

SYLLABUS FOR
BUSINESS 7976 (Special Topics): BUSINESS ETHICS

Course Description:

This is a one-semester-hour graduate level course designed for students enrolled in the Executive MBA program of study offered by the Harbert College of Business at Auburn University. It is self-paced and offered through Canvas, the on-line learning support system used by Auburn University.

Instructor:

The course is led by William I. Sauser, Jr., PhD, Professor of Management at Auburn University. Dr. Sauser may be reached by telephone at 334-332-1228 (mobile) or 334-502-0614 (home); or by e-mail at sausewi@auburn.edu or through the Canvas email feature. His office address is 408 Lowder Hall, 405 W. Magnolia Avenue, Auburn University, AL 36849-5248. You are welcome to visit him when you are on campus.

Course Objectives:

- < To become familiar with issues and terminology related to business ethics.
- < To consider the viewpoints of various experts in areas of business ethics.
- < To begin to formulate a personal code of ethics.
- < To promote ethical behavior in business.

Textbook:

Executive Ethics: Ethical Dilemmas and Challenges for the C-Suite edited by Scott A. Quattro and Ronald R. Sims (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2008). (Note: Required chapters are noted on the syllabus; the other chapters are optional; you are welcome to read the entire book as you wish.)

Additional Readings (provided through Canvas):

- < Sauser, W. I., Jr. (2005). Business ethics: Back to basics. *SAM Management in Practice*, 9 (2), 1-4.
- < Sauser, W. I., Jr. (2005). Ethics in business: Answering the call. *Journal of Business*

Ethics, 58, 345-357.

- < Sauser, W. I., Jr. (2007). Employee theft: Who, how, why, and what can be done? *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, 72 (3), 13-25.
- < Sauser, W. I., Jr. (2008). Regulating ethics in business: Review and recommendations. *SAM Management in Practice*, 12 (4), 1-7.

Course Format:

The course consists of five modules, each containing a video lecture, a video interview, a reading assignment, and a writing assignment. All written assignments are to be posted to the respective discussion boards for this course on Canvas so that other students in the class may read them and learn from them. **Since the written assignments will be shared with your fellow students, do NOT provide confidential information within them!** The written assignments will be graded on a 20-point scale by the professor; assignment grades will be posted promptly to each respective student in confidence through Canvas. Written assignments should be thorough but need not be lengthy; they should be based on the student=s own (informed) opinion. It is not necessary that the written response conform to the textbook authors' or professor=s opinion in order for it to earn a high grade; what matters is that the response expresses the student=s (informed) opinion with respect to the question asked.

Course Schedule:

This course is designed to be **self-paced**. Students may work through the five modules at whatever pace they desire (as long as all assignments are completed before grades are due in mid-December). Please notify the professor if special circumstances warrant an AIncomplete@ grade (to be completed during the next semester).

Module One

- < Lecture: Introduction to Business Ethics
- < Interview: Mr. Larry Fillmer, Executive Director, Natural Resources Management and Development Institute (Auburn University), and Former CEO of Antares Alliance Group, Amdahl IT Services, and Fujitsu Technology Solutions
- < Reading Assignment: Quattro & Sims chapters One (Sauser), Three (Bakke), and Five (Nielsen).
- < Writing Assignment: What is your Astory@ (e.g., personal history)? How has your story shaped your own worldview? (Post as Discussion One.)

Module Two

- < Lecture: Understanding Ethical Behavior
- < Interview: Mr. James Pursell, Former Chairman of the Board, Pursell Technologies, Inc.
- < Reading Assignment: Quattro & Sims chapters Fifteen (Kahn & Maxwell) and Sixteen (Hawver, Pollack, & Humphrey); Sauser, "Business ethics: Back to basics."
- < Writing Assignment: In your opinion, what are the major benefits and costs for businesses that seek to operate in a moral manner? Are the benefits worth the costs? Why or why not? (Post as Discussion Two.)

