

**GBL 295**  
**Business Law and Ethics**  
**Tuesday & Thursday 7:00 – 8:20 p.m.**  
**115 Eppley**  
**Fall 2014**

**Professor Daniel P. Bock**

- Leave papers or written messages with a secretary in 315 Eppley
- Do **not** slip items under the door or in the bins next to the door
- Use “msu.edu” for messages, **do not** use Angel messages or voicemail

**In Case of Emergency:**

**Finance Secretary: 353-1705**

**Fax: 353-1705**

- Papers may be faxed only in unforeseen circumstances, such as getting stuck in a snow storm, but a hard copy must be turned in as soon as physically possible

**Office Hours:**

Tuesday & Thursday

6:15-6:55 in 306 Eppley

Or by appointment

**Readings:**

- *Required:* “LEGAL ENVIRONMENT OF BUSINESS” COURSEPACK, EDITED BY KUBASEK, BRENNAN, AND BROWNE
- *Required:* “ETHICS, CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR BUSINESS LAW” COURSEPACK, EDITED BY VISSER, BOYLAN, AND WICKS
- *Required:* STERN’S THE BUFFALO CREEK DISASTER
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**The Eli Broad College of Business Undergraduate Honor Code**

- **Policy on Academic Honesty:** Article 2.3.3. of the *Academic Freedom Report* states that “the student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, the finance department adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades, and in the All-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades, which are included in *Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide*, as well as *The Eli Broad College of Business Honor Code*. **Students who plagiarize on any assignment or examination will receive a 0.0 on the assignment or examination and cannot earn a grade above a 2.0 in the course regardless of their point total in the class. You are expected to do your own work; use of websites such as AllMSU.com is considered a violation of Academic Honesty.**

### Attendance:

- The University Policy on attendance states, “There is no all-University regulation requiring class attendance. However, attendance may be an essential and intrinsic element of the education process. In any course in which attendance is necessary to the achievement of a clearly defined set of course objectives, it may be a valid consideration to determining the student’s grade. It shall be the responsibility of the instructor to state the relevance of attendance at the beginning of the course.”
- Class discussion is an integral part of the learning process in this course. I cannot test all learning on an exam. Therefore, class participation is a factor in your grade. **Lectures and class discussion may cover material not in the text and assigned readings.** There is a **high correlation between multiple absences and low grades** on examinations and papers in my class. Students are responsible for all announcements made in class.

### Class Participation:

#### Points allotted

- As you start the semester, you have thirty (30) points for participation. You may use three “Excuses” as defined below. You will lose three (5) points for each Excuse (as defined below) **in excess of the three (3) allotted.**

An Excuse is any one of the following:

- Absence from class
- Your written request to use a Pass (on the daily attendance list) \*
- Your failure to actively listen and pay attention to others in class.

#### Exceptions:

\* I will not call on you if you have chosen to use a Pass for the day. If you sign the list and fail to ask to use a Pass, yet you are not prepared, this is a violation of the Eli Broad College of Business Undergraduate Honor Code and will result in a deduction of five points from your 30 class participation points.

If you use your three Excuses early in the term for reasons other than illness and become ill later, you will lose points for the additional Excuses used. Save your Excuses!

**Daily Sign-in List:** I will have an attendance sheet with me at the front of the class each day. Please sign in when you arrive. You may write “Pass” next to your name to indicate that you do not want to be called on that day. Each Pass will count as an Excuse.

- If you come to class late, it is your responsibility to see me to sign the list at the end of class. I will note on the class list that you were late.
- If you know that you must leave class early, please tell me before class begins.
- There is a “grace” provision if you forget to sign the list once during the semester. You should contact me via e-mail within twenty-four (24) hours after the class. If I remember that you were present, I will count you as present for that day. You may use this “grace” provision only once during the semester without losing class participation points.

