I. COURSE PURPOSE

There is a increasing concern about the ethical quality of American life, evidenced in the growing interest in professional ethics, the revisions of the NASW Code of Ethics (2008), and in national debates on policy issues, such as immigration, the economy, health care, discrimination, end of life care and global issues. The purpose of this course is to help students become more effective in dealing with the increasingly complex ethical questions in professional social work practice. The course has a three-pronged focus designed to assist the student to:

- develop a more conscious awareness of the role of values from the perspectives of the client, the practitioner, societal organizations, and the profession;
- understand the ethical principles and standards derived from the value base of the profession; and
- make use of philosophical ethics and processes for ethical decision making when dealing with direct practice as well as organizational and policy issues that have implicit and explicit ethical concerns.

Class sessions are designed to increase student awareness of their personal value systems with respect to the ethical dimensions of policy, organizational and practice issues. It provides ethical tools needed to translate ethical principles, including philosophical world views, contemporary social justice perspectives and human rights principles into social work practice behaviors. A model for ethical decision making, comprised of basic components for ethical reflection and analysis of conflict situations, is provided. Competency in ethical decision making is needed to deal with rapidly shifting social needs and practice requirements which call for social workers who are creative, self-directed and technically and ethically competent in professional practice. Case studies, class dialogue and debate, and analysis of student experiences in the field of social work will be utilized.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A number of orienting frameworks which, generally, follow the organizing dimensions of the NASW Code of Ethics are utilized to provide sequence for course study. The theoretical underpinnings of the course draw from the ontology of the professions--the philosophical nature of the professions as well as understandings from social sciences on the nature of professions, the nature and mission of social work as presented in the revised NASW Code of Ethics (2008), and competing philosophical perspectives.

RATIONALE

Because of the multi-focused nature of social work practice, this course addresses the ethical issues in direct practice as well as social policy, managerial, and programmatic issues which confront social workers in various settings. Advances in technology and an environment of economic constraints, shifting social policies, changing organizational structures (managed care and practice in for-profit settings), and cultural diversity are creating complex moral issues that require special ethical competencies. Since direct practice is profoundly influenced by social and organizational policies, direct service workers need ethical sensitivity and knowledge to engage these issues; while managers, community developers, and policy practitioners need insight into micro level concerns in order to provide adequate leadership in these areas. That is, all social work practitioners have ethical responsibility and accountability not only for direct practice but for influencing policies that affect direct client service. Increased emphasis on service outcomes, evidence-based practice and the use of information technology raises questions about the moral implications of the means selected to achieve targeted ends. The emergence of ethics review processes as a tool for risk management in both for-profit and non-profit settings affirms the need for the profession to engage in ethics risk management at all levels of practice.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

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

1. demonstrate an increased understanding of the role of values, human rights and ethics in human experience and in professional social work situations;

2. distinguish between the inter-related concepts of moral values, ethical principles, ethical theory, and ethical standards;

3. analyze the interaction of personal, professional, societal, and client value systems in professional settings;

4. identify and clarify their own personal value system, ethical orientation, and the process through which one’s ethical choices are made;
5. demonstrate awareness and sensitivity to human rights and the ways in which poverty, racism and other forms of social discrimination influence ethical decision making;

6. demonstrate skill in identifying the values and/or ethical conflicts inherent in social policies, institutional arrangements, organizational structures, and direct practice situations;

7. utilize ethical theories drawn from professional ethics, organizational ethics, social ethics, multi-cultural and trans-temporal ethics, and bioethics in reaching and justifying ethical positions in social work practice;

8. identify the uses and limitations of the Codes of Ethics with respect to ethical dilemmas involving clients, practitioners, professionals, and society; and,

9. demonstrate competence in the use of a systematic model of ethical decision making in dealing with professional ethical dilemmas.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts and Readings: Required texts may be purchased at the CUA bookstore and can be accessed through the Mullen Library. Periodical readings can be accessed through the Electronic Journal Title Finder and the Electronic Journal Collections located on the WEB.


B. Recommended Readings (Use selectively based on Concentration and topical interest.)


NASW (2009). *Current controversies in social work ethics: Case examples.* DC: NASW.


