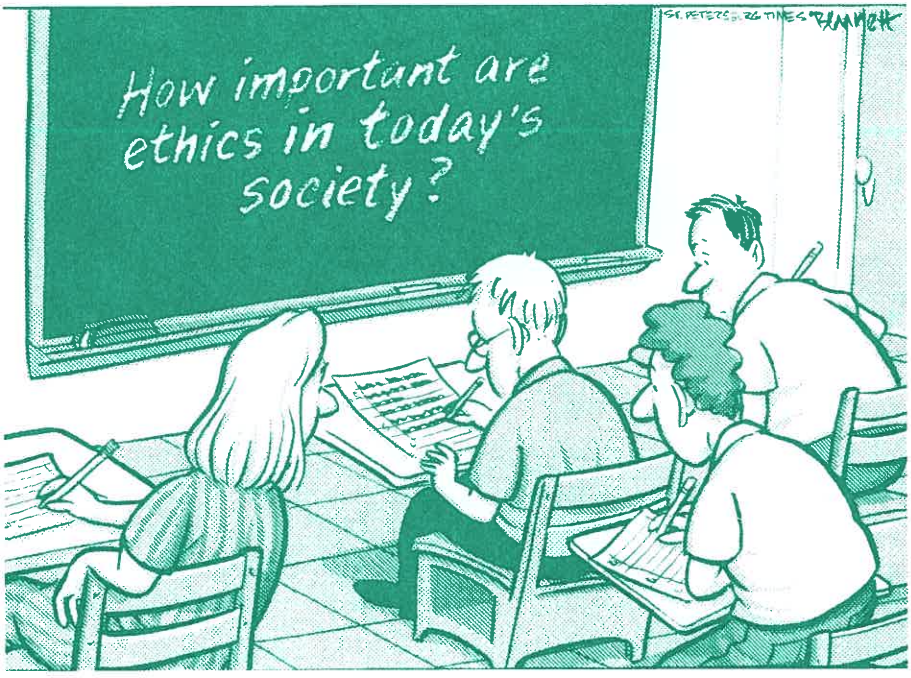
LESSON 1

WHY ETHICS MATTERS



Clay Bennett, North American Syndicate

WHY ETHICS MATTERS

Prework for participants: Ask participants to read a current newspaper or watch the news on TV prior to attending this first lesson. Assign the reading, "There's Only Ethics," or the preface and Chapter 2 of *How Good People Make Tough Choices* by Dr. Rushworth M. Kidder.

OBJECTIVE

By the end of this lesson, each participant will be able to:

- Identify his or her personal predisposition for making ethical choices
- Describe the role and status of ethics in our society today
- Identify factors influencing our ethical decisions now and in the future

OPENING

Introduction

With the millennium already under way, many people are questioning our ability to resolve the critical ethical dilemmas of our nation and world. This series of classes will help prepare you to meet these increasingly complex ethical challenges. After we orient ourselves to the expectations of this learning experience and collectively lay some ground rules, we will address some initial questions. What kind of ethical choices are we currently making? How do we define "ethics" and "ethical fitness"? How is the ethical barometer faring? Why is ethics important at all levels of society? What kinds of ethical issues do we find in newspapers and on TV news? What will we face in the future?

Expectations

To gain the most from this experience, we all need to make a commitment to:

- Actively participate in the individual exercises and group discussions
- Complete all readings, written assignments, and worksheets on time for use in class
- Engage in moral dialogue with our peers

Assignments/Requirements

Requirements for a for-credit course:

See Sample Syllabus included with this lesson.

Recommended requirements for both noncredit and for-credit course:

1. **Journal entry:** Keep a reflective journal throughout the sessions noting personal responses and questions relating to readings, worksheets, handouts, exercises, and class discussions. The journal entries can be a section in the notebook mentioned below. The journal can also include outside materials, e.g., news articles, Web sites, poems, stories, pictures, and letters that support or expand upon the concepts and cases discussed in class or related to the reading assignments. Creativity and making connections between theory and real life is encouraged.

2. **Notebook of readings, worksheets, and homework assignments from** *Building Ethical Fitness:* The purpose of the notebook and journal is to help the participant keep a session-by-session record of thoughts and observations and to develop the habit of self-reflection while strengthening the capacity for ethical decision making and action. In for-credit courses, the notebook and journal can be used to evaluate the student's learning as well.

Setting of Ground Rules

In order to engage in effective moral dialogue and to show respect for one another despite possible differences of opinion, we need to lay out some ground rules for how we will communicate and interact during our sessions. Can you suggest some rules with which we all can agree? These ground rules can be negotiated or modified if necessary by the group in the future. An example of a ground rule is, "Avoid interrupting someone who is speaking."

STRATEGIES

Use or adapt the above introduction to your audience and then hand out a description of any specific requirements or logistical information necessary for your group. Emphasize active involvement in the "moral dialogue" and sincere engagement in the exercises presented for maximum benefit and learning.

Next, administer the warm-up self-assessment activity, Making Ethical Choices. Divide students into small groups and ask them to share as much as they wish about their responses. Ask: What did you learn about your ethical decision-making tendencies? Did anything surprise you? How similar or different are your responses to those of other people in your small group? Are you satisfied with your responses? Why or why not?

Follow this discussion with a brief overview of the terms "ethics," "ethical fitness," and "obedience to the unenforceable" using the overheads provided and the Ethics versus the Law worksheet.

Begin the Ethical Barometer Exercise by distributing the Selected Survey Statistics handout and reviewing the Ethical Barometer overhead. In small groups, discuss and complete the Ethical Barometer Worksheet. Reconvene the large group and ask the participants to provide evidence or observations of the rise or fall of the ethical barometer. What are the reasons for their position? Students might be encouraged to say, "I believe the ethical barometer is rising or falling in our society because . . . ." Determine the group's final conclusions, and list on flip-chart paper what each of us can do about it.