### Writing Requirements:

- The policy on Writing in the Curriculum as adopted by the Eli Broad College of Business faculty in June of 1987 is as follows:
  - RESOLUTION
    - Effective writing skills are essential for all participants in the business world today. It is important that business professionals have the ability to articulate and communicate information and ideas in writing effectively.
    - Therefore, it is hereby resolved by the College of Business Faculty of Michigan State University, that, wherever feasible, writing shall be included in courses intended for students in the College of Business. Further, any faculty member who chooses to consider writing form in the process of student evaluation (grading of papers or exams) is encouraged to do so and is fully supported by this Faculty. The phrase “writing form” as used here includes, but is not limited to, spelling, punctuation, grammar, organization, and clarity of expression.
- The Eli Broad College of Business adopted the following definition as a college-wide standard as of spring 2006:
  - **Definition of writing mechanics:**
    - **In this class, the term writing mechanics is used in lieu of the term writing form. Writing mechanics include, but are not limited to, the following nine (9) criteria: spelling, grammar, complete sentences, correct use of vocabulary, punctuation, proof-reading, paragraph division, capitalization, and specific rules discussed in class during daily “writing mechanics moments.”**
- **Writing is 20% of each paper grade (not your entire course grade)**
  - 20% of the possible points on the final paper are allotted to writing mechanics

### Exams:

- **Writing**
  - On exams, I will mark some writing mechanics errors, because you need to continue to learn. I do not take points off for writing mechanics errors on exams unless your errors detract from the content of your paper.
- **Format**
  - Your exams will include short answer and essay questions, as well as multiple choice. Short answer questions will vary in format from yes or no to fill in the blanks to a sentence or two of explanation. Short answer questions generally test vocabulary, definitions, and basic concepts. Essays require that you (1) identify the legal issue involved, (2) give and define relevant vocabulary, rules, and concepts, (3) apply rules and concepts to the facts at hand including discussion of various perspectives (arguments), (4) examine relevant public policy, and (5) reach a well-reasoned conclusion.
  - I reserve the right to assign a take home essay question or an Angel-based essay question on one or more exams.

### Assignments and Point Values

- **Grade Distribution**

Class Participation	30 points
Exam #1	50 points
Exam #2	50 points
Exam #3	50 points
THE BUFFALO CREEK DISASTER Essay	20 points
<b>Total Points Possible</b>	<b>200 points</b>

### **Grading Scale**

- 4.0 (93.00% & higher)
- 3.5 (87.00% – 92.99%)
- 3.0 (81.00% – 86.99%)
- 2.5 (75.00% – 80.99%)
- 2.0 (69.00% – 74.99%)
- 1.5 (63.00% – 68.99%)
- 1.0 (57.00% – 62.99%)
- 0.0 (56.99% & lower)

- **Extra Credit**

- I reserve the right to award extra points for essays, papers, or presentations that rise **far above** the quality expected for 4.0 work in an honors class.
  - I will **rarely** grant such credit
  - I will **never** give such credit upon a student's request or appeal

### Scoring on Exams & Papers and Appeals of Scores:

- If you believe you deserve more points than I have assigned to your paper or answer on an exam **you must make your request in writing**. You may do so on paper or via e-mail. You must identify the item you want me to reconsider and explain your reason for asking for reconsideration. This written request must be submitted **within ten (10) calendar days of the date on which your papers or feedback materials are made available to you**. The fact that you do not come to class to pick up your paper and feedback when it is made available will not extend the deadline. Requests submitted after ten (10) calendar days will not be considered.
- **I reserve the right to lower the points recorded if, after reconsideration, it is my judgment that the original score received was higher than deserved.**