C. Other Recommended Resources and Media:

JOURNALS
- Ethics
- Ethics and Behavior
- Hastings Center Report
- Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics
- Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal
- Professional Business Ethics
- The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy
- The Journal of Religion and Spirituality: Social Thought
- Journal of Religious Ethics

WEBSITES
- University of San Diego, Ethics Matters http://ethics.sandiego.edu/
- Kenan Institute for Ethics, Duke University http://kenan.ethics.duke.edu/
- Ethics Resource Library--Free www.ethicshare.org

D. Course Assignments: The student should select one of two assignments—The Personal Journal OR The Ethical Model Paper, both of which are partially completed at mid-semester and finalized at the end of the term. Assignments should be related to your concentration and field of practice. All assignments should be completed using the APA Style. The assignment options are:

(1) Personal Journal: The ethical decision-making process is applied through a personal journal of internal dialogue on the student's values as they relate to various client systems in practice or policy situations. Entries are entered and analyzed throughout the semester. It is intended as a tool to develop a more conscious awareness of your own value orientation and the shifts in emphasis that may occur in life phase development. The focus is on the process of clarifying one's own value system and seeking to discover how it transacts with the value stance of the client system; that is, how it may interfere, conflict, or facilitate practice. Attention should also be directed to shifting value emphases as related to life cycle development; that is, phase-related values or changes that take place during role transitions. This technique, used in various ways today, should help in self-awareness and growth in the conscious use of self in professional situations. (See Guidelines for the personal journal which includes the expected format for the journal and the objectives for its use in this course).

(2) The Ethical Model Paper: A scholarly paper on an ethical issue related to the student’s concentration/specialization. That is, a social justice/social change, combined, or clinical practice situation in professional social work is selected and
analyzed using a systematic model for ethical decision making. (See Guidelines for the ethical model paper.)

**Assignment #1  MID-TERM PRELIMINARY PAPER  DUE:  Class 7**

Students who have selected the **Personal Journal** are required to submit a brief **process paper** based on the journal they are keeping. The focus is on the process of valueethical identification and clarification as experienced through keeping the journal. Emphasis is on the process and use of the journal--what new insights have emerged, and how this form of reflection has or has not been helpful in professional development. (See Guidelines for the brief process paper.) Suggested length: approximately eight printed pages. **Check with instructor as to whether personal journal should be submitted at this point.**

**OR**

Students who have selected the **Ethical Model Paper**, are required to submit a **preliminary ethical model paper** in which they describe the practice issue and define and clarify the ethical dilemma they have chosen to process. (See sections 1 through 5 of Guidelines for the ethical model paper.) Suggested length: six to eight printed pages.

**Assignment #2:  FINAL COMPLETED PAPER  DUE:  Class 12**

The **Personal Journal** is submitted in its entirety including periodic process summaries (see Guidelines for the personal journal). The journal may be handwritten. Be sure to submit process entries with the final journal.

**OR**

Sections 1 through 5 of the **Ethical Model Paper** are corrected, edited, and/or revised based on mid-semester feedback and sections 6 through 8 of the paper are completed. The entire paper is submitted. Suggested length: 12 to 15 printed pages. The completed Ethical Model Paper may be submitted as one of the student’s Scholarly Papers required for graduation.

**N.B.  A Bibliography should be included in the preliminary paper as well as the final assignment.**

**Class Participation:** Class sessions will be set into learning modules which will include lecture-discussion, group discussion, and experiential content drawn from student field experiences, case materials, class presentations, and role plays. Each participant is asked to share relevant knowledge, experience, and ideas. Students are encouraged to draw upon their experience and that of others in the field and to think creatively in terms of current problems and future directions.
Class Presentation: Students will participate in planning the class presentations—particularly the experiential component, with the instructor. This process allows for meaningful student participation and class content that has specific relevance to the group’s learning needs. Small groups of students will select a class session of interest to them. The group should meet with the instructor at least one week in advance of their presentation to structure the content of the session they will facilitate. Student facilitation will begin during the third class session and will be considered an essential part of class participation. A sign-up sheet will be posted for this purpose.

Learning Contract: The student's goals for the course will be discussed and formulated in a brief written statement (See Learning Contract Form attached). The direction for the semester will be set within the framework of the learning needs of the students and course curriculum.