Finally, distribute the Key Questions Exercise, based on the reading assignment, and facilitate a large-group discussion. Conclude with a consideration of future ethical issues this younger generation will face.

If time permits, engage in the Why is Ethics Important? worksheet (*See* also the supplemental worksheets at the end of the lesson: "Ethical Barometer in My Chosen Profession," "Why Ethics Matters in My Chosen Field," and "College Student Worksheet").

Key Questions

- Am I satisfied with my ethical choices? Why or why not?
- What do we mean by an "ethical barometer"?
- What evidence do we have that it is rising or falling in our society?
- What has changed our ethics in recent years?
- What new ethical issues will we face in the next ten years? Twenty-five years?

Closure & Transition

Over the course of history, observers of the prevailing culture have often called for improved moral behavior, especially of the younger generation. Why is this concern even more critical today, and how can we prepare ourselves to face the ethical challenges of a rapidly changing and uncertain future?

Homework for Lesson 2

- Community: A Work in Progress (worksheet)
- Community Interview Questions (worksheet)

- Why Ethics Matters in My Chosen Field (interview)
- Web site research on College Student Ethics (worksheet)

THERE'S ONLY ETHICS

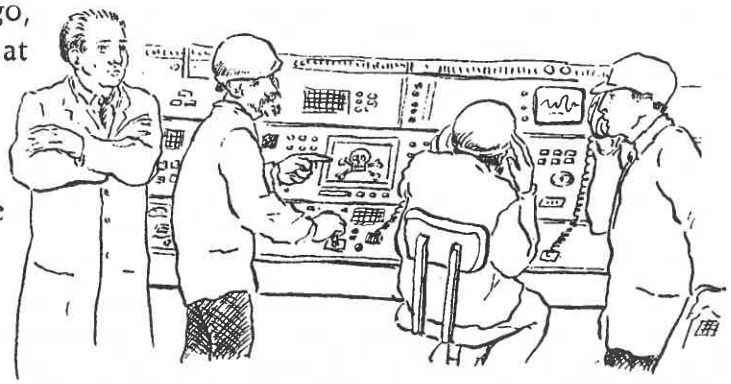
The following is based on a speech given by Dr. Rushworth Kidder, president of the Institute for Global Ethics.

ETHICS IS ESSENTIAL TO SURVIVAL

Ethics is not a luxury or a choice. It is essential to our survival. To support that point, let me give you three statements, two definitions, and one conclusion.

STATEMENT ONE: We will not survive the twenty-first century with the ethics of the twentieth century.

Why do I say that? Well, many years ago, in 1989, I visited Reactor Number Four at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Soviet Union. Three years earlier, in 1986, the reactor had exploded, causing the worst nuclear disaster in the history of the world.



Looking back later, I discovered that I was probably the first Western journalist ever to get that close to Chernobyl. I was taken there in the company of two of the engineers who had come in right after the accident on April 26, 1986, to help clean up the mess.

The radioactive fallout from that disaster was detected in hundreds of countries all over the world. The explosion and its aftermath killed thousands of Soviets.

Why did it happen? That night in 1986 there were two engineers in charge of the control room. It seems they decided to "play" with this gigantic nuclear reactor. As they continued to experiment, they ignored six separate computer-driven alarm systems. Each system would come up and say, "Stop! Don't do this! Terribly dangerous!"

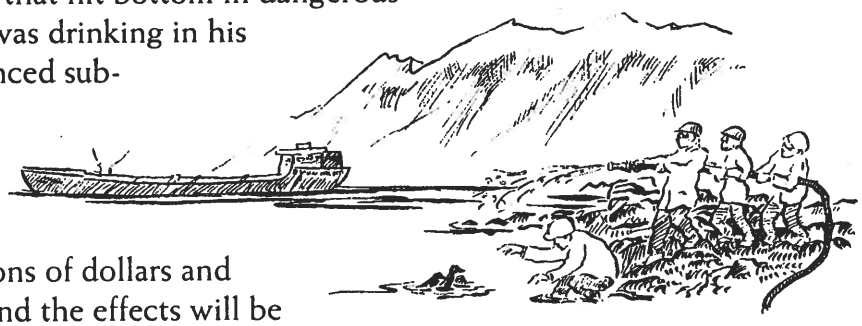
But instead of shutting off the experiment, they shut off the alarms.

When my friends got in there, they discovered there were valves padlocked in the "open" position to keep them from shutting down and turning off this experiment. That is how deliberate this whole thing was.

Now, the question to me is, what was going on in the minds of those engineers? Obviously, these were bright people. Jobs at Chernobyl go to the very best Russian students. These two engineers were well educated. Why did they decide to do something so terrible?

I think their consciences had to shut down before the alarm systems could be turned off. They must have known the possible consequences of what they were doing. What blew up Chernobyl was not a lack of knowledge. It was a lack of ethics.

That's a very important point for the twenty-first century. There is no machine you could have put those individuals in front of in the 19th century and said, "Do the worst thing you can with this machine," that would have produced the damage of Chernobyl. Or, to change examples, let's think about the 1989 disaster caused by the American oil tanker Exxon *Valdez*, a large ship that hit bottom in dangerous waters while the captain was drinking in his cabin, with a less experienced subordinate left in charge.

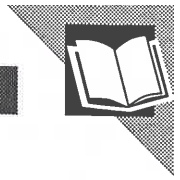


The oil spill from this ship killed thousands of animals and took millions of dollars and many years to clean up, and the effects will be felt for decades. Ships as big as the *Valdez*, carrying millions of gallons of oil, were not in use just a century ago. Back then, no one imagined that such enormous destruction might, one day, be the result of one person's thoughtless behavior.