### Dates for Exams & Papers and Requests for Make-up Exams:

- Plan ahead!
  - A job interview will not be accepted as a reason for missing an exam
- All dates for all assignments, papers, and exams are contained in this syllabus
- The examinations are taken at the scheduled times. Exceptions based on extenuating circumstances must be requested in writing two (2) full MSU class days (not calendar days) before the exam date. If you miss an exam because of an unexpected emergency, you must notify me via e-mail on the date of the exam before the time at which the exam begins, unless that is physically impossible. If such notice is impossible, you must notify

me as soon as possible. **If the reason is not among those recognized by the University Policy, then no make-up will be allowed.**

## **Course Outline and Assignment List**

As noted above, class sessions will consist primarily of discussions of the readings that were assigned for that session. You will be expected to have read the day's assignment before coming to class and to be prepared to discuss the readings. The only exception will be for class sessions which are designated as "lecture" on this assignment list.

In class discussions, I will ask for volunteers to answer questions or explain portions of the readings. If there are no volunteers, I will call on students at random. I will not call upon you if you have taken a "pass" (as described earlier in this syllabus). If you are called upon and are not prepared, then your class participation grade will be reduced by 5 points.

Note: Readings from the "Legal Environment of Business" course pack are referred to as "Kubasek." Readings from the "Ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Sustainability for Business Law" course pack are referred to as "Visser."

### **Week of**

8/28: Introduction, Discussion of why government regulates business practices

9/2-4: "An Introduction to Ethics" and "What Is a Corporation" (Visser pp. 13-35) and Introduction to Law" (Kubasek pp. 1-8)

9/9-11: "The American Legal System" (Kubasek pp. 10-40) and "What Are Proper Business Practices" (Visser pp. 36-46)

9/16-18: "The Law of Torts" (Kubasek pp. 41-63) and "Product and Service Liability Law" (Kubasek pp. 65-76)

9/23-25: "The Law of Contracts and Sales I" (Kubasek pp. 78-91) and "The Law of Contracts and Sales II" (Kubasek pp. 92-102)

9/30: Review session for Exam #1

10/2: Exam #1 (covering the American legal system, torts, contracts and sales, products and service liability, and proper business practices)

10/7-9: "Ethical Issues Within the Corporation" (Visser pp. 47-87) and "Grassroots Tools of Sustainability" (Visser pp. 93-103)

10/14-16: "Constitutional Principles" (Kubasek pp. 104-126)

10/21-23: "Law and Business Associations I" (Kubasek pp. 127-135) and "Law and Business Associations II" (Kubasek pp. 136-150)

10/28: Review session for Exam #2

10/30: Exam #2 (covering constitutional law, law of business associations, ethical issues within corporations, and grassroots tools of sustainability)

11/4-6: “Agency Law” (Kubasek pp. 151-159), “Employment Law” (Kubasek pp. 183-194), and “Our Ability to Respond” (Visser pp. 105-118)

11/11-13: “Environmental Law” (Kubasek pp. 161-182) and “The Age of Management” (Visser pp. 119-146)

11/18-20: **Lecture** on “The Age of Responsibility” and the principles of creativity, scalability, responsiveness, and circularity (Visser pp. 119-226). These class sessions will be lectures which means that, while discussion and student participation is encouraged, it is not required.

11/25: Exam #3 (Covering agency law, employment law, environmental law, and the principles of creativity, scalability, responsiveness, and circularity)

12/2-4: Discussion of The Buffalo Creek Disaster (note: this is a novel-length work of non-fiction upon which your final paper will be based. It is strongly recommended that you begin reading The Buffalo Creek Disaster as early as possible in the semester so that you will be prepared for these discussion sessions.

Final paper: The final assignment for this course will be an essay on the topic of “Examples of business law and ethics (or the lack thereof) in The Buffalo Creek Disaster.” The essay must be 1,000 to 1,500 words (approximately five to seven pages), and must provide an analysis of one or more of the concepts we have studied in this course as evidenced in The Buffalo Creek Disaster. This essay is due no later than Friday, December 8 (the last day of this semester’s final exam period), and can be provided to me by email, or by delivering a hard copy to me personally or to my mailbox on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.