E. Grading Policy: The university grading system will be utilized (see policy in bulletin). The grade will be based upon the extent to which the student meets the course objectives as demonstrated by class participation and the two NCSSS required papers.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation/Session Facilitation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #1: Mid-term Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #2: Final Paper</td>
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F. Attendance and Participation

1. Students are expected to attend all class sessions, to arrive at classes on time, and to conduct themselves in an ethical and scholarly fashion. In the event that it is necessary for a participant to miss a class session or come late, s/he is expected to notify the instructor in advance. Students are responsible for obtaining any class notes or other materials distributed when they are absent. Unexcused or multiple absences may result in a reduction of the final grade.

2. Students are expected to read all required readings for each class session and be prepared to participate in classroom discussions and exercises.

3. The course combines the formats of didactic lectures and participatory seminars. Students and the instructor will endeavor to draw on their own experience including professional practice experience, relevant literature and analytic thinking about the course content. Each student is expected to participate actively in class discussions and to come prepared to share current knowledge, ideas, and relevant experiences as appropriate. Students and the instructor will view each other as resource persons.

G. Course and Instructor Evaluation:
NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations using your CUA username and password. Additional informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to special requests. These evaluations will serve as a basis for ongoing course revisions.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Scholastic Expectations:

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should demonstrate communication ability consistent with graduate level performance, reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and be carefully proofread by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

Academic Honesty:

Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and Appropriate Program Handbooks.

Accommodations:

Students with physical, learning, psychological or other challenges wishing to request accommodations must identify themselves with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. Once you have documented a disability, DSS will establish whether any accommodations or academic adjustments are required. If so, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.

CLASS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>COURSE OVERVIEW AND PLANNING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Overview of the course and planning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State of the art in social work ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The social context and the ethical imperative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>General ethics, social ethics, organizational ethics, and social work ethics.</td>
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</tbody>
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Required Readings


**Recommended Readings**


**Class 2. THE ROLE OF VALUES IN THE TRANSACTIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WORKER AND THE CLIENT SYSTEM**

Values and ethical principles differentiated
Value typologies; Value exercise
Framing ethical dilemmas: conflicts of values, rights, responsibilities
Examining a social work ethical dilemma

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings**


Class 3  
WORLD VIEWS AND SOCIAL WORK ETHICS

Orientation to the person and the universe  
Western perspectives  
Consequentialist and Principle-based approaches  
Virtue Ethics  
Eastern perspectives  
Introduction to Multi-cultural and trans-temporal ethics

**Required Readings**


Visit: U. of San Diego, Ethics Matters—http://ethics.sandiego.edu/

**Recommended Readings**


Class CODES OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM
4 The professionalization of social work
The significance of codes of ethics and essential components
NASW Social Work Code of Ethics (Revised 2008): purpose and limitations
Malpractice issues
NASW adjudication process

Required Readings


NASW Adjudication Process can be found on the WEB at: http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/procedures.pdf

**Recommended Readings:**


**Class 5**  
A PROCESS MODEL FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING  
Rationale for the model  
Phases in the Process of ethical decision making  
Justification of an Ethical Decision  
Discussion of the process used in the Applewhite &Joseph article

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Class 6**  
SOCIAL ETHICS: Global Issues and Human Rights  
Human rights and the global community  
Competing theories of social justice  
Poverty and other economic and social issues
Required Readings


Recommended Readings


ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK: PRACTICE AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Organizational context of agency- institutional practice
Bureaucratic-professional systems' tensions
Ethical considerations of policy practice, managerial ethics, and programmatic responsibility and accountability
Malpractice and risk management

PRELIMINARY PAPER DUE

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


ETHICS REVIEW PROCESSES IN ORGANIZATIONS

Ethical issues in multi-disciplinary settings
Ethical processes: case consultation, policy formulation, education
**Required Reading**


**Recommended Readings**


**COMPASSION FATIGUE AND BURNOUT: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SOCIAL WORKER TO SELF AND OF THE AGENCY/ORGANIZATION TO SOCIAL WORKERS**

Compassion fatigue and burnout defined; sources of burnout: multiple roles and organizational pressures
Ethical responsibility for supports: personal and programmic to prevent and/or intervene in staff burnout

**Recommended Readings**: (Select at least one reading)


**Class 8**

**THE DIRECT SERVICE SITUATION: BALANCING ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES: THE CLIENT SYSTEM AND THE AGENCY**