Or consider the "I Love You" virus. Designed and executed from the desk of a 23-year-old man in the Philippines, this malicious computer virus spread through the world's Internet system affecting millions of computers around the globe and prompting hundreds of copycats within days of the original virus's release. How in the 19th century could a few young people in Manila have developed a computer virus and launched it into the world to do an estimated $10 billion in damage?

The point here is that the very scale of our systems, the scale of our technology itself, is multiplying the importance of ethics in brand-new ways. Whether the people making decisions are the decision makers at the top or the people who work for them, our increasing reliance on technology almost guarantees that every worker will face many more difficult challenges today than were faced in the past. And what is going on in the consciences of those individuals directly determines the use of that system.

In the twenty-first century, Chernobyl and the Exxon *Valdez* will seem small. Consider, for example, the current and future possibilities of genetic engineering or cyberspace. Then consider the ethical sophistication needed to manage them.



Not only will we need to learn complex new technologies that demand intelligence and expertise. We will also need to develop the ethical awareness to avoid the misuse of such systems, because ethical mistakes could lead to large-scale disaster.

That is why it seems to me we will not survive the twenty-first century with the ethics of the twentieth century. Something significant has to change.

Reading the Moral Barometer

Statement Two: While we know we need to make some changes in our ethical behavior, we are not in good shape to make those changes.

Why? Well despite some good signs, many surveys point to some unsettling trends. Before looking at those trends, what are the good signs?

- When the Gallup Organization asked the U.S. public to identify the "most important problem" facing the nation in 1999, "ethics, morality, and family values" came out at the very top for the first time in 50 years that Gallup has asked that question.
- A 2000 annual survey of high achievers published by Who's Who Among American High School Students identified "moral and social breakdown" as today's greatest national crisis, as well as the biggest problem facing the teen generation.

In other words, there is increasing interest in the question of ethics, and increasing evidence that we want stronger ethics. But even though we are more interested in ethics, there is a serious question about whether we're doing anything about it.

Consider these statistics:

- In a 1999 Public Agenda Survey, only 13 percent surveyed said that "teens who treat people with respect" are "very common." Thirty-four percent said they were not common at all.
- Seventy-eight percent of teens surveyed in the 2000 Who's Who Among American High School Students admitted to cheating and say that consequences are virtually nonexistent.
- In a 2000 poll sponsored by the Horatio Alger Association, 34 percent of 14- to 18-year-olds said that their idea of the American Dream involved possessions and their career, and 30 percent said it involved monetary gain and comfort.

You may think we are only talking about students. We're not. We are talking about America's middle managers in the year 2020—and about the top business leaders, the senators and representatives, the heads of schools and charities in the year 2030.

We are talking about the people who are going to be piloting *your* airplanes while you sit back wondering, "Does this guy really know how to fly, or did he just fake his way through his exams?" We are talking about the people who are going to be managing *your* money.

But Are Kids to Blame?

I don't think so. There was a story reported in one of the New York newspapers a while ago about a ten-year-old child who found on the street a wallet full of money, full of credit cards, and full of identification. He reportedly took the wallet to school, where he could find no one—no teacher, no administrator—willing to tell him what was the right thing to do with that wallet.

Essentially they all said, "Gee, I can't impose my values on you, kid. I mean, if I told you what to do, that would not be right. You have to sort it out for yourself—otherwise it's my ethics and not yours. Besides, you're poor and this guy is obviously rich. Your mother might be mad if I told you to send the wallet back. No, you figure it out for yourself."

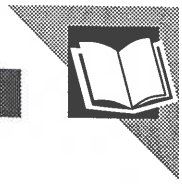
What's going on? Why do they feel this way? Why has our educational system delivered us into a situation where even the most basic concepts of honesty, responsibility, and respect for others are not being taught?

Why Ethical Relativism Fails

That question brings me to Statement Three, which is simply this: The principal difficulty we face is the idea that there are no absolutes, no common values, no standards, no core set of moral ideas out there that can be shared and understood. It is the notion that all ethics is relative, negotiable, fluid, intensely personal.

Let me give you an example of how it surfaces. Let's say that at a school committee meeting, the committee members get thinking about the big issues facing the world in the next century. They want to shape an educational system to prepare students to meet those challenges.

Pretty quickly someone realizes that teaching in schools has been mostly about the facts—about biology, or math, or history. And they realize that that's good, but it's not enough—that we will not survive the next century without better ethics. So someone suggests that we teach values and ethics.



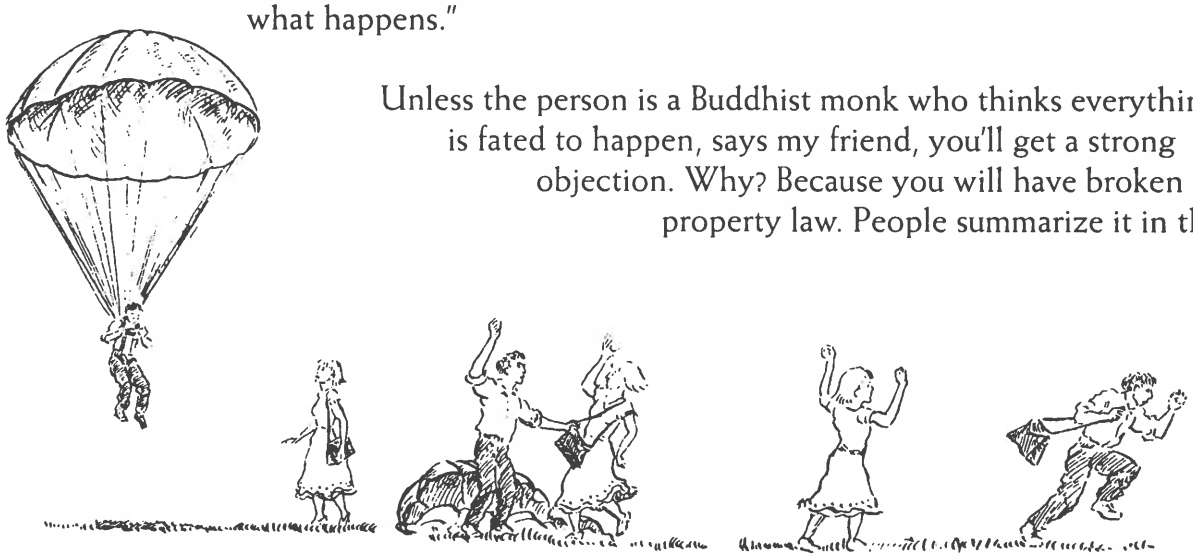
And immediately somebody in the back of the room stands up and says, "But whose values will you teach?" When someone asks this question, he or she may be trying to stop the discussion, thinking, "if you dare to teach ethics, you are imposing *your* values on *my* kid, and I don't like that!"

