



Distance Opportunities for
Interpreter Training Center

**INTR 401: Professional
Decision-Making**

**Study Guide
Spring 2007**

INTR 401: Professional Decision-Making

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INTR 401: Professional Decision-Making

This course is designed to engage you in an exploration of ethical standards and practices and the specific application of ethical standards and practices to interpreting. You will explore the challenges of ethical decision-making and how decisions are influenced by core values and guiding principles. You will explore the theory of value paradigms—beliefs and attitudes you hold that impact the choices you make in your personal and professional life.

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Course Overview

Purpose

This course provides you with the opportunity to explore the dimensions that guide ethical decision-making. Much of your learning will result from your participation in a variety of case studies and in discussions designed to foster greater degrees of ethical fitness. The goal of the course is to foster a collegial investigation of ethics and ethical decision-making as the cornerstone that can contribute to the professionalization of the field of Sign Language Interpreting.

Impact

In your text book, *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living*, Rushworth Kidder defines ethical fitness as "...the capacity to recognize the nature of moral challenges and respond with a well-tuned conscience, a lively perception of the difference between right and wrong, and an ability to choose the right and live by it" (p. 57). This definition contains the essence of why this course is important to your overall learning and experience as an interpreter.

All of us want to think of ourselves as individuals with high moral character. Yet, we do not naturally know what is ethical. It is not an inherited attribute. Knowing and understanding what is ethical and how to respond to professional conflict through ethical decision-making requires ongoing study and the internalization of ethical and moral principles.

Our character and commitment to integrity are not static—they evolve as we evolve. Our commitment to choose to do right is not fixed permanently in childhood; it continues to develop (or weaken) throughout our life. Many of the moral and/or ethical dilemmas and challenges we face as working professionals differ in our personal life from the issues we faced as children or even as adults.

Impact (continued)

Therefore, studying ethical decision-making and ethical fitness as it relates to our work as interpreters helps strengthen our resolve to behave ethically. Ethical decision-making includes both knowing what to do and acting upon our decision. Acquiring both skills requires commitment and time.

There are a variety of purposes for a code of professional conduct. One is to protect consumers/clients/students from the potential for abuse of position by the professional who is delivering the service. This is necessary, regrettably, because malpractice occurs. Malpractice is the act of not providing due care or following standards of practice when engaged in your profession. These standards also help consumers/clients/ students to know what to expect from practitioners of a given profession. These standards define common expectations for behavior.

Codes of professional conduct also help the practitioner. They provide a common frame of reference for resolving conflicts in roles and responsibilities, and establish the boundaries or limits to what others can expect from professionals. It is important for everyone to recognize that all professionals have limits and that a respect for the limits of a given profession/practice protects the interests of everyone.

Violations of codes of professional conduct are viewed seriously and can involve a variety of consequences. In some instances, it can involve a limitation on the ability to practice a profession. In other cases it can impact on the trust and credibility extended to a practitioner. In yet other cases, it can involve civil legal action related to malpractice. So, part of a professional's responsibility is to understand, respect, and apply ethical standards to the decision-making they do as a part of their work. This requires the development of discernment and discretion.

Objectives by Lesson

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

Lesson 1 – Core Values

- Explore the meaning of core values and examine your personal belief system.

Lesson 2 – Exploring Your Identity

- Identify factors contributing to your identity.
- Gain awareness in interpersonal relations.
- Explore the role of power in relationships and when power imbalances exist.
- Explore the role of feedback in gaining self-awareness and the role of reflective analysis in on-going personal and professional development.

Lesson 3 – Constructing a Framework for Intellectual and Ethical Maturity

- Identify your own stage of ethical maturity and ethical fitness.
- Explore a roadmap for ethical decision-making.
- Discuss ethical fitness and how it relates to interpreting.

Lesson 4 – When Values Collide: Conflict Resolution as a Part of Ethical Fitness

- Develop strategies for addressing and resolving conflict.
- Apply conflict resolution to ethical decision-making.

Lesson 5 – Codes of Conduct/Ethics: Core Values in Print

- Identify the core values and guiding principles that underwrite professional codes of conduct.
- Discuss the similarities and differences that exist between the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct and the codes of other professions, and gaps that may exist.

Lesson 6 – Ethical Decision-making

- Apply ethical standards of practice and consider resolution of case studies related to interpreting.

Lesson 7 – Business Practices

- Identify and discuss ethical conflicts that arise in the “business” of interpreting.

Lesson 8 – Lifelong Learning

- Identify the core values and guiding principles that underwrite your own personal philosophy of interpreting.
- Identify the professional development priorities you want to address upon completion of this course.