Worker competency and ethical consideration for responsible practice
Client self-determination
Dual Relationships
Ethical issues in the use and conduct of practice research
**Required Reading:**


**Read selectively from EACH section below.**

**DUAL RELATIONSHIPS/BOUNDARY ISSUES**


**CONFIDENTIALITY**

The right to privacy and the principle of confidentiality:

The ethics of secrets

Student case situations


**SELF-DETERMINATION**


**Class THEORIES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND PRACTICE APPROACHES**

Kohlberg's and Gilligan's theories of moral development

Selected practice models and related ethical issues

The ethics of power and manipulation

Case illustrations and group discussions
Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Practice Situations

Managed care
Private and public agencies: Ethical issues around policies and procedures
Ethical issues around practice models

Read Selectively


ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SOCIAL WORKER TO THIRD PARTIES
Responsibility to significant others in the client's social environment
Third party liability: Agency and practitioner considerations
Consideration of specific ethical conflicts in responsibilities to third parties--protective service, marriage counseling, etc.
The doctrine of informed consent and implications for social work

REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE DUTY TO WARN

Recommended Readings

INFORMED CONSENT


Class  
CULTURE, RELIGION, AND SOCIETY: MACRO AND MICRO ETHICAL ISSUES

11 Multicultural and trans-temporal ethics
Religion/spirituality and social work practice in social policy, organizational, and clinical social work contexts
Functional and dysfunctional aspects of religion in practice
Ethical issues related to faith-based communities

Required Reading

NASW Standards for Cultural Competence. See NASW Website


Recommended Readings:


Class 12. THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Children’s rights: Well being vs. autonomy
Considerations of the limits and boundaries of the rights of children
Child welfare policy issues, such as transracial issues, family preservation, family rights vs. best interests of the child

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


See International Journal of Children’s Rights


Class 13

**BIO-ETHICAL ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES-- FINAL PAPER DUE**

Overview of life and death issues
Life sustaining technology at the beginning and later stages of life
Issues related to suicide, AIDS, and genetics

**Required Readings**

Beauchamp, T. L. and Childress, J. F. (2009). Chapter 4, Respect for autonomy (pp. 99-148); Chapter 5, Nonmaleficence (pp. 149-196); Chapter 6, Beneficence (pp. 197-239). In *Principles of Bio-Medical Ethics*. NY: Oxford University Press


**Recommended Readings**


Class 14

**THE ETHICS OF SUPERVISION**

Ethical issues in supervisory practice

Worker and supervisory responsibility

The principles of direct and vicarious liability

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Readings**


### PRIVATE PRACTICE MANAGED CARE

Private practice defined

Ethical issues identified and clarified

Private practice versus agency-based practice

Managed care issues

#### Required Readings


#### Recommended Readings


**NASW guidelines on the private practice of clinical social work.** (1991). Silver Spring, Md.: NASW.

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**Class 14**

**Summary of Course**

**Review of Student Topics**

**Future Considerations**

Revised 5/09: apc
GUIDELINES FOR THE PERSONAL JOURNAL AND BRIEF PROCESS PAPER

(Students should consult their Instructor before selecting this option.)

The journal—in a variety of forms such as diaries, logs, personal accounts—has been used through the years for various purposes. In social work, it has been used with small groups, in community work, in practice courses, and/or field to study process and professional growth. Historically, it has been a tool for personal and spiritual development. The intensive journal, a personal journal, has received attention in recent years as a means of personal growth and self integration (Ira Progoff). Journals are classified in four main categories: personal, spiritual, small group, and community journals.

In this course the journal is suggested as a tool to help you identify and clarify your own value system and be more aware of the values operating in professional social work situations. The focus is on the relationship between your personal values and the values of various client systems and policy situations. It seeks to help you discover how your value system interfaces and transacts with the value stance of the client—how it may impede or facilitate practice. Thus, it should sensitize you to the value and ethical dimensions in professional practice as well as to the relationship between values and life stage development and changing value orientations over time.

In this context, the journal process may be said to be an inner dialogue around your own value orientation and its relationship to your professional practice. This technique should help in self-awareness and in the conscious use of self in professional situations. While spontaneity is emphasized, it also provides a framework and method to systematically analyze and evaluate value-ethical positions.

