



Course Syllabus: Ethical Decision Making in Social Work  
College of Health Sciences and Human Services  
SOWK 3707 TR 6:00-7:20 Martin Hall 106  
Spring 2019 January 12-May 11, 2019

Contact Information

**Instructor:** Catherine Earley

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**Office hours:** Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday 8:30-11:30 or by appointment

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Course Description

This course provides students with a comprehensive exploration of values and ethical issues as they apply to social work theory, research, policy, and practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Although values and ethical issues pervade all social work studies, this course is intended to provide students with an opportunity to study these issues in greater depth than may be provided in other courses. This course will provide students with a basic understanding of their ethical obligations as social workers, as well as a framework for analyzing and managing more complex ethical dilemmas that may arise in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

To master applied ethics, developing social workers need to engage in interactive styles of education. This course is taught through small group discussions, audiovisual presentations, and lectures. The expectation is that students will have read the assigned reading to facilitate class dialogue and interactions. The instructor will explain the meanings of key concepts and provide various frameworks for the resolution of ethical issues. Students are expected to attend classes and to actively participate in discussions, debates, and role-plays in order to apply these concepts to social work practice situations. The instructor will provide case examples drawn from all levels of social work practice. Guest presenters from various professional groups will provide alternate perspectives on ethical decision-making. Students will make use of both theoretical and applied ethics literature.

## Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the differences between beliefs, morals, ethics, values, laws, human rights, social responsibilities, and freedoms;
- Reflect upon and clarify their own personal and professional values;
- Identify and articulate ethical issues that may arise in a variety of practice settings and organizational contexts;
- Identify and draw upon the help of supervisors, attorneys, professional associations, and other sources of assistance when faced challenging ethical issues.
- Locate and interpret social work standards, ethical principles, agency policies, and public laws that are relevant to an array of social work practice situations;
- Critically apply and analyze the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics, with particular focus on the needs of socially and economically challenged clients from diverse backgrounds;
- Apply critical thinking skills (making use of deontological, teleological, and virtue ethics) to assist with the resolution of ethical issues.
- Present a comprehensive ethical analysis, orally and in writing.
- Apply conflict resolution strategies and skills to engage clients, coworkers, and others in collaborative discussions of ethical issues.

## Textbook & Instructional Materials

Barsky, A. E. (2010). *Ethics and Values in Social Work: An integrative approach to a comprehensive curriculum*. New York: Oxford University Press.

The NASW Code of Ethics ([2017 NASW Code of Ethics](#))

## Writing Assistance

Begin drafting papers as early as possible and take advantage of the [MSU Writing Center](#), located off the second floor atrium of Prothro-Yeager. The MSU Writing Center is committed to serving the university's academic mission. It provides trained writing tutors and facilitates writing workshops. Students are invited to bring any kind of writing to the Writing Center. They do not provide an editing service; instead, they offer feedback and support to help writers develop into more effective communicators.

## Student Handbook

**Refer to:** [Student Handbook](#)

## Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Student Handbook](#)

## Grading

**Table 1:** Student achievement will be evaluated on the basis of written assignments, class exams, class participation, and class presentation.

Assignments	Weight
Quizzes (10 quizzes averaged for total)	30%
Class Participation	15%
Group Presentation	30%
Final Exam	25%

Table 2: Weighted average will be used to calculate final grade.

Grade	Points
A	90-100
B	80 to 89
C	70 to 79
D	60 to 69
F	Less than 60

A course grade less than C is considered failing and the course will have to be repeated.

## Homework

Questions may be assigned for selected chapters to be answered and handed in at the next class.

## Quizzes

Quizzes will be completed outside of class through D2L. Ten Quizzes will be required and will have 10 questions each. Eleven quizzes will be available and students completing all 11 will have their lowest quiz grade dropped. The tests will include application questions, meaning that you will need to know how to apply the concepts to brief case situations and make critical distinctions when applying ethics concepts. One purpose of having these tests is to ensure that we all have the same baseline knowledge about the ethical decision-making process. With this baseline knowledge, we will be able to engage in lively and critical discussion of ethical issues throughout the rest of the course, and in your final

exam. Quizzes will be due by 11:30 pm on Fridays. No requests for late access will be considered unless the student has submitted documentation through the Dean of Student's office proving incapacitation for the entire week that the quiz was available.

