are going to attend class, I request that you arrive on time and remain seated while class is in session. Students walking in and out during class is disruptive to me and to the other students in the class. Points will be deducted for students who disrupt class in this way.

X. Scholastic Honesty Policy and Inappropriate Behavior

Plagiarism or any other form of dishonesty will not be tolerated. The minimum penalty for a class member found guilty of plagiarism or dishonesty will be a grade of "F" in the course. Such conduct obviously constitutes unethical behavior and will be dealt with severely.

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive, and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. This is a discussion class; speaking in class comes easily for some students, but is more difficult for others. Any actions in or outside of the classroom that discourages your classmates from participating in class or creates an environment where your classmates do not feel safe speaking up will be considered inappropriate behavior and falls within these policies. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu>.

XI. Succeed at UNT initiative

UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grow. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here's how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find support. Take control. Be prepared. Get involved. Be persistent.

XII. Disability Accommodation

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://disability.unt.edu>. You may also contact them by phone at (940) 565-4323.

XIII. Missing class due to a religious holiday

Please see the most current university policy at:

http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/15.2.5_Attendance%20Policy.pdf

If you expect to miss class due to a religious holiday conflict, please notify me immediately.

Tentative Weekly Assignments	
<u>Week</u>	<u>Material Covered</u>
1, Sept 3	Topic: Introduction, Overview of Course and Discussion of Ethical Reasoning
	Topic: Moral Character
	A. Understanding Moral Character
	B. Four Components Model
	C. Honesty and Integrity
	D. Descriptions of Character
	Assignment: Read: ML Ch 1; In Class: Ch1 Case 3 and Handout case

- 2, Sept 10 **Topic: Character Development**
 A. Levels of Moral Judgment
 B. Components of Character
 C. Building Character
Assignment: Read: ML Ch 2; **Write-up:** Ch2 Case 2 and your *personal moral principles* assignment
- 3, Sept 17 **Topic: Moral Leadership**
 A. Understanding Honesty
 B. Measuring Honesty
 C. Why Good People Go Wrong
 D. Moral Decision Making
 E. Principles of Moral Leadership
 F. Moral Accountability
Assignment: Read: ML Ch 3 & 4; **Write-up:** Ch3 Case 1 (classify and answer questions) and Ch4 Case 2
- 4, Sept 24 **Topic: Developing Morality in Organizations**
 A. Moral Climate
 B. Moral Standards in Organizations
 C. Organizational Influence on Character Development
Assignment: Read: ML Ch 5; **Write-up:** Ch5 Case 2 and Handout case (answer questions and also apply EDRF);
- 5, Oct 1 **First Exam (first half of class/week) and Video (second half)**
- 6, Oct 8 **Topic: Making Ethical Decisions**
 A. Moral Behavior
 B. Characteristics of Moral Standards
 C. Relativism vs. Universalism
 D. Moral Issues and Ethical Principles
 E. The Concept of Ethical Egoism
 F. Business and Morality
Assignment: Read: ML Ch 6; **Write-up:** Ch6 Case 2 & Handout case (apply EDRF)
- 7, Oct 15 **Topic: Economic Self-Interest and Utilitarianism**
 A. The Concept of Ethical Egoism
 B. Business and Morality
 C. Utilitarian Decision Framework
 D. Objections to Utilitarianism
Assignment: Read: ML Ch 7 and Ch 8; **Write-up:** Ch7 Case 1 & Ch8 Case 2 (apply EDRF)
- 8, Oct 22 **Topic: Reason and Universal Justice**
 A. The Categorical Imperative
 B. Applying the Categorical Imperative
 C. Theories of Social Justice
Assignment: Read: ML Ch 11; **Write-up:** Ch11 Case 1

- 9, Oct 29 **Topic: Moral Decision-Making Process**
 A. A Framework: Steps in the Decision-Making Process
 B. Decision Strategies
 C. Personal Morality
Assignment: Read: ML Ch 12; **Write-up:** none; **Case assignment due**
- 10, Nov 5 **Second Exam (first half of class/week)**
Topic (second half of class/week): Design and Purpose of Codes of Conduct
 A. Intended Purpose of a Code of Conduct
 B. Critical Elements in the Development of a Code of Conduct
 C. Constituents to Consider in Developing a Code of Conduct
Assignment: Handout material on developing codes of professional conduct
Write-up: assigned handout cases and updated version of your *personal moral principles*
- 11, Nov 12 **Topic: American Institute of Certified Public Accountant's *Code of Professional Conduct*; Ethical Requirements of the Securities and Exchange Commission**
 A. Independence, Integrity, and Objectivity, Competence, Compliance with Standards
 B. Discreditable Acts
 C. Impact of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act
 D. Input of the SEC and the Public Companies Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB)
Assignment: Questions and case material will be distributed in class
- 12, Nov 19 **Topic: Texas State Board of Public Accountancy's *Rules of Professional Conduct***
 A. Public Accountancy Act
 B. General Provisions, Professional Standards, Responsibilities to Clients
 C. Responsibilities to the Public and to the Board/Profession
Assignment: Reading: TSBPA *Rules of Professional Conduct*. **Write-up:** Questions and case material will be distributed in class
- 13, 14, Nov 26, Dec 3 **Topic: Dealing with moral failure**
Assignment: Reading: Handout; **Write-up:** Handout cases
- Nov 28 **Thanksgiving Holiday**
- 15, Dec 10 **Third Exam**

UNT College of Business Student Ethics Statement

As a student of the UNT College of Business, I will abide by all applicable policies of the University of North Texas, including the Student Standards of Academic Integrity, the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline and the Computer Use Policy. I understand that I am responsible reviewing the policies as provided by link below before participating in this course. I understand that I may be sanctioned for violations of any of these policies in accordance with procedures as defined in each policy.

I will not engage in any acts of academic dishonesty as defined in the Student Standards of Academic Integrity, including but not limited to using another's thoughts or words without proper attribution (plagiarism) or using works in violation of copyright laws. I agree that all assignments I submit to the instructor and all tests I take shall be performed solely by me, except where my instructor requires participation in a group project in which case I will abide by the specific directives of the instructor regarding group participation.

While engaged in on-line coursework, I will respect the privacy of other students taking online courses and the integrity of the computer systems and other users' data. I will comply with the copyright protection of licensed computer software. I will not intentionally obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with the teaching and learning that occurs on the website dedicated to this course through computer "hacking" or in any other manner.

I will not use the university information technology system in any manner that violates the UNT nondiscrimination and anti-sexual harassment policies. Further, I will not use the university information technology system to engage in verbal abuse, make threats, intimidate, harass, coerce, stalk or in any other manner which threatens or endangers the health, safety or welfare of any person. Speech protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution is not a violation of this provision, though fighting words and statements that reasonably threaten or endanger the health and safety of any person are not protected speech.

Student Standards of Academic Integrity

http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf

Code of Student Conduct and Discipline

http://conduct.unt.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/code_of_student_conduct.pdf

Computer Use Policy

<http://policy.unt.edu/policy/3-10>

Your signature below signifies that you have read this syllabus, including the above ethics statement, and that you commit to complying with all expectations stated herein and of the university.

Signature

Printed name

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Printed name