THE JOURNAL PROCESS

Objectives for use in the course are to:

1. become more consciously aware of your own value orientations;

2. reflect on shifting value orientations and value emphases at various phases of the life cycle;

3. become more aware of the transactional dynamics at the interface of your personal value system, client value systems, and values in policy situations;

4. consciously and systematically analyze and manage value-ethical conflicts in practice.
Journal entries are made regularly (weekly or more frequently if necessary) and include main events or episodes in practice situations that reflect value-ethical issues. Entries should include your spontaneous reactions, attitude, and response to these events and your awareness of the interrelatedness of your values. Any conflicts experienced with the client system and your spontaneous, interior reaction should be recorded.

The main qualities in writing should be spontaneity, authenticity, and fidelity to what is going on in self. This enables one to recognize one's own interior value responses in reaction to professional practice episodes.

The Journal option requires submission of a brief paper as well as the journal itself, using the following guidelines:

Suggested Structure of the Journal for this Course

1. During the semester, you will keep a process journal in which you will **make entries regularly** --weekly or more frequently as needed. To facilitate your integration of the process of ethical decision-making, use **two interfacing pages in a notebook** as follows:

   a. on the right side, the objective record of events in the practice situation;

   b. on the left side, your ethical thought-process and interior process dialogue.

2. A framework for your interior process dialogue to consider the ethical issues (left side of the journal page) should include the following:

   a. Identify the practice situation and explicitly state the ethical dilemma involved: example, right to life vs. right to quality of life. Since the journal process is meant to involve you as a professional dealing with an ethical problem, the problem should be one that will require you to make decisions and/or take actions that have an ethical dimension. An ethical dilemma in which you are merely an observer may not engage you in the dynamic process that is the object of journal writing.

   b. Give background, research, literature, experience directly related to your ethical focus. Be sure to examine pros-cons (arguments for both side of issue). Provide references.

   c. Clearly identify values involved, including social work values and specific articles from the Code of Ethics. Develop a tentative values' hierarchy.
d. Consider your own personal values and ethical dilemmas, any biases or preferences you have or have become aware of in reflecting on this ethical issue.

e. Consider the ethical options or ethical alternatives/ courses of action and their consequences. In other words, consider possible solutions to the ethical problem.

f. Ethical position. State your ethical position and how you arrived at it.

You may find that you will define the issue(s) in the first entries and clarify your background research focus. For succeeding entries, you need to demonstrate the interplay of the various elements of the ethical decision-making process by clearly defining and describing what aspect of the process you are considering: values (whose?); ethical options; your position. Since this is a dynamic process, you may find that these do not occur necessarily in sequential order. There may be intermediate judgments, a later redefinition of the dilemma, identification of further options, or a clarification of client values that emerges in a later session. In the journal and in practice, these are all part of an on-going process.

3. Finally, your journal should contain Periodic Process Entries. These entries are feedback mechanisms in which you will periodically review what you have written (every 2-3 weeks). The purpose of these entries is to trace the development and interplay of your awareness of value-ethical issues in the practice situation over a period of time. You will begin to see themes emerge.

   a. Be sure to include ethical issues surfaced in the course discussion and readings that have helped you identify issues, values, ethical concerns, and the ethical decision-making process.

   b. Record the process of development you see within that period.

THE BRIEF PROCESS PAPER

For those who decide to keep a journal, a brief paper on your experience of the process of journal writing is required as the mid-semester assignment. This paper will be graded.

Suggested Guide for the Brief Process Paper

The purpose of the brief paper is to: provide necessary background information about the agency/practice setting in which your reflection process takes place; focus and define the ethical issues that have become the center of your journaling; and, reflect on the process of your journal writing. Be sure to discuss the following:
a. Describe the agency setting and the emerging ethical problem(s) as you perceive them.

b. How has the process helped to sharpen and clarify your values-ethical preferences and those of the client systems. Are your clearer on your values than you were a month ago?

c. How has the process helped you to be more aware of the ways your personal values-ethical preferences have interfaced and transacted with your professional practice situation? Illustrate.

d. How the process helped you to objectify your value orientation in practice?

e. How the process influenced your professional practice?

f. Have you noticed any life-cycle related values?

g. Comment on any aspect of the process experience that has been particularly meaningful in your journal writing.