### Exams

There will be a final exam. The final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, true or false statements, short answer, or essay questions. Since class instruction will be based on the text as well as materials from other sources, what is presented in class will be included in the quizzes and final exam. This may include content from the textbook, lectures, guest speakers and student presentations. The exam will focus on your understanding of ethics terminology and the Framework for Managing Ethical Issues from our required textbook. The exam also includes application questions, so you will need to know how to apply the concepts to brief case situations and make critical distinctions when applying ethics principles.

### Projects Required

APA style formatting is required for all written work in this course. Be sure to use appropriate APA style citations for any information you take from the textbook, handouts, lectures, reference materials, websites, or other outside sources while completing written assignments.

**Description:** During the first and second classes, students will be asked to organize into groups of **2 to 3** members for the purpose of group presentations as scheduled in the weekly outline. Each group will select a different case study and will be responsible for a 30-40 minute presentation. You may use any of the cases on pages:

- **315-316 under exercise "3. Developing Policies"** [these cases relate to SW administration]
- **339-340 under exercise "5. Application"** [these cases relate to mental health]
- **360-362 under exercise "3. Managing Issues"** [these cases relate to child welfare]
- **409-410 under exercise "1. Analyze Elder Issues."** [these cases relate to SW with elders]

The focus of the presentation is to identify the ethical issues raised by the case and present a critical analysis, including AT LEAST ONE PRIMARY ETHICAL DILEMMA or ISSUE that the group will analyze in its presentation. Groups may select among various forms for their presentation: traditional debate, a feminist-informed discussion, a dialogue, interest-based mediation, transformative mediation; professional review hearing, Socratic inquiry, a role play, student-produced video, panel discussion, skit, or other experiential exercise (cf., Barsky, 2010; *Journal of Small Group Exercises*). Students are encouraged to present an outline to the professor and discuss their plans with her prior to their presentation in order to obtain advance feedback and suggestions. **In the class prior to a group's presentation date, that group will distribute a three to five page "Handout"** to all students in the class, including: Title of the Presentation (case name, page, exercise number), Names of Group Members,

Synopsis of Major Issues to be Covered, List of Sources that have been Consulted (3-6 sources); and at least two Questions for Class Discussion. Do not repeat case facts from the scenarios in the textbook; however, please indicate any changes or additions that you are making to the cases for the purposes of your presentation.

**Evaluation of Presentation:** Grading will be based on the following criteria: Selection of relevant, scholarly readings (include at least one classical ethicist or social philosopher – e.g., Hobbes, Kant, Hegel, Rawls, Philippa Ruth Foot, Simone de Beauvoir, John Stuart Mill, Joseph Fletcher, Joseph Soleveitchik, The Dalai Lama, Nozick, Confucius, Paulo Freire, or Lao Tzu – make sure you can show the relevance of this person’s theories/concepts to your case; if you cannot, then please select another ethicist); Preparation of Handout (described above); accurate identification of “ethical dilemmas” raised by the case; connections between case and readings; critical analysis; reflectiveness; engagement of class; linkages to social work values from varied sources; creativity (in process); originality (of argument); and effective use of time. When you identify ethical or legal rules, ensure that you cite original sources, and quote the most relevant sections. All members of a group will receive the same grade. If a group agrees to an alternative arrangement for grading, the group must submit this agreement in writing and signed by all the members prior to their presentation, subject to the approval of the professor.

**Equal Division of Responsibilities:** Please ensure that everyone contributes equally to the presentation, including organizing/planning, brainstorming ideas, researching, preparing the handout, critically thinking through the case, preparing PowerPoint or other audiovisual aids, and participating in the class presentation (you may divide responsibilities among group members, but ensure that there is approximately equal participation over the entire list of responsibilities). ***If a member of the group is not participating equally, then the group is responsible for letting the instructor know at least 10 days prior to the presentation.*** Please do not wait until just before the presentation is to be made. The instructor may ask that member to do a separate, individual assignment.