Required Text/Readings

Textbook

Kidder, R. M. (1995). *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living*. New York: Fireside (Simon Schuster).

Workbook

Stewart, K. M., & Witter-Merithew. (2006). *The Dimensions of Ethical Decision-Making: A Guided Exploration for Interpreters*. Burtonsville, MD: Sign Media, Inc.

Online Readings

- Reading #1: “From Benevolent Caretaker to Ally: The Evolving Role of Sign Language Interpreters in the United States” by Anna Witter-Merithew, 1999
- Reading #2: Chart entitled “Progressive Development of Interpreter Identity” by Anna Witter-Merithew, 1996
- Reading #3: “Moral Courage: A White Paper” by Rushworth Kidder and Martha Bracy. Retrieved on 12/27/06 from http://www.globalethics.org/pub/moral_courage_11-03-2001.pdf
- Reading #4: “Playing the Drama Triangle” by Theresa B. Smith
- Reading #5: “Feedback, Correction/Direction, Critique and Building a Support System” by Theresa B. Smith
- Reading #6: “Thinking Ethically: A Framework for Moral Decision Making” by Manuel Velasquez, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, and Michael Meyer. Retrieved on 12/27/06 from <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/>

Course Preview

This course contains eight (8) lessons, described below.

1. Defining Your Starting Place: Core Values

In this lesson, you will explore the meaning of “core values” and “paradigms”. You will examine your own personal beliefs and values, and identify how core values influence your thinking, beliefs, and actions.

2. Exploring Your Identity

Self-awareness is an essential building block of ethical fitness. In this lesson, you will take some time to reflect about yourself – how you envision yourself, your personality traits, experiences with others, and openness to feedback. The goal is to start you on a journey toward increased self-awareness. You will take a self-assessment quiz on the Johari Window and reflect on the results of the quiz in your journal.

3. Constructing a Framework for Intellectual and Ethical Maturity

The goal of this lesson is to provide a theoretical framework in which you, as an interpreter, can begin to understand and appreciate the nature of ethical decision-making, and the factors that impact ethical decision-making. This foundation will be established by introducing you to the following:

- Models of intellectual and ethical development
- Descriptions of conflict paradigms
- Principles of ethical decision-making

Textbook readings will provide a definition of ethical fitness and an introduction to four value paradigms that will help you distinguish between a true ethical dilemma and a moral temptation.

4. When Values Collide: Conflict Resolution as a Part of Ethical Fitness

This lesson introduces you to types and sources of conflict and strategies for conflict resolution. These strategies are then applied to ethical decision-making.

5. Codes of Conduct/Ethics: Core Values in Print

In this lesson you will review the NAD-RID Code of Ethics, explore the code of professional conduct of another profession, and discuss the differences and similarities that exist between the other profession and your profession. The overall goal of

this lesson is to enhance your ability to identify core values and principles that underwrite the ethical tenets that guide professions, and to provide insight into how these core values and principles are related to universal beliefs that govern the “world society”.

6. Application of Ethical Decision-Making: Case Study Analysis

In this lesson, you will analyze case studies related to interpreting and identify the values paradigm that is the source of conflict in the case study. A paradigm is a model, theory, perception, assumption or frame of reference. In a more general sense, it is the way we see the world. This lesson will present a six-step model for ethical decision-making as a foundation for case study analysis and as a tool for your own ethical decision-making.

7. Business Practices: Integrity in Action

In the business world the application of ethical principles and ethical decision-making is a constant concern. As a practicing interpreter, you will be encountering situations that will require you to make decisions and deal with consumers in a professional and ethical way. This lesson explores some of the dilemmas you may face and the principles for positive business ethics.

8. Lifelong Learning: Continuing to Sharpen the Saw

In order to function as a balanced professional, it is important to be proactive about tending to what Stephen Covey calls “sharpening the saw.” Being proactive requires advance thinking and planning. That will be the focus of this lesson. In this lesson, you will explore your continuing goals for professional development and create a draft outline of a Professional Development Plan—Assignment 4. This plan will include a discussion of resources that can enhance your professional development.

Lifelong learning and functioning in a balanced way are two of the most important investments you can give to yourself as a professional. As a proactive professional you recognize that the quality of your work product depends on the choices you make about your on-going professional development and the commitment you make to putting a plan for development into action.





Course Roadmap






Use this as your “map” while traveling on your distance-learning journey. All the information you need to complete the course is here in one location. Use the last column to check off each item as you complete it. Icons are used in two situations:








- To indicate activities that use media other than the Web
- To indicate activities that carry points that count for grading













Dates within the lessons are designed to provide a guideline for you to help you pace your activities. Assignment due dates are firm.