So let's examine this issue a little more. When people imagine that all values are relative and no standards exist, they sometimes use the famous scientist Albert Einstein to support their arguments. "See," some people are fond of saying, "Einstein proved that everything is relative. There are no absolutes out there in the physical world. So how do you expect there to be absolutes in the moral realm? This is the twentieth century: We no longer believe in absolutes and constants."

Einstein would be horrified to hear that his ideas are being used this way. And so would your friendly local research physicist. The next time you see her, ask her what would happen if, when she went into her laboratory tomorrow, she said, "Okay, everything is relative. Today I think we will set the speed of light at sort of . . . well, about here! And I've always thought pi was too large, so let's call it 2.8 for today. And we'll say Planck's Constant is this, and Avogadro's number is that, and the acceleration due to gravity is right about here for today."

Ask her how successful she's going to be in physics if she really believes that Einstein was saying that all things are relative and there are no constants.

Don't believe that argument. There are constants in the physical realm. But are there any constants in ethics? A friend of mine who teaches at Stanford University argues there are constants by using this example: "Okay," he says, "I am going to parachute you into some country, and you don't know where it is. When you get out of your parachute, walk up to the first person you see, take away what that person has, and run away with it. And see what happens."



Unless the person is a Buddhist monk who thinks everything is fated to happen, says my friend, you'll get a strong objection. Why? Because you will have broken a property law. People summarize it in the

Ten Commandments as "Thou shalt not steal." But you will find property laws in any culture into which you drop. Culture by culture, people by people, there is thorough agreement that stealing is wrong.

We need to recognize that there is a core set of moral concepts that can be and must be taught. What are they? We've found one—the idea of not stealing. Are there others? Well, what about the Golden Rule?

We usually think of the Golden Rule as "treat other people the way you want them to treat you." Jesus said it like this: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

But who said, "That which you hold as detestable, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole law: the rest is but commentary"? That's how the Talmud puts it.

Islam says it this way: "None of you is a believer if he does not desire for his brother that which he desires for himself" (Sunnab).

Or, as Confucius said, "Here certainly is the golden maxim: Do not do to others that which we do not want them to do to us" (Analects 15:23).

And so it goes, down through Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and the rest of the world's great religions.

Common ethical ground? I would say so! Teachable? Certainly!

Two Definitions of "Ethics"

Now, I promised you two useful definitions of "ethics," so here they are.

The first comes from Lord Moulton, a British lawmaker in the 19th century, who described ethics simply as "obedience to the unenforceable."

He contrasted that idea to obedience to the *enforceable*. That's what law is. And law is an important part, but only a small part, of the reason we behave as we do. Obedience to the enforceable is what usually makes us drive at the speed limit. If we drive too fast, we may get fined by the police.

Obedience to the *unenforceable*, however, is what keeps you from going into a supermarket, and just as an elderly woman ahead of you is about to put her hand on the last shopping cart, you rush up, push her away, grab the cart, and run off down the aisle with it.

There is no law that says, "Thou shalt not steal shopping carts from elderly women." You don't do it because "people don't do those things"—because of the very real but ultimately unenforceable rules of society.

This concept of ethics as obedience to the unenforceable helps explain some of the things we see going on around us in the world today. When I was growing up, we didn't throw litter out of the car window because "people don't do those things." Now you don't throw litter out of the car window because there is a $500 fine if you do. Why? Because it was discovered that people *did* do those things. As the ethics of not littering disappeared, in other words, the law rushed in to take its place.

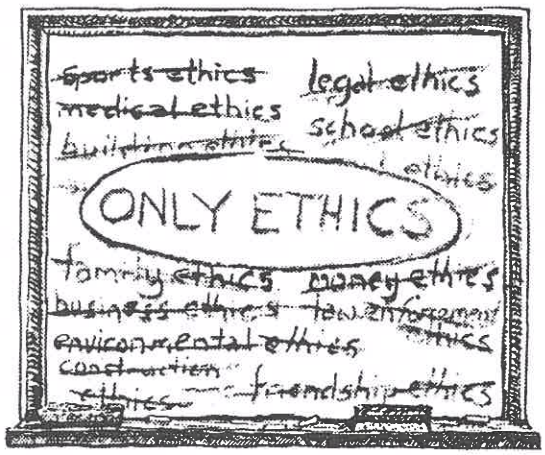
And that will always be the case. When ethics collapses, what used to be obedience to the unenforceable becomes obedience to the enforceable. Face it: We're going to be regulated. Our choice is simple: Will we self-regulate, or will we have regulation imposed on us by outside authority? Self-regulation is ethics. Imposed regulation is the law.