- Everyone in the group is expected to participate in the oral presentation. Be mindful of the use of time.
- Please do not read your presentation notes or PowerPoint slides.
- If you have more than one ethical issue or question that you want the class to consider, make sure that you present the issues in a logical order (you may need to go through the analysis of each question separately).
- When you state an ethical issue (Stage 1 of the Framework for Managing Ethical Issues) make sure you provide some background facts, express the issue with an open-ended question that highlights the conflicting ethics/values/laws/policies/perspectives, and if there is some “unknown

information” that it relevant to determining the ethical issue, describe what that type of information is.

- Come early to set up PowerPoint or any other audiovisual technology, and have back-up plans in case there are problems with any of the technology.

**Alternative Presentation:** An alternative presentation is an “Ethics Audit” (see pp. 303 to 309 of the textbook). If interested in conducting and presenting an ethics audit, please meet with the professor for further instructions.

#### Late Work

Late assignments shall have a negative effect on your grade. You should get with the instructor as soon as possible if an emergency occurs interfering with your ability to meet a due date.

#### Make Up Work/Tests

All assignments must be submitted on time. Late work will be penalized ½ letter grade per 24 hour time period. Failure to submit any assignment within 7 calendar days of the due date will result in a failing grade for the assignment.

Students who, for whatever reason, need additional time to complete assignments must meet with the instructor at least one class session prior to the assignment due date to make arrangements to discuss the accommodations that need to be made. It is the student’s responsibility to request this meeting. Students will not be allowed to take make up exams after the original exam has been given. If you cannot take the exam on the required day and time, you must make arrangements in advance to take it PRIOR to the scheduled administration of the exam.

#### Important Dates

**Last day for term schedule changes:** January 14-16

**Deadline for May graduates not enrolled for fall semester to file for graduation: February 18**

**Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:”** March 25

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

#### Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

#### Social Work Program Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all meetings of this class. If unable to attend class, please inform the instructor directly via email or office phone before the

class start time. If unable to attend class due to an emergency, please inform the instructor as soon as possible. Please note that **for each "uninformed class absence" 5 points will be taken off from the student's final course (average) grade. Coming late to class, inattentive or disruptive behavior during class (including inappropriate cellphone use), and leaving early from class will also have an adverse impact on attendance and participation grade.**

Students are allowed three excused absences as defined by MSU absence policy. For an absence to be excused the **student must inform the instructor of the reason for the absence** and provide documentation supporting the need for the class absence. A **student who has missed five classes** (including the three excused absences) will **receive a full lower letter grade. After six absences the student will be dropped from the class.**

Authorized absences due to required participation in university-sponsored activities must be approved by the college dean or Athletic Director and the Provost. These absences will not count against the student when the student presents a signed letter to the instructor at least two class days prior to the date of the absence. Only prior notification can guarantee lack of penalty for these absences. It is the responsibility of the student to arrange with the instructor to make up all work missed during an authorized absence. Academically-related activities (class field trips, attendance at conferences, etc.) which result in absences require the cooperation of individual faculty members. Even though such activities are educational in nature, they do not qualify as university-sponsored activities.

#### Instructor Class Policies

All students registered for courses in the Social Work Department are expected to adhere to the responsibilities, and behavior as articulated in both the [Student Handbook](#) and the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) [Code of Ethics](#). An essential feature of these codes is a commitment to maintaining intellectual integrity and academic honesty.

Students are expected to display professional decorum at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, respecting classmates and the instructor. In this regard, it is expected that students will not hold side conversations, use cell phones, or engage in other types of unprofessional behaviors once class has begun.

## Professional Expectations of Student Behavior

Midwestern State University Department of Social Work is mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to foster and evaluate professional behavioral development for all students in the social work program. The Department of Social Work also bears a responsibility to the community at large to produce fully trained professional social workers who consciously exhibit the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession of social work. The values of the profession are codified in the NASW Code of Ethics. Given this context, all students in the social work program will be expected to exhibit the following ethical standards of behavior.