Note: The activities listed here in the Course Roadmap are required for course completion. The “Dimensions of Ethical Decision-Making” workbook contains many additional elective activities and resources. For your greatest enrichment you are encouraged to complete as many as you can.

Points	Non-web	Dates	Activities	Done!
 PP		On-going	Assignment 1 – Case study discussions	
 PP		On-going	Assignment 2 – Online journal entries	
Lesson 1 - Core Values				
		1/16-17	1.1 BlackBoard Discussion: Post your introduction	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1/18	1.2 Workbook: Chapter 1	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1/19	1.3 Textbook: Chapter 4, “Core Values”	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1/20	1.4 Online Reading #1: “From Benevolent Caretaker to Ally: The Evolving Role of Sign Language Interpreters in the United States” by Anna Witter-Merithew, 1999 Online Reading #2: “Progressive Development of Interpreter Identity” chart by Anna Witter-Merithew, 1996	<input type="checkbox"/>



Points	Non-web	Dates	Activities	Done!
 PP		1/20-24	1.5 Case Study #1: “Happy Trails” Post your response to a discussion question associated with the case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		1/26	Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #1: Journal exercise on your Memory Box in Chapter 1 of the workbook	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1/27	1.6 Web Activity: Explore quizzes from workbook along with the one at: http://confessiononline.com/quiz.asp	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesson 2 - Exploring Your Identity				
		1/29-30	2.1 Workbook: Chapter 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1/31	2.2 Online Reading #3: “Moral Courage: A White Paper” by Rushworth Kidder and Martha Bracy at http://www.globalethics.org/pub/moral_courage_11-03-2001.pdf	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		2/1-3	2.3 Case Study #2: “Loyalty and Betrayal” Post your response to a discussion question associated with the case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		2/5	2.4 Web Activity: Self-assessment quiz on the Johari Window and discussion posting	<input type="checkbox"/>
		2/6	2.5 Online Readings 4 & 5: “Playing the Drama Triangle” and “Feedback, Correction/ Direction...” by Smith	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		2/7	Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #2: Journal exercise on self-awareness in Chapter 2 of workbook	<input type="checkbox"/>

Points	Non-web	Dates	Activities	Done!
Lesson 3 - Constructing a Framework for Intellectual and Ethical Maturity				
		2/8	3.1 Workbook: Chapter 3	<input type="checkbox"/>
		2/9	3.2 Online Reading #6: http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/ Read links: “A Framework for Ethical Decision Making”, “Approaching Ethics”, “Can Ethics Be Taught?”, and “Common Good”.	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		2/11-13	3.3 Case Study #3: “Creating a Life” Post your response to a discussion question associated with the case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		2/14	3.4 Textbook: Chapters 1 - 3	<input type="checkbox"/>
		2/15-17	3.5 BlackBoard Discussion: Applying right vs. right – Discuss scenarios	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		2/20	Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #3: Journal exercise about you as an interpreter in Chapter 3 or the workbook	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesson 4 - When Values Collide: Conflict Resolution as a Part of Ethical Fitness				
		2/21	4.1 Workbook: Chapter 4	<input type="checkbox"/>
		2/22	4.2 Textbook: Chapter 7 “Resolution Principles”	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		2/23-27	4.3 Case Study #4: “In the Best Interest of the Children” Post your responses to one of the questions about the case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		3/1	4.4 Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #4: Journal exercise about a personal conflict situation in Chapter 4 of the workbook	<input type="checkbox"/>

Points	Non-web	Dates	Activities	Done!
		3/12	Assignment 3: Cases #5 – #9 Collaborative work on case of choice	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesson 5 – Codes of Conduct/Ethics: Core Values in Print				
		3/14	5.1 Workbook: Chapter 5	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		3/15-19	5.2 BlackBoard Discussion: Conflict of Interest situations	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		3/21	Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #5: Journal exercise about professional codes of conduct in Chapter 5 of the workbook	<input type="checkbox"/>
		3/26	Assignment 4: Codes of Ethics Investigate similarities and differences between the NAD-RID Code and the code from one other profession.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesson 6 – Application of Ethical Decision-Making: Case Study Analysis				
		3/28	6.1 Workbook: Chapter 6	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		3/29-4/2	6.2 Case Study # 11: “On the Spot” Post your responses to one of the questions associated with the case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		4/4	6.3 Textbook: Chapter 8 “There’s Only Ethics”	<input type="checkbox"/>
		4/23	Assignment 5: Create and analyze a case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesson 7 – Business Practices				
		4/23	7.1 Workbook: Chapter 7	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		4/23-26	7.2 Case Study #12: “Determining Rates” Post your responses to one of the questions associated with the case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		4/27	7.3 Textbook: Chapter 9, “Ethics in the 21 st Century”	<input type="checkbox"/>
		4/27-5/1	7.4 BlackBoard Discussion: Case Examples and Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>