The second definition I want to share with you grows out of our concern over dictionary definitions of the word *ethics*. They usually talk about ethics in relation to the difference between right and wrong. But for most of us, most of the time, ethics is the battle of right versus right. Few people, facing an ethical dilemma, say to themselves, "Here, on one hand, is the great, the good, the wonderful, and the pure thing to do. And there, on the other hand, is the awful, the evil, the miserable, and the terrible thing to do. And here I stand, incapable of deciding which to do."

We don't do that. Once we define one side as evil, we choose the other side. We don't usually get into huge debates with ourselves, for example, by thinking, "I've got this real problem with my friend. Should I talk it out with her, or poison her food?" We talk with her to try to work things out.

There's Only Ethics

Now, I also promised you a conclusion, so here it is. After all we've talked about, it may not surprise you to learn that there really is no such thing as education ethics. There is no such thing as sports ethics, or medical ethics, or business ethics, or legal ethics, or journalism ethics, either. There is only *ethics*. It should apply in all kinds of ways, and it should apply across the board. It can't be divided up into personal and public categories. Anything short of that is called hypocrisy.



Don't be under any illusion that somehow one can be unethical in personal financial matters, or in relationships, or in academics, but perfectly ethical at work or in one's profession. It may sometimes seem possible, but you can only have one set of values. When people operate with more than one, they contradict themselves and create a double standard. So a corporate executive can't really be virtuous at work, but terrible in family matters. A politician can't really claim, "Oh, that is my private life. You should not take that into account. Judge me as a politician."

The public no longer believes that line of reasoning. It's becoming obvious that who we are in private is who we are in public. It's too easy to spot the hypocrite. It's too easy to tell when someone isn't walking the talk.

There is no dividing up ethics into the compartments of private ethics and public ethics. There's only ethics.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

COURSE: PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

TEXTS: Kidder, R. M. (1996). *How Good People Make Tough Choices.* New York: Simon & Schuster/Fireside.

Gough, R. W. (1998). *Character is Destiny.* Rocklin, CA: Prima.

Texts for professional ethics (Discipline specific)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The focus of this course is enhancing the capacity of students to make difficult and necessary ethical choices on the basis of limited information and frequently conflicting values. In their personal lives and future roles as professionals in a chosen field, students will face moral temptations and ethical dilemmas that resist easy answers or a simple formula for action. A major goal of this class is to prepare students to ask important questions, test the strengths and limits of various approaches to seeking answers, and act more thoughtfully, courageously, and creatively in uncertain situations. Students will explore the ethical decision-making process, personal and professional codes of ethics and accepted standards of practice, and the major ethical issues confronting professionals in their field today and in the near future.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, the student will:

- Know the basic theories, principles, and practices of the ethical decision-making process
- Develop a personal code of ethics and a heightened awareness of personal values and other factors influencing one's own conduct
- Be aware of the ethical issues and challenges facing professionals in their field of study today
- Be familiar with the basic standards of practice and codes of ethics in their chosen profession
- Know how to apply ethical decision making to real-life situations and act with moral courage when necessary

Course Requirements and Grading

10% **Classwork—Attendance, participation, homework assignments**

5 % **Attendance**
ONLY major illness, and major family or personal crisis will be considered an excused absence. All other absences, including minor illness, car problems, etc., will be credited as an absence from class.

5% **Participation and completion of homework assignments**
Grade will reflect your timely submission of written homework assignments and your willingness to voice your opinions by asking questions; offering information, opinions, and ideas; and supporting or challenging in a respectful way the ideas of others—in other words, your participation in the "moral dialogue" of this class.

30% **Exams—Classes #8 and #12, and Class #21**

15% Short essay exams on Kidder, Gough, and assigned class readings, exercises, and lectures (Classes #8 and #12)

15% Objective exam—professional ethics (Class #21)

25% *Building Ethical Fitness* **Notebook**
Purchase a three-ring notebook to store all handouts for submission. Included in this notebook will be: (1) all homework assignments and in-class exercises; (2) your personal code of ethics with examples of how you will operationalize it on a daily basis; (3) eight reflective journal entries, approximately one per week; (4) a three- to five-page summary of your analysis and plan to "take a courageous moral stand" involving an issue or situation of importance to you; and (5) a two-page conclusion describing what you have learned about yourself as an ethical person, your ethical strengths and weaknesses, and how you might develop into a more ethical human being. **Due Class #13.**

25% **Position Paper**
Choose one contemporary ethical issue encountered in your chosen profession, describe the development and current status of this issue, and take and support a position. Refer to journals and newsletters in this profession to identify current concerns. Talk to practitioners in the field and find out their perspectives. Use eight to ten references as a minimum when writing this paper. Be prepared to share the basic points of your paper as a member of a panel discussion in class at the end of the semester. **Due date for paper for all students is Class #22.**

10% **Additional assignment of choice related to either personal or professional ethics**

100% **TOTAL**

Extra Credit

You may earn up to five extra points on your class work grade by attending any on- or off-campus educational program involving content that relates to this course, writing a two- to three-page summary of the program, including a description of its relevance to this course and your personal response. **The last day for submission of extra credit work is _____.**

Class Schedule for Semester Course

Weeks 1–6	*Building Ethical Fitness* curriculum
Weeks 7–14	Professional ethics

Course Outline: Personal and Professional Ethics

Date	Topic	Reading/Assignment
Unit I: Moral Awareness		
Class #1	Why Ethics Matters—Introduction and Orientation	Handouts and readings
Class #2	Ethics within Communities	
Class #3	Building a Moral Community	
Class #4	The Development of Character	
Unit II: Values Definition		
Class #5	Defining Shared Values	
Class #6	Building a Code of Ethics	
Unit III: Ethical Analysis		
Class #7	Right vs. Wrong—Moral Temptations	
Class #8	Progress Check #1: Quiz, Exam, and/or Controversy—Moral Relativism vs. Universal Values	
Class #9	Right vs. Right Dilemmas	
Unit IV: Dilemma Resolution		
Class #10	Resolving Right vs. Right Dilemmas	
Class #11	Moral Courage—Critical Role or Action	
Class #12	Progress Check #2: Quiz or Exam, and Summary and Conclusion	
Class #13	Transition and Catch-Up Day (if needed)	
Class #14	Professional Issues and Ethics—Professional Codes (Select texts and topics relevant to your professional field) Group work: Compare codes of related professions	
Class #15	Person behind the Profession—Personal vs. Public	

