



HONORS 1000 SYLLABUS

Behavioral Ethics: Understanding Why “Good” Employees (and Students) Make Unethical Decisions

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Universities, businesses and other organizations create codes of conduct to define acceptable and responsible behavior within the organization; to articulate shared ethical principles, values and commitments; and to guide decision-making when values conflict. And yet, students and employees sometimes act contrary to these codes, other societal norms and even their own moral standards when they confront an ethical dilemma. Behavioral ethics studies various psychological biases and situational factors, as well as organizational and social pressures to explain why otherwise good people sometimes behave unethically and make bad decisions.

This course will first provide you with an opportunity to identify the ethical principles and core values that guide your conduct. Then through readings, short videos, and in-class exercises on behavioral ethics, we will examine how conflicts of interest, overconfidence, the role we play in a particular situation, and even the way we frame an ethical issue can influence our decisions, sometimes leading to conduct contrary to those principles and core values. We will then analyze and apply relevant portions of either a Fortune 500 company’s employee ethics code or the GSU Student Conduct Code to typical ethical dilemmas confronting employees or students.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Cultivate the values and attributes of an intellectual community, including the motivation to work hard, the willingness to embrace new concepts and methods of thinking, and the habit of being an active participant in the learning process.
- Enhance students’ ability to use and apply primary source materials through the critical examination, assessment and comparison of corporate and/or university Codes of Conduct.
- Enhance students’ ability to communicate orally and in writing at the collegiate level.

DESIRE2LEARN (D2L): You are not required to purchase a textbook for this class. Brief readings, links to videos, assignments and other course materials will be posted on D2L. To access my Honors 1000 D2L site, go to the GSU homepage at www.gsu.edu and then link to Desire2Learn from the pull-down menu behind the Students tab at the top of the page. When you get to the log-in page, use the name user name as you use for GSU e-mail your GoSolar pin number as your password. Check D2L regularly for new course materials and course-related announcements.

CLASS FORMAT: Class will be conducted as a seminar, with considerable time devoted to discussion, with teams of students assigned to lead discussions of readings and videos. In-class activities will explore corporate and university codes of conduct and/or apply representative code provisions to hypothetical scenarios involving business or students.

In addition, we will invite Jennifer Gerz-Escandon to talk about National Scholarships and how to build a portfolio to make students more competitive for these scholarships. We may invite other Honors College or GSU staff to talk about other college programs and opportunities.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (300 POINTS OR 60% OF YOUR GRADE):

- A. Homework (4 at 25 points each):

1. Mandatory meeting with me at my office **before October 1**.
 2. Jennifer Gerz-Escandon will visit our class on September 30 to tell us about National Scholarships available for college students. Before her visit, pairs of students will be assigned one of the scholarships to research, so that you will already know what the scholarship recognizes, the types of qualifications they seek, and the names of some of the recipients of these prestigious awards. After her visit, you will be asked to write a “reflections” essay in which you discuss the national scholarship(s) that interest you the most, why, and what you would need to do to make yourself more competitive for this award. Due **October 7**.
 3. The Honors College sponsors a number of activities each semester from invited speakers to more informal “Dine and Discover” and “Honors Essentials” events. I have posted a calendar of activities on D2L and you receive frequent emails from the college listing upcoming events. This fall’s speaker is Donna Gambrell (November 4), while “Dine and Discover” and “Honors Essentials” events are usually information sessions (typically at noon) that tell you about opportunities for study abroad, service activities, undergraduate research, and internships; scholarships, enhancing your research and writing skills, leadership, etiquette, and a variety of other topics). You are required to attend one Honors event and then write a brief Reflections essay briefly describing the event you attended, what you learned, whether it inspired you to act (and if so, how), and whether you would recommend this event to other Honors students. **Due November 11**, the class following Ms. Gambrell’s Founders Day lecture on “Why Race and Place Matter.”
 4. Time Allocation Diary as follow-up to “expected” use of time you identified on the first day of class. Due **October 28**; instructions will be provided in class later in the semester.
- B. Scandal Figure Presentation (75 points):** You and a partner will research an individual who has been tainted by scandal, prepare a 1-page handout that explains who your figure is, what that individual did (and when) that tarnished his/her reputation, the accepted explanation of why s/he engaged in this conduct, and your assessment of the ethics of that conduct. On **September 23**, each team will “present” their research and analysis to the class.
- C. Code of Conduct Project with Annotated Bibliography (75 points).** This project requires you to research corporate codes of conduct in general – why companies have them and the types of topics they usually address. After you identify a particular industry, you’ll locate and examine at least 1-2 codes of conduct developed by companies in that industry before you create a 3-5 page Code for “your” company. More details will be announced in class and posted on D2L. **Due November 18**.
- D. Take-Home Essay (50 points).** You will be given the take-home essay question(s) before Thanksgiving and your essay will be due at our last class (**December 2**). We will meet during the time scheduled for your exam during exam week (December 9 from 10:45 to 12:15) to discuss the exam and I will return your answers.