- 1. Accountability:** Attend class, arrive on time, and return from break in a timely manner.  
*Participate in group activities and assignments at a comparable level to peers.*  
*Complete work in a timely fashion and according to directions provided.*  
*Come to class prepared, with readings and other homework completed.*
- 2. Respect:** Treat all your peers, your instructors and all those you come in contact with, with dignity and respect at all times.  
*Listen while others are speaking.*  
*Give feedback to peers in a constructive manner.*  
*Approach conflict with peers or instructors in a cooperative manner.*  
*Use positive and nonjudgmental language.*
- 3. Confidentiality:** Treat any personal information that you hear about a peer or an instructor as strictly confidential.  
*Maintain any information shared in class, dyads or smaller groups within that unit.*  
*Use judgment in self-disclosing information of a very personal nature in the classroom. (Class time should not be used as therapy or treatment. If students feel the need to talk about issues they are struggling with, they may consult with their instructor to receive a referral for counseling.)*  
*Never use names of clients or disclose other identifying information in the classroom.*
- 4. Competence:** Apply yourself to all your academic pursuits with seriousness and conscientiousness, meeting all deadlines as given by your instructors. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.  
*Come to class with books, handouts, syllabus, and pens*  
*Seek out appropriate support when having difficulties to ensure success in completing course requirements.*  
*Take responsibility for the quality of completed tests and assignment.*  
*Strive to work toward greater awareness of personal issues that may impede your effectiveness with clients.*



5. **Integrity:** Practice honesty with yourself, your peers, and your instructors. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.  
*Academic: Commit yourself to learning the rules of citing other's work properly.*  
*Do your own work and take credit only for your own work.*  
*Acknowledge areas where improvement is needed.*  
*Accept and benefit from constructive feedback*  
  
*Submission of Papers: Students will submit their written assignments on paper and electronically. Electronic copies will be subject to plagiarism analysis and will be kept in electronic file for future reference. A student may not submit the same paper, or essentially the same, paper, project, assignment, or finished project to an instructor, which has been submitted to another instructor, unless specifically authorized by both instructors to do so.*
6. **Diversity:** Strive to become more open to people, ideas, and creeds that you are not familiar with. Embrace diversity.  
*Maintain speech free of racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, or stereotyping.*  
*Exhibit a willingness to serve diverse groups of persons.*  
*Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact.*
7. **Communication:** Strive to improve both verbal and written communication skills as these skills are used heavily in interactions with clients and peers and also with creating client records.  
*Demonstrate assertive communication with peers and instructors.*  
*Practice positive, constructive, respectful and professional communications skills with peers and instructor: (body language, empathy, listening)*
8. **Social Justice:** Strive to deepen your commitment to social justice for all populations at risk.  
*Demonstrate an understanding of how institutional and personal oppression impede the experience of social justice for individuals and groups.*  
*Strive to learn about methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.*

### Consequences of Unacceptable Behavior

The Department of Social Work may terminate a student's participation in the program on the basis of professional non-suitability if the Department's faculty members determine that a student's behavior has constituted a significant violation or pattern of violations of the NASW Code of Ethics, the MSU of Social Work Student Manual, or the MSU Academic Policies and Regulations. Examples of violations that may lead to termination include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Failure to meet or maintain academic grade point requirements as established by the University and the Social Work program.
2. Academic cheating, lying, or plagiarism (turnitin.com will be used to check the originality of the text).
3. Behavior judged to be in violation of the NASW Code of Ethics.
4. Failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity, or emotional stability requisite for professional practice.
5. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior toward colleagues, faculty, or staff (at the department or in the field placement).
6. Consistent failure to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills necessary for forming professional relationships (for example, unable to demonstrate nonjudgmental attitude or unable to allow client self-determination).
7. Documented evidence of criminal activity occurring during the course of study.

For additional university-wide policies and regulations, see the MSU [Undergraduate Catalog](#). This web site contains information on grading, incomplete grades, cheating on exams, plagiarism, and expectations of student behavior.

#### Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

#### Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. Two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

#### Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-

4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

#### College Policies

### **Campus Carry Rules/Policies**

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

### **Smoking/Tobacco Policy**

Midwestern State University seeks to provide a safe, healthy, pleasant environment for its faculty, staff, and students. To this end, the use of tobacco products, including smoke and smokeless tobacco, and the advertising, sale, free distribution, and discarding of tobacco products shall be prohibited in all indoor and outdoor facilities and in all university vehicles. The policy extends to faculty, staff, students, vendors, guests, and visitors.

### **Alcohol and Drug Policy**

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

#### Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#)

### Course Changes:

Although much thought, study, and research has gone into designing the course and learning opportunities, often the most significant learning comes in unexpected moments. The instructor cannot predict these times but respond to them. Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.



## Course Schedule

(The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus schedule as needed.)

Week & Dates	Chapters/Readings	Assignments
Week 1 January 12 – January 18	<p><b>Course Introduction</b></p> <p>Part I: Foundations of Values and Ethics (pp.1-11)</p> <p>NASW Code of Ethics (2008 revision)  <a href="#">(2017 NASW Code of Ethics)</a></p>	
Week 2 January 19 – January 25	<p>Chapter 1: Values – Mine, Theirs, and Ours</p> <p>Chapter 2: Theory, Values and Ethics – Macro Perspectives</p>	- Quiz 1 (part 1, Ch. 1, Ch. 2)
Week 3 January 26 – February 1	<p>Chapter 3: Theory, Morals, and Ethics – Micro Perspectives</p> <p>Chapter 4: Research, Values, and Ethics</p>	- NIH Computer-Based Training (tentative) - Quiz 2 (Ch. 3, Ch. 4)
Week 4 February 2 – February 8	Part II: Advanced Values and Ethics – Framework for Managing Ethical Issues	- Quiz 3(Part II)
Week 5 February 9 – February 15	Chapter 5: Practice, Values, & Ethics- Social Work With Individuals	- Quiz 4 (Ch. 5)
Week 6 February 16 – February 22	Chapter 6: Practice, Values, & Ethics- Social Work With Families	- Quiz 5 (Ch. 6)
Week 7 February 23 – March 1	Chapter 7: Practice, Values, & Ethics- Social Work With Groups	- Quiz 6 (Ch. 7)
Week 8 March 2 – March 8	Chapter 8: Practice, Values, & Ethics- Social Work With Organizations	- Quiz 7 (Ch. 8)

Week & Dates	Chapters	Assignments
Week 9 March 9 – March 15	Chapter 9: Practice, Values, & Ethics- Social Work With Communities	- Quiz 8 (Ch. 9)
Week 10 March 16 – March 22	<b>Spring Break</b>	
Week 11 March 23 – March 29	Chapter 10: Policy, Values, and Ethics	- Quiz 9 (Ch. 10)
Week 12 March 30 – April 5	Chapter 13: Psychopathology, Mental Health, Values, and Ethics	- Quiz 10 (Ch. 13)
Week 13 April 6- April 12	Chapter 16: Elders, Values, and Ethics	- Quiz 11 (Ch. 16) -Student Handouts
Week 14 April 13- April 19	Student Presentations <b>Holiday Break-no class Thursday</b>	-Student Handouts
Week 15 April 22- April 26	Student Presentations	-Student Handouts
Week 16 April 27 1- May 3	Student Presentations	<b>-Final Exam May 2**</b>
Week 17 Tuesday, May 7	<b>Finals Week **</b> If Student Presentations run long the Final Exam will be moved to May 7 <sup>th</sup> 8:00pm-10:00pm	

**STUDENT COURSE AGREEMENT**

Please review the course syllabus. Once you have read and understand the syllabus and all faculty expectations, please sign and return this agreement. Please pay special attention to attendance and late/make-up work policies as well as the Instructor Class Policies and Professional Expectations of Student Behavior sections. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [catherine.earley@mwsu.edu](mailto:catherine.earley@mwsu.edu).

This agreement of understanding should be completed only after thoroughly reading the course syllabus. Sign, date & return this document to Professor Earley prior to the second class session.

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Semester

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Printed Student Name

***I have read and understand the syllabus and faculty expectations for this course. I agree to come to class prepared and to participate fully in this course.***

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Date

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Signature