Class #16	Legal Issues—Rights and Responsibilities	
Class #17	Research Ethics in Your Profession	
Class #18	Multicultural Perspectives and Diversity Issues	
Class #19	Guest Professional Five (5) prepared questions per student	
Class #20	Selected Professional concerns	
Class #21	Progress Check #3	
Class #22	Position Paper Panel Presentations	All position papers due
Class #23	Position Paper Panel Presentations	
Class #24	Position Paper Panel Presentations	

Optional Final Exam

ETHICAL FITNESS: JOURNAL ENTRY

Name: _____

Date: _____ Session No.: _____

Reflect upon the readings, exercises, homework, and class discussions from our previous session.

Making Ethical Choices: Warm-Up Questions

Directions

Below you will find brief descriptions of situations in which difficult decisions are required. Do the best you can to put yourself in the position described and answer the questions for each situation. In all cases, assume that the decision must be made by you right now.

Question 1: You are working under a tight deadline on a group project for a computer class. You discover that a good friend of yours, a computer major who is in another group, is intentionally damaging the computer software program in the lab to try to pressure the course instructor to extend the deadline for the project. To complete his course of study early and afford to finish his degree, this friend is taking an overload of classes this semester and working two jobs. He has fallen behind in his academic work.

A. Which of the following actions is closest to the action you would take. Please circle only one.

1. Tell your friend to confess or you will inform the instructor.
2. Tell the instructor that sabotage is taking place, but without exposing your friend.
3. Warn your friend privately about the possibility of getting caught.
4. Take steps to hide evidence of your friend's guilt.
5. Do nothing.

B. Given what you know about this situation, indicate the statement that best describes the reason for your decision. Please circle only one.

1. This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.
2. This decision is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences.
3. I would want to be treated this way if I were the distressed student.
4. It's none of my business.

C. Which of the following statements describes the decision you think most of the other students on your campus would make in this situation? Please circle only one.

1. Tell the friend to confess or they will inform the instructor.
2. Tell the instructor that sabotage is taking place, but without exposing the friend.
3. Warn the friend privately about the possibility of getting caught.
4. Take steps to hide evidence of their friend's guilt.
5. Do nothing.

Question 2: Your roommate comes back to the dorm drunk from a keg party in another dorm. You see him accidentally break a window in the dorm lounge which will cost the dorm $200 to replace. The next morning your resident advisor asks you who broke the window and tells you that if no one confesses the entire dorm will have to pay the bill.

A. Which of the following actions is closest to the action you would take. Please circle only one.

1. Tell the resident advisor about your roommate.
2. Tell the resident advisor it was someone you don't know.
3. Tell the resident advisor you don't know.
4. Tell the resident advisor it was someone you don't like.
5. Tell the resident advisor you don't know, but ask your roommate to confess.

B. Given what you know about this situation, indicate the statement that best describes the reason for your decision. Please circle only one.

1. This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.
2. This decision is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences.
3. I would want to be treated this way if I were my roommate.
4. It's none of my concern.

C. Which of the following statements describes the decision you think most of the other students on your campus would make in this situation? Please circle only one.

1. Tell the resident advisor about their roommate.
2. Tell the resident advisor it was someone they didn't know.
3. Tell the resident advisor they don't know.
4. Tell the resident advisor it was someone they didn't like.
5. Tell the resident advisor they don't know, but ask their roommate to confess to the resident advisor.

Question 3: You are working on an important assignment due the next day in class. At 11:00 P.M. one of your teammates from the intercollegiate sports program arrives and wants to talk about whether or not to quit the team. Your teammate is very upset and asks for your help in deciding what to do right now. You will need at least three more hours to complete the assignment for your class tomorrow and need to get a good grade to pass the course. You are already tired and frustrated by the difficulty of this work.

A. Which of the following actions is closest to the action you would take. Please circle only one.

1. Stop working on your assignment immediately and talk to your teammate.
2. Ask your teammate to come back tomorrow to talk.
3. Talk briefly to your teammate and then ask the person to return later or tomorrow to talk.

B. Given what you know about this situation, indicate the statement that best describes the reason for your decision. Please circle only one.

1. This decision would produce the best outcome for the greatest number of people.
2. This decision is what everyone should do in such a situation, regardless of the consequences.
3. I would want to be treated this way if I were my teammate.
4. It's none of my concern.

C. Which of the following statements describes the decision you think most of the other students on your campus would make in this situation? Please circle only one.

1. Stop working on their assignment immediately and talk to their teammate.
2. Ask their teammate to come back tomorrow to talk.
3. Talk briefly to the teammate and then ask the person to return later or tomorrow to talk.

KEY TERMS

- **ETHICS:** the study of standards of right and wrong

- **MORALS:** having to do with right and wrong conduct

- **VALUES:** that which has intrinsic worth; a principle, standard, or quality that is worthwhile

—Institute for Global Ethics

ETHICAL FITNESS

One's capacity to:

- *Recognize* the nature of moral challenges
- *Respond* with a well-tuned conscience
- Perceive the difference between right and wrong
- *Choose* the right and live by it

Ethical Fitness is like physical fitness—it has to be practiced to be learned.