PARTICIPATION: (200 POINTS OR 40% OF YOUR GRADE): 100 of these participation points have been allocated to team-lead discussions of the behavioral ethics videos produced by the University of Texas McCombs School of Business, related assigned readings, and any additional research you did on the topic. Each team will be “responsible” for 15 minutes of class time. A sign-up sheet will be distributed soon and full instructions posted on D2L and announced in class.

Although you are expected to attend class and actively participate regular presence alone is not sufficient to earn the remaining 100 participation points in this class. The success of this course depends on active, effective student contribution to the topic being discussed. You will be expected to ask questions,

make comments and offer salient observations as we evaluate and apply various behavioral ethics concepts from the readings, videos and ethics codes you are researching.

EXTRA-CREDIT (25 points): Working individually or with a partner, create a 1-2 minute video that illustrates an aspect of the GSU Student Code of Conduct. More instructions will follow.

DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS: Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which accommodations are sought. Please let me know if you have a disability or special need that requires accommodation.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

- “People get hired for their technical training. They get fired for their lack of character.” -- Booker T. Washington.
- “It takes 20 years to build a reputation, and five minutes to ruin it.” – Warren Buffet.
- “We learned about honesty and integrity - that the truth matters... that you don't take shortcuts or play by your own set of rules... and success doesn't count unless you earn it fair and square.” – Michelle Obama

Academic honesty goes directly to the question of are you an individual of character and integrity. Academic dishonesty not only affects you, it affects the reputation of Georgia State University and will not be tolerated.

All university and college regulations concerning academic honesty apply to Honors 1000. In general, students are expected to recognize and uphold the highest standards of intellectual and academic integrity. More specifically, these standards require that students be honest and that they submit for credit only the products of their own efforts.

The GSU Academic Honesty Policy represents a core value of the University. All members of the University community – including students -- are responsible for knowing and abiding by its tenets. ***Lack of knowledge of the contents of the University Policy on Academic Honesty is not an acceptable defense to any charge of academic dishonesty.*** I have posted the full policy on D2L. Read it carefully, particularly the sections on unauthorized collaboration and plagiarism.

COURSE ASSESSMENT: "Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take the time to fill out the online course evaluation."

GRADING: Although this course is graded on a Pass-Fail basis, I will grade each assignment and your participation as if this were a graded class. At the end of the semester, you will need to have earned at least 75% of the available points (375 points out of 500) to “pass.” For those of you who are competitive (with yourself and against others), I will also post what your grade would be if this were a graded course.

Name _____ Date _____

Using the following scale, rate your own participation in today's class:

- 🍎 **5 Points = Outstanding Contributor:** My contributions in class reflected **exceptional** preparation. The ideas I offered were always substantive and provided one or more major insights, as well as direction for the class. If I had not participated, the quality of today's discussion would have been **significantly** diminished.
- 🍎 **4 Points = Good Contributor:** My contributions in class reflected **thorough** preparation. I was an active participant with substantive comments and good insights. If I had not participated, the quality of discussion would be diminished.
- 🍎 **3 Points = Adequate Contributor:** My contributions in today's class reflected some preparation, but my contribution to the discussion was fairly minimal, e.g., I asked brief question, typically to clarify a point already made or I answered questions but without a detailed explanation. If I had not participated, the quality of discussion would have been only somewhat diminished.
- 🍎 **2 Points = Low-to-Poor Participant:** I said little in today's class and nothing that contributed to the discussion. If had been absent, the quality of discussion would not be changed.
- 🍎 **1 Point = Unsatisfactory Contributor:** Although present for some or all of today's class, I did not contribute to class discussion to share my thoughts (or preparation) with others.

I can't always remember who said what, so please jot down your major contributions to today's discussion to help jog my memory and make it easier for me to assess your role. Mention specific comments, questions or insights, not general observations like "I contributed a lot." Thanks!

If you think a classmate (or 2) made exceptional contributions by exhibiting some of the characteristics below to enhance the discussion and/or your learning, you **MAY** nominate up to 2 students for Merit Points.

- Clearly presented complex ideas
- Demonstrated depth of analysis or reasoning
- Publicly tested her/his reasoning and assumptions, and encouraged others to do the same
- Was able to respond to questions and to defend his/her position
- Integrated materials from diverse sources
- Encouraged classmates to extend their learning

Based on these criteria, I would nominate _____ and _____.

Please explain why (for each classmate nominated).