Points	Non-web	Dates	Activities	Done!
			Post your responses to one of the questions associated with the cases.	
 PP		5/3	Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #6: Journal exercise about business practices in Chapter 7 of the workbook	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesson 8 - Lifelong Learning - Continue to Sharpen the Saw				
		5/4	8.1 Workbook: Chapter 8	<input type="checkbox"/>
 PP		5/5-8	8.2 Case Study #13: "Behind the Times" Post your responses to one of the questions associated with the case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		5/10	Assignment 6: Professional Development Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
		5/10-11	Complete on-line course evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>
		5/11	Last Day of Class!!	<input type="checkbox"/>

Assignment Overview

	Description	Points	Due
Assignment 1  PP	Participation Post your introduction (1 point), then post responses to a variety of Discussion Questions/Activity Responses indicated throughout the course. There will be a total of six required postings—each worth two points. (12 points total)	13	On-going
Assignment 2  PP	Online Journal Post responses to the specific question or questions in your online journal. There will be a total of six entries throughout the course—each worth two points.	12	On-going
Assignment 3	Case Study Collaborate with a group to choose a case and analyze it for the purpose of identifying the source of conflict, the values paradigm involved, and the ethical tenets to guide professional decision-making.	15	3/11
Assignment 4	Codes of Ethics Compare and contrast the NAD-RID Code of Ethics with the code(s) of ethics from other professions, identifying similarities, differences, and gaps.	25	3/26
Assignment 5	Case Studies Collaborate with a group to create a case study that reflects some of your real life experiences. You will then work with the same group to analyze and post a response to one of the case studies developed by your classmates.	25	4/23
Assignment 6	Professional Development Plan Prepare an outline of your Professional Development Plan.	10	5/10

For more detail:

A complete description of each assignment is included as an activity in the appropriate lesson found on BlackBoard.

Course Summary

Conclusion

A fitting conclusion to this course is found in your workbook in the “Closing Thoughts”:

“The process of developing ethical fitness and ethical decision-making skills is often described as a journey. We develop and refine an awareness of right and wrong, justice, fairness, integrity, duty, responsibility, as well as skills in ethical decision-making, throughout the course of our lives. Our sense of what is right and good when we are young often changes as we grow and encounter different groups of people, differing perspectives, and experience various life events. Thus, a day never arrives when we can truly say that we have attained all we need to be perfect ethical beings. The journey toward ethical fitness, both in our personal and professional lives, begins on the day we are born and ends when we take our last breath.

At a minimum, each of you has begun a journey with this course. You have been asked to look into the mirror and reflect upon what you have seen there. You have studied theories and discussed cases which illustrate, not only how difficult it is to make ethical decisions, but also how a lack of judgment and decision-making skills can affect each of us, our society, our profession, and the consumers we serve. Once an awareness of ethics develops, it cannot be unlearned. Many students who have taken an ethics course report that the information opened their eyes. They began to notice ethical issues all around them that they had never seen or considered before! Notice them; Ponder them; Discuss them; Reflect upon them further. It is within this process that we continue along on our journey toward fine-tuning and improving our ethical fitness.”

Key Points

- Core values and your belief system provide the starting place for moral and ethical decision-making.
- Self-awareness is a building block for becoming morally and ethically fit.

- Ethical maturity takes place in stages and movement from one stage to another is based on life experiences.
- Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* provides one roadmap for ethical decision-making.
- Ethical dilemmas involve "right vs. right" situations.
- Conflict occurs when values collide, meaning ethical decision-making involves conflict resolution.
- Codes of ethics establish a standardized foundation upon which company employees, organizations, or professionals base ethical decisions.
- Engaging in frequent case analysis activities and discussions enhances your awareness of potential conflicts and how to handle potential conflicts.
- Ethical business practices are not only for those in private practice. All interpreters, whether we work in private practice or receive a salary, must still be responsible for negotiating working conditions; scheduling work and maintaining day-to-day work relationships.
- Ethical fitness requires lifelong learning, so continue to reflect on ethical situations, participate in self-assessment, and share thoughts and learning with colleagues.

What's Next

The workbook you received in this course contains a wealth of information, websites, references, and activities for you to explore. Take the time to review and engage in some of the activities and resources that were not covered in this class as a way to strengthen your ethical fitness.

Consider ways to create a "community of learning" in your local area to continue your growth in the area of ethics and professionalism. Find other interpreters with whom you can meet regularly to discuss your profession, and share experiences and insights that can help you all grow into mature ethical practitioners. You will also apply your learning from this class during your fieldwork and practicum in INTR 331 and 492.

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