ETHICS: OBEDIENCE TO THE UNENFORCEABLE

"the obedience of a man to that which he cannot be forced to obey"

—*Lord John Fletcher Moulton, 1924*

ETHICS VERSUS THE LAW

WHY DO THIS?	OBEDIENCE TO THE UNENFORCEABLE (Because it's the right thing)	OBEDIENCE TO THE ENFORCEABLE (Because it's a law)	BOTH
Give an older person your seat on the bus			
Only use handicapped parking if you're handicapped			
Take off your hat when you enter a church			

List here some other examples of laws that have been passed because people did not do the right thing on their own:

1 _____

_____

2 _____

_____

List here some other examples of obedience to the *unenforceable*:

1 _____

_____

2 _____

_____

Would you rather live in a world in which laws tell us how to behave all the time? Or would you rather live in a world in which we have more freedom to make decisions?

The Ethical Barometer Exercise

Purpose

- To develop an awareness of the ethical aspects of day-to-day events
- To begin to ask if ethics is any more important today than it was in earlier times

Preparation & Materials

Have available at least one flip chart or white board, several markers, and masking tape. Prepare copies of the Selected Survey Statistics handout and Ethical Barometer Worksheet and distribute to students. Divide the class into groups of five or six students.

Process

- Open the exercise by distributing the Ethical Barometer Worksheet and referring to some simple statistics on how people view the current state of our society's ethics.
- Introduce the concept of an ethical barometer and ask what is meant by an "ethical barometer"? (*See* The Ethical Barometer overhead.)
- Direct the small groups of students to the Ethical Barometer Worksheet and the task of coming up with a list of possible answers for each of the three questions. Advise students to take notes in preparation for completing the worksheet. Allow 15–20 minutes for discussion.

Then, do one of the following:

—Have each group list their answers on flip-chart-sized paper taped on the wall

—Solicit ideas from each group and record them on flip charts or a white board at the front at the room

- Finally, discuss the overarching question: Is our society's ethical barometer rising or falling? (Are people any different today than in the past? Are we just more aware of things now than we used to be? Is there anything about today that is significantly different from the past?)

Variations on the Ethical Barometer

In Lesson 2 the class will address the ethical barometer in higher education and on their respective campuses. If Lesson 2 is not to be included in the seminar, The Ethical Barometer Exercise can be modified here.

Narrow the scope of the question.

- Is the ethical barometer in higher education rising or falling?
- Is the ethical barometer on our campus rising or falling?
- Is the ethical barometer rising or falling in our own lives? What are the factors that make it easier for us to "do the right thing"? What factors make it harder? How can we overcome the factors that make it harder to "do the right thing"?

Focus on specific issues or fields.

- Using topics in the news and on the minds of students, have them explore the pros and cons of subjects such as: Is the media a force for ethical or unethical attitudes and behavior? Do talk shows promote healthy or unhealthy behaviors?
- In your major field of study and its related professions, is the ethical barometer rising or falling? (*See* Ethical Barometer in My Chosen Profession worksheet.)

SELECTED SURVEY STATISTICS

THE GOOD NEWS

- A 1999 Public Agenda poll reports that 61 percent of teens say they can always trust their friends to be there for them when in need, and exactly half of the teens surveyed said they are usually happy (published in *Kids These Days*, Public Agenda, 1999).
- Seventy-seven percent of students indicate that making a contribution to society is an important aspect of their own personal success (State of Our Nation's Youth 2000–20001, Horatio Alger Association, 2000).
- Students see the need for a new focus on values as well. In the 2000 annual survey of high achievers by Who's Who Among American High School Students, students identified "moral and social breakdown" as today's greatest national crisis, as well as the biggest problem facing the teen generation (published by Educational Communications Inc., November 2000).

THE BAD NEWS

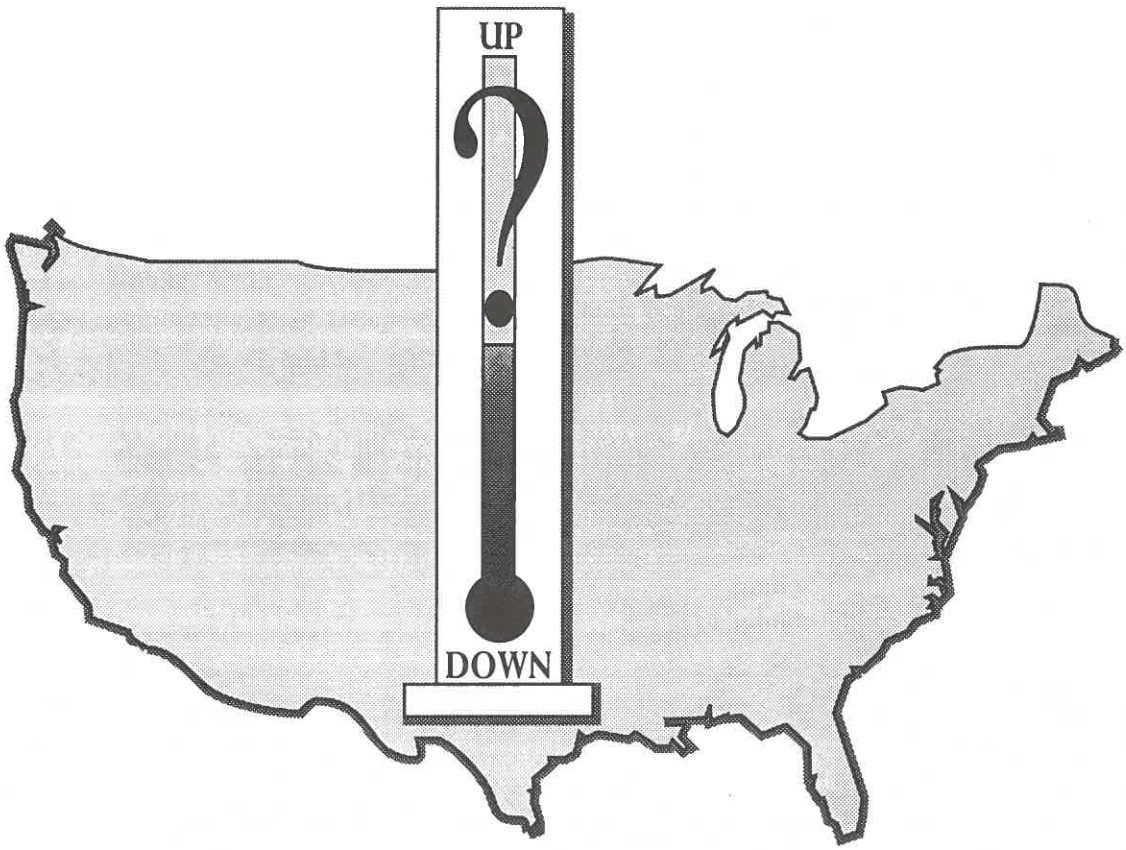
- In the same 2000 Who's Who Among American High School Students survey, 78 percent of students admitted to having cheated.
- Sixty percent of adults surveyed in a 1999 Public Agenda poll say that "kids failing to learn values, such as honesty, respect, and responsibility" is a "very serious" problem (published in *Kids These Days*, Public Agenda, 1999).
- Forty percent of today's teens indicate that the behavior of students in their school interfered with their performance, while only 12 percent said it was a positive influence (State of Our Nation's Youth 2000–20001, Horatio Alger Association, 2000).
- Forty-two percent of teens feel bored every day or almost every day, and another 39 percent say they see people their age using drugs or alcohol every day or almost every day (published in *Kids These Days*, Public Agenda, 1999).

