COURSE INFORMATION

- **Course:** COUN 510: Law and Ethics for Counselors (SDHE)
- **Term:** Spring 2012

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

- **Instructor:** Jonathan O’Brien, Ed.D.
- **Office:** AS-214
- **Office Phone:** 562-985-8593 (email is preferred and quicker)
- **Email Address:** jobrien@csulb.edu
- **Office Hours:** Mondays & Wednesdays 2 pm-4 pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide entry-level student affairs practitioners with a basic understanding of common legal and ethical issues they may encounter in their work. The course focuses on general themes in the law of higher education and the ethical responsibilities encoded in ethical standards pertaining to counseling and higher education. The course will also focus on helping students to explore their personal beliefs and value systems and to examine their decision making processes and response when dealing with challenging issues.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

Students will

1. Recognize and apply the concepts of higher education law and ethics to professional academic, counseling, and/or support services contexts and situations.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of ethical codes and standards pertaining to counseling practice (ACA, APA) and the student affairs profession (ACPA, CAS, NASPA).
3. Learn ethical decision making models and theories to incorporate into practice.
4. Be aware of issues of diversity when practicing in a multicultural context and be insightful about personal values, beliefs, and attitudes impacting legal and ethical decisions.
5. Become familiar with and be able to identify current issues and general legal principles that affect the practice of student affairs professionals.
6. Develop skills in finding, reading, and understanding legal documents pertaining to student affairs.
ETHICAL WILL

The ethical will has a very long tradition. In ancient times it was a formal means of communicating personal values, hopes, and advice to future generations at the time of one’s passing. In modern times, the ethical will takes many forms for different purposes. In this class it is re-imagined as a vehicle for articulating our ethical foundations and a means of personal reflection on our practice.

Our unique life experiences (family, education, work, culture, etc.) shape our values. Our values influence our behavior, which we call dispositions. Dispositions reflect our character. Although we are not required to justify them, their subjectivity makes them difficult to explain to others. It is difficult to transcend our biases when we are confronted with others who do not share our values. For this assignment, you will write an “ethical will” as a way of reflecting on your personal values and to articulate to others the meaning of your values, particularly as they relate to being a professional.

Your ethical will should be a brief (max 3 pp) but compelling statement describing key life experiences that illustrate your (a) purpose or calling, (b) self-discovery process, (c) values and commitments to serve others, and (d) plan to engage in ethical professional practice. Please present these four categories as Level 2 headers (see APA manual) in your Ethical Will and then conclude with a fifth section on how you will know you’ve accomplished your plans as identified in section (d).

To guide your reflection before writing, considering the following (Baines, 2002):

- People who matter to you and why: your family and significant relationships
- Values/beliefs received from others and/or developed from experience
- Culture and traditions, e.g., faith/spirituality; language; celebrations; symbols; etc.
- Importance of formal and informal education, learning, and knowledge
- Mistakes and regrets and the lessons you learned from them
ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Sometimes we are forced to make decisions with little time. Environmental scans are a systematic process you can use to inform your decisions, whether you are choosing a place to work, assessing changes to make in a program, or evaluating the strategic plan of an entire institution or system of education.

This exercise will help you to refine your instincts and develop the skills to “read” an institution’s culture, its people, networks, rules, traditions, etc. Ultimately you will make conclusions grounded in the “data” you collect from the site.

Some things to look for in an environment scan

- Mission: of institution, department, office, program, etc.
- Demographics: race, ethnic, and class background of clientele, commuter vs non-commuter, residential versus non-residential, age, ability, college preparation, etc.
- Services offered (Look at formal or stated services offered AND other services that happen informally and that may not necessarily be intentional.)
- Physical structure (campus, surrounding area, individual space, classroom).
- Leadership styles: who is the “titled” leader and who are the “natural” leaders?
- Staff efficacy: how are people prepared for the work they do? What experiences do they bring to their positions? What type of formal education do they have?
- Networks: who works where, who makes up individual groups, how do they relate?
- External and internal influences: policy- state, local, institutional; Funding, societal shifts (e.g., job market, economy), shifts in leadership and institutional priorities.
- Trends: past, current, future. Pay attention to this so that you can learn from the past, keep up with the current, and be a visionary and see where things are headed.
- How you feel. Sometimes things just don’t “feel” right, but we don’t know how to explain it. Feelings take the “temperature” of a workplace climate; is the mood warm and inviting or cold and prickly; lively or lethargic, etc.

How to collect information in an environmental scan

- Documents: newspapers –local, institutional, etc.; reports; old documents; campus publications, websites, etc.
- Observation
- Comparison: what you know, what others are doing, etc.
- Interpret. Don’t assume. Think critically about information you collect and explore different possible explanations for things, triangulate different forms of “evidence,” and then begin to form conclusions.
REFERENCES