Module Three

- < Lecture: Ethical Dilemmas in Business
- < Interview: Dr. Jay Gogue, President, Auburn University
- < Reading Assignment: Quattro & Sims chapters Eight (Sims) and Eleven (Geary); Sauser, "Employee theft: Who, how, why, and what can be done?"
- < Writing Assignment: What do you believe are the five most critical ethical issues in your own field of endeavor? Why are they critical, in your opinion? (Post as Discussion Three.)

Module Four

- < Lecture: Social Responsibility and Corporate Performance
- < Interview: Dr. Don-Terry Veal, Director, Center for Governmental Services, Auburn University
- < Reading Assignment: Quattro & Sims chapters Nine (Wescher) and Ten (Johnson); Sauser, "Regulating ethics in business: Review and recommendations."
- < Writing Assignment: In your opinion, what are the responsibilities of business to society? How can these responsibilities best be met? (Post as Discussion Four.)

Module Five

- < Lecture: Business Ethics in Practice
- < Interview: Ms. Leann Barr, Director, Human Resources Division, ACIPCO
- < Reading Assignment: Sims & Quattro chapters Six (Hoekstra, Bell, & Peterson) and Twelve (Gilley, Anderson, & Gilley); Sauser, *AEthics in business: Answering the call.*
- < Writing Assignment: What is your own personal code of business ethics? In a final essay, formulate (or at least begin to formulate) a statement of your own personal code of ethics. Use whatever format or approach is most comfortable to you. I am interested in your own thoughts expressed in your own style. (Post as Discussion Five.)

Grades:

Each written assignment will be graded on a 20-point scale by the professor: 20=A+, 19=A, 18=A-, 17=B+, 16=B, 15=C+, 14=C, 13=D+, 12=D, 11 through 0=F.

Essays earning 17 or more points are considered good work. If you score 16 or fewer points on any essay I will send you in confidence some suggestions on how to improve your score on future essays.

The grade for the course will be calculated by summing the points for the five written assignments, thus 100 to 90 points=A; 89 to 80 points=B; 79 to 70 points=C; 69 to 60 points=D; and 59 or fewer points=F.

Academic Honesty:

The Student Academic Honesty Code, set forth in the *Student Policy eHandbook*, will be enforced in this class. Students are expected to do their own work without outside assistance.

Reasonable Accommodation:

Students desiring reasonable accommodation due to disabilities are encouraged to consult the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center (telephone: 334-844-2096). Reasonable accommodation will be provided for students with disabilities.

How to do well in this class:

- < Get started right away! The hardest part of this class is getting started. Once you have

begun, you will find that your positive momentum will carry you through. You may even find that you are able to complete the course within a week or two of getting started.

- < When writing your essays, feel free to express your own ideas, but back up your opinions with facts, illustrations, and/or solid arguments.
- < Check your spelling and use good grammar and style. Clear, concise, well organized, and convincing essays will win points for you.
- < You need not agree with the ideas I express during the lectures or in my articles, or that my guests express during the interviews. Again, I am seeking to stimulate your own critical thinking on these topics. If you do not agree with me (or your fellow students) that is fine! In your essays, state your own position and back it up with your own arguments.
- < As you read one another's essays on the discussion boards, feel free to comment—but do so thoughtfully and responsibly. The discussion boards are designed to simulate classroom discussion, so speak up if you have something to say. You may take issue with another student's posting, but **NEVER** attack another student's character.
- < Remember that everything you post on the discussion board—including your own essays—may be read by **everyone in the class**. If you have a personal question or request to direct to me, please do so using my individual Canvas mailbox. I will respond in kind.
- < I tend to check the discussion boards every day or two, even when I am on the road. Each time you post an essay I will update your grade through Canvas. Notify me if you have not heard from me within a week after posting an essay.
- < My job is to help you learn, and I take my job very seriously. If there is anything I can do to help you succeed in this course or this program, just let me know. Your success is my goal.