THE ETHICAL BAROMETER

ETHICAL: having to do with standards of right and wrong

BAROMETER: (1) instrument for measuring atmospheric pressure to forecast changes in weather; (2) anything that indicates change

ETHICAL BAROMETER: instrument to indicate change in standards of right and wrong



Ethical Barometer Worksheet

Is Our Society's Ethical Barometer Rising or Falling?

1. What evidence do we have that it is rising? (What are our sources of hope?)

2. What evidence do we have that it is falling? (What are our greatest areas of concern?)

3. What can each of us do about it?

In my view, the ethical barometer is:

_____ rising

_____ falling

_____ just about the same

because

KEY QUESTIONS EXERCISE

- How has the scale of systems (i.e., the power, size, and speed of our technology in the twenty-first century) changed or challenged our ethics?

- How has the shrinking of the "global village" on our planet changed or challenged our ethics?

- Who or what institution(s) in our society is (are) responsible for the moral development of our citizens? How can we support or nurture this development?

- Do you think that someone can be considered virtuous if he or she is ethical in their public life but not in their personal life (or ethical in their personal life but not in their public life)? Why or why not?

- Is ethics a luxury or a necessity in our modern world? Why?

- What new ethical issues do you think will arise in the next ten years in our society? Twenty-five years?

WHY IS ETHICS IMPORTANT? FROM THE PERSONAL TO THE GLOBAL

Using this worksheet, brainstorm why ethics is important at different levels of society. Think about your own communities and relationships among people and groups that are living, learning, working, and serving together. Why, in particular, is it important to think and act ethically within each of these settings? Be prepared to share your ideas with the rest of the group.

Home/Family: _____

_____

_____

_____

School: _____

_____

_____

_____

Religious Institutions: _____

_____

_____

_____

Peer/Social Groups (formal and informal): _____

_____

_____

_____

Workplace: _____

_____

_____

_____

Business and Industry: _____

_____

_____

_____

Military: _____

_____

_____

_____

Government (all levels): _____

_____

_____

_____

International/Global: _____

_____

_____

_____

What do all of the settings have in common ethically?

In what ways do the settings differ ethically?

What is your conclusion about why ethics is important at all levels of society?

Ethical Barometer in My Chosen Profession

Based on interviews with professors or practicing professionals, articles from professional newsletters or journals in your chosen field, or newspaper and news magazine articles, what evidence is there that . . .

. . . the ethical barometer is rising in this profession

. . . the ethical barometer is falling in this profession

What are the factors that make it easy for professionals in this field to do the right thing?

What are the factors that make it hard for professionals in this field to do the right thing?

How are these professionals working to overcome factors which make it hard to do the right thing?

Why Ethics Matters in my Chosen Field

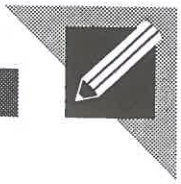
Interview a professor or professional in your major field of study and ask him or her why, in particular, it is important to think and act ethically in this field of study or profession. In other words:

1. Why are ethical decision making and ethical behavior important in this profession?

2. What are the benefits of ethical behavior?

3. What are the risks of unethical behavior?

4. What supports or strengthens ethical decision making and behavior for individuals in this profession?



College Student Ethics Worksheet

Visit one of the following Web sites or follow an interesting link to any of the many additional Web sites mentioned, and read one article addressing ethical issues faced by students in higher education communities. You might want to focus on student life, or the academic, social, Greek, or athletic team areas, in particular, or even professional and graduate student issues. Whatever you choose, try to identify at least one area of ethical concern. Below write a few paragraphs describing the ethical issue, extent of the problem, and attempted solutions.

Center for Academic Integrity
http://www.academicintegrity.org

"The Ethics Connection" from the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics
http://www.scu.edu/SCU/Centers/Ethics/homepage.shtml

Journal of College &Character
http://www.collegevalues.org

Links to over 900 ethics-related Web sites (from the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics)
http://www.scu.edu/SCU/Centers/Ethics/cgi-bin/link_display.cgi

College Student Ethical Issues—Summary

Web site address:

Title of issue:

Summary: