



Course Syllabus: Human Resource Ethical Issues

College of Education
COUN 4373 Section X10/DX1
Fall 2025 (August 25 – December 7)

Contact Information

Instructor: Lei Xie, PhD, SHRM-SCP
Office: I do not have an office on the MSU campus
Office hours: Zoom office hours are by appointment.
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Instructor Response Policy

I will attempt to respond to email and voice mail within one workday. If you do not get a response within that timeframe, send a text to the cell phone number and request a response.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Ethical and Legal Issues in Human Resources Development: Evolving Roles and Emerging Trends, Clarethia Hughes, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019

Course Description

This course will explore current organization codes of ethics, confidential issues of management and/or the employees, organization values and standards, and mandatory compliance with codes of ethics.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook-2025-26](#)

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Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given).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.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Grading/Assessment

Table 1: Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Weekly discussion posts	130
Participation	65
Minimum wage argument	100
Ethics case study	150
Final Exam	100
Total Points	545

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	490
B	436 to 489
C	381 to 488
D	327 to 380
F	Less than 327

Homework

Participation in Discussion Posts

Because much of the value of the course is based upon the discussion of various cases and scenarios, participation in the weekly posts is an important consideration in successfully completing the course. Each week I will have an article, proposed legislation/regulation, or some other ethics issue for discussion/debate. The expectation is that you will post your own response and comment on at least **two** other student posts. I would expect your posts on the comments of other students to be more than a "me too" type response. 130 points for your own posts (10 points each week) and 65 points for your responses to other student posts (5 points each week) possible.

Projects Required

- **Minimum Wage Argument**

- Discuss the ethical framework for how should a company should set the minimum pay for their workers.
- Deliverable: 3 -5 pages (cover page and bibliography do not count toward this total) with your ethics-based argument for how a company should determine the bottom of its pay structure.
 - Discuss the values relating to setting wages on the part of employers
 - State your position and support it
 - Minimum of 3 references
- **Due: October 13**
- Total points: 100

- **Ethics Case Study**

- Choose a company or organization which has had an ethical problem which led to issues which came to the attention of the media or the

- government (there are many to choose from).
- Use the company as the basis of the assignment. Analyze the case and determine the following:
 - The timeline of events
 - The ethical issues and dilemmas in the case
 - Factors that contributed to the ethical issues encountered by the company
 - The impact of the ethical issues on the company
 - A review of practices which could have prevented or mitigated the problems encountered, ***with an emphasis on HR practices***
- Deliverables:

Written paper, 10 - 12 pages. Include a cover page and bibliography (not part of the page count)

- Minimum 5 references
- Total Points: 150 (Note this is more heavily weighted than other assignments—I expect a thorough job.)

Final Exam

This will be an essay exam. Generally, you can expect some short answer questions, a longer application-based question and a case study of some type. I will place this in the last weekly module. It is a “take home” exam. It is due the first day of finals week. 100 points.

Extra Credit

If you think you will need extra credit, you are welcome to earn up to 15 points each with the following projects. You may elect to do neither, one of the projects, or both.

- Choice #1
Read a fiction novel or watch a fictional movie that focuses on a workplace dilemma. Write a short paper (2 – 3 pages), discussing one ethical issue faced by a character in the book/movie in a business environment. Provide a short summary of the situation, the ethical issues involved and the decision-making process the character used to resolve the dilemma. You may have to infer some of the thinking. Discuss possible alternatives to the choice made by the character.
- Choice #2
Interview an HR manager/director to discuss ethical issues they have faced and their involvement in ethical issues in their company. Discuss their company ethics programs and codes of conduct. Provide a short report (2 - 3 pages) of your findings.

Late Work

I will accept late work on the projects only—not discussions and the final exam. You may submit your projects late and still receive credit, but there will be a no excuses 10% late penalty.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#).

Deadline to file for graduation: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

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

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive 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 primary 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.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ***Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world that is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Instructor Class Policies

Students are expected to be professional in their online interactions with one another and the instructor.

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. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exists 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

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by MSU TEXAS. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

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.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still

requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Obligation to Report Sex Discrimination under State and Federal Law

Midwestern State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. State and federal law require University employees to report sex discrimination and sexual misconduct to the University's Office of Title IX. As a faculty member, I am required to report to the Title IX Coordinator any allegations, personally observed behavior, or other direct or indirect knowledge of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, or stalking, involving a student or employee. After a report is made, the office of Title IX will reach out to the affected student or employee in an effort to connect such person(s) with resources and options in addressing the allegations made in the report. You are also encouraged to report any incidents to the office of Title IX. You may do so by contacting:

Laura Hetrick
Title IX Coordinator
Sunwatcher Village Clubhouse
940-397-4213
laura.hetrick@msutexas.edu

You may also file an online report 24/7 at [Online Reporting Form](#)

Should you wish to visit with someone about your experience in confidence, you may contact the MSU Counseling Center at 940-397-4618. For more information on the University's policy on Title IX or sexual misconduct, please visit [Title IX Website](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

Notice

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 1 8/25 – 8/31	• Review syllabus--become familiar with the course requirements • Introduce yourself to the class • Read the supplemental articles provided • Respond to the discussion question • Read chapter 1 of your text	8/31
Week 2 9/1 to 9/7	• Read supplemental material on Wells Fargo • Read chapter 2 • Respond to discussion question	9/7
Week 3 9/8 to 9/14	• Read chapter 3 • Read supplemental articles • Respond to the weekly discussion question	9/14
Week 4 9/15 to 9/21	• No reading from the textbook this week • Read supplemental article • Respond to discussion question	9/21
Week 5 9/22 to 9/28	• Read chapter 5 • Review supplemental material • Respond to discussion question	9/28
Week 6 9/29 to 10/5	• Review supplemental material • Respond to the weekly discussion question	10/5
Week 7 10/6 to 10/12	• Read chapter 6 • Review the supplemental materials • Respond to the discussion question • Submit Minimum Wage Argument assignment	10/12
Week 8 10/13 to 10/19	• Read supplemental material • Respond to discussion question	10/19
Week 9 10/20 to 10/26	• Read supplemental material • Respond to discussion question	10/26
Week 10 10/27 to 11/2	• Read supplemental material • Respond to discussion question	11/2
Week 11 11/3 to 11/9	• Read supplemental material • Respond to discussion question	11/9

Week 12 11/10 to 11/16	• Read supplemental material • Respond to discussion question • Submit ethics case study	11/16
Week 13 11/17 to 11/23	• Read supplemental material • Respond to discussion question • Submit any extra credit you want considered	11/23
Thanksgiving Vacation 11/24 – 11/30	• Rest and relaxation	NA
Week 14 12/1 – 12/7	• Submit final exam	12/2