**N.B.** Be sure to place process within the context of the situation in which the ethical/value concerns emerged. Readings should be included which have helped you in the Journal Process.
GUIDELINES FOR THE ETHICAL MODEL PAPER

Focus: The objective of this assignment is to provide a framework through which you can demonstrate your ability to utilize a process for structuring, defining, and making ethical decisions in social work. This model can be applied to an ethical dilemma at the macro, organizational, or direct practice levels. An important emphasis in the paper is on the methodology, that is, how you arrived at your ethical choice--the ethical solution to the issue/problem selected. This includes logical analysis, self-awareness, and clarity of the reflective process. Each step is essential to the process, builds on the previous step, and moves toward a solution and implementation plan. The justification, or set of reasons/arguments for the ethical position taken, should be clearly stated.

The Ethical Model Paper is submitted in two parts: The Preliminary Ethical Model Paper and the Final Ethical Model Paper as follows:

a) The Preliminary Ethical Model Paper describes the professional practice issue and defines and clarifies the ethical dilemma that is being processed. It is submitted mid-semester at the beginning of the particular class session specified by the Instructor. It covers sections 1 through 5 of the Guidelines presented below and includes bibliography. Suggested page length should be approximately six to eight text pages and bibliography, using APA style. Students receive written feedback from the Instructor on the quality of the Preliminary Paper.

b) The Final Ethical Model Paper integrates any needed modifications, revisions, or additions to the preliminary work and goes on to complete sections 6 through 8 of the Guidelines. The complete paper is submitted at the end of the semester at the beginning of the class session specified by the Instructor. Suggested page length is 12 to 15 text pages and bibliography.

Outline of the Paper

1. The paper should begin a) with a brief introduction to the ethical issue that will be processed, b) a brief statement of the purpose of the paper, and c) an overview of what will be covered. *Use subheadings throughout the paper.*

2. Practice Situation and the Related Ethical Issues

This section should include: a) a brief description of the practice setting in which your dilemma is embedded. Briefly explain the purpose, sponsorship, and mission of the organization or the specific department/service related to your dilemma. b) Clearly identify the specific situation you have chosen to process. It may be a direct practice case, an organizational policy or a social policy dilemma. Explain all relevant facts of the ethical dilemma. And, c) explicitly state the central ethical dilemma(s) involved. That is, frame the dilemma in terms of a conflict of values, rights, or responsibilities. In complex dilemmas, you may also choose to briefly discuss any related ethical issues.
The practice situation should be related to your area of concentration. It may be one of direct practice, program management/development, or social policy related to your concentration. In other words, the ethical issue may be related to any of the contexts OR systems in which a social worker carries professional responsibility.

Focusing the dilemma - Ethical dilemmas, like all dilemmas, present the decision-maker with competing perspectives which are of proportional or similar worth. The choice that needs to be made is between two or more alternative goods or the avoidance of alternative harms. If the claims of one side are much stronger than the claims of the other side of the dilemma, it is not a true dilemma because the choice is then clear. In order to focus the situation, you need to state the dilemma you are processing in ethical terms. This means, in terms of a conflict of values, a conflict of rights, or a conflict of responsibilities; for example, children's rights to privacy/confidentiality vs. parents rights to know, OR the responsibility of the organization to provide services consistent with its mission vs. the responsibility of the organization to engage in practices of fiscal restraint, OR worker's responsibility to the client vs. responsibility to the employing agency. This formulation, then, is the central focus of the ethical dilemma you are processing.

3. **Background: Research or Literature Directly Related to Your Ethical Dilemma**

You need to present a careful literature search that examines both sides of your issue from a theoretical, empirical, and ethical perspective, as appropriate. This review should include a thorough, objective discussion of the ethical dimensions of the situation, pro and con. Consider the interrelationships of variables that influence the situation, the ethical principles/perspectives involved, any legal aspects of the dilemma, and the multiple causes and related ethical issues involved. Focus should be on the issues, not on the affect around the issues, unless this is referred to objectively as an issue. In addition to library research, it is often useful to consult your agency policy manual, talk with workers in agencies similar to yours, explore community resources, and talk with your supervisor and agency director. This can provide you with some guidance as to current practice and your agency's experience with the dilemma you are processing.

4. **Clearly identify the values and salient ethical principles** surfaced in your literature review and professional experience search, including professional social work values/principles against which to consider possible solutions. This is essential because ethical decisions are made from values and the related principles that are drawn from them. Specific values, such as freedom may support one or both sides of your dilemma, but may be applied differently depending on the principles that are drawn from them, such as client self-determination or the
principles of the least restrictive environment. The values/principles section of your model paper should include the following:

a) Begin with a discussion of the general values derived from society, such as freedom, well-being, privacy, etc., and point out how these are related to your issue.

b) If possible, consider the specific values of your client/client system as they relate to the situation.

c) Consider the ethical principles against which to judge the possible options or solutions that may arise, such as the greatest good for the greatest number or the lesser of two evils.

d) Now, consider how the particular standards of the Social Work Code of Ethics apply to this situation? Cite the specific Standard(s) that are relevant, such as Section III, B, and discuss the alternative and sometimes conflicting considerations raised by reflection on various Standards in the code of ethics.

e) Based on the above information, develop a single values hierarchy relevant to the ethical dilemma you are processing. (This is not a further review of literature, but your summarization and prioritization of the explicit and implicit values/principles noted in your background research and consultation on the situation). This values hierarchy will become an essential touchstone by which you will evaluate the possible courses of action you surface in the next ethical decision making step.

5. **Clearly identify and consider your own personal values and initial ethical stance.**

What is your own value/ethical stance at this point in the ethical reflection process? What biases may spring from your current point of view? Attempt to clarify and objectify the situation as much as possible.

Are you aware, at this point, of any personal biases or preferences you hold or have became aware of during the course of this process that may interfere with reaching a well thought-out course of action? Are you aware of the basis for this bias, if any? (You do not have to discuss personal reasons for any bias; the concern here is on your own self-awareness).

**PRELIMINARY PAPER SHOULD BE COMPLETED THIS FAR**

*Be sure to include references for your work.*
6. **Identification and Evaluation of Ethical Options or Ethical Choices**

Consider the range of ethical options or ethical alternatives/courses of action available to you and their possible consequences. This portion of the process synthesizes the various dimensions of the dilemma presented in #1 with the research presented in #2, and with the values and principles identified in #3. In other words, you need to:

a) Identify and elaborate the possible alternative solutions that apply directly to the problem situation you have posed. The possible courses of action might stem directly from one or the other side of your dilemma; or your process of reflection may present you with mediating courses of action that combine values/principles from both sides of the dilemma. Be realistic about the alternatives you consider.

b) Evaluate each potential solution using your values hierarchy. Consider how the various values and ethical principles you have identified in #3 would be maximized or minimized in each alternative. Consider the possible consequences that could occur as a result of each possible course of action.

7. **Your Ethical Position**

After completing the above process, you must make a choice of action to resolve the dilemma and present your justification for the ethical position you have taken.

a) State which action alternative you have chosen to resolve the ethical dilemma. It should be explicit and clearly stated.

b) Provide justification for your position; that is, present the philosophical reasons or theoretical arguments for your position. Your argument should show how you arrived (in logical sequence) at your conclusion. What were the specific values and set of criteria that guided your judgment and action decision. Which ethical principles are most applicable to your position and which ethical theory(ies) support your chosen course of action.

8. **Implementation Plan**

a) Discuss how your decision can best be implemented. What interpersonal skills, relationships, and sensitivity to all parties must be considered?

b) Careful ethics risk management requires that you carefully **document** the process by which the decision has been formulated and implemented. Which ethics risk management provisions are most appropriate for the setting you described?

*The paper will be graded on the quality of the content including its organization, comprehensiveness, and explicit use of ethical theory and principles as well as on the clarity and the conciseness of the writing, and the inclusiveness of documentation and bibliography.*
LEARNING GOALS

Purpose:

A very brief statement of the following information will help the instructor to understand your practice background, your professional interests, and your learning expectations for this course. It is due to the instructor by the second class session.

1. Name ____________________________________________________________
   Address __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
   Telephone: (home) ________ (cell) ________ (field) ________________
   e-Mail: _____________________________________________________________
   (please print clearly)

2. Concentration:

3. Field Placement Experience:

   Foundation Placement (please include the types of practice experience you have had)

   Concentration Placement (please include the types of practice experience you have had)

4. Learning Goals (Briefly discuss your areas of interest in relation to this course, your specific learning goals, and your expectations of the course)

5. Learning Style (Provide an indication of your learning style, the ways you seem to learn best.)