

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
THE WHARTON SCHOOL  
DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL STUDIES AND BUSINESS ETHICS

LEGAL STUDIES AND BUSINESS ETHICS 227 Syllabus  
Spring 2009

Professor G. Richard Shell  
THE LITERATURE OF SUCCESS:  
ETHICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Classroom: F38 Huntsman Hall  
Office: 643 Huntsman Hall  
Class times: Thursdays 3:00 -- 6:00 PM  
Office Hours: 1:30 – 3:00 PM Thursday or call/email me  
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This course explores the history, literature, ethics, and philosophy of two age-old questions: what does it mean to be “successful” and how does one achieve this elusive goal? It surveys some of the classics of the “success” genre – from Epictetus’ (c. A.D. 50-130) classic “Handbook for Living” to Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and Dale Carnegie’s How to Win Friends and Influence People in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Case studies include Charles Lindbergh’s The Spirit of St. Louis (about the first successful solo flight across the Atlantic), Mary Kay Ash’s Miracles Happen (about the founding of Mary Kay Cosmetics company), and Arthur Miller’s play Death of a Salesman.

In addition to examining the readings from both critical and cultural perspectives, students will utilize web-based tools developed by Penn’s Positive Psychology Center and the Gallup Organization to examine their own personal character strengths, talents, and achievement orientations. Grading is based on overall class contribution and participation (25%), short reading response papers and personal journals on assigned topics (25%), a short paper (8 pages) on a theme in the course (20%), and a longer “Final Project” (15-20 pages) presenting students’ current theories of success, additional readings on the subject, and treatments of the lives of two historical figures (not covered in the course) from business, the arts, science, politics, etc. that provide context and depth to their success theories (30%). More details on the grading events in the course is attached to this syllabus, together with a sample “Reading Response” paper. ***NOTE WELL: Because of the importance of class participation in this course and the fact that the class meets only once per week, class attendance is critical. Students may miss one class without any penalty, but beyond that a 10% grade penalty will be imposed for each class missed unless the student provides a written medical excuse or evidence of a family emergency. Recruiting and extracurricular activities, while recognized as important student interests, are not valid excuses for missing class.*** Please consider this when enrolling.

Readings include a Bulk Pack (with daily Reading Guide and review questions) and these required books: Benjamin Franklin, The Autobiography; Tom Rath, StrengthsFinder 2.0; Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People; Stephen R. Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People; and Napoleon Hill, Think and Grow Rich.

### **CLASS TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

Class 1 (1-15-09): Course Introduction: Defining Success – Happiness, Achievement, Fame, Service to Others, None of the Above, or All of the Above?

Discuss: Syllabus, Grading, Reading Response Papers, Personal Journals.

Read: BP #1-5 (to be handed out, read, and discussed during class):

Activity: Rate Profiled Lives; Debate Success vs. Happiness

#### Part I. The Character School

Class 2 (1-22-09): Character, Virtue, and the Self-Made Person: Benjamin Franklin  
**\*(Journal #1 Due – A Failure or Major Disappointment in My Life and Its Effect on Me)**

Read: BP #6-7; Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography (Part 1 written in 1771 and Part 2 written in 1784). You can skip Part 3 written in 1788, which details many of Franklin's achievements.

Activity: Group discussion of Journal #1; Work on individual VIA Strengths profile results

Class 3 (1-29-09): Practicing Character as a System for Success:  
Seven Habits and One Elephant

Read: BP #8-11; selections from Stephen Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (1989). Everyone should read pages 15-62 and 309-319. In addition, different students will be assigned to read and report on each of Covey's "7 Habits."

Activity: Groups discuss student experiences trying to practice one of Franklin's virtues on a daily basis for a week.

Class 4 (2-5-09): Character's Roots: Family and Role Models  
**\*Journal #2 Due – Essay on a Personal Role Model in My Life**

Read: BP#12-16

Activity: Group discussions of role models. "Advantages" exercise.

Class 5 (2-12-09) Success, Family, and Literature: Death of a Salesman

Read: BP# 17-18.

Activity: Watch and discuss the original Broadway cast production of Death of a Salesman.

## II. The Excellence School

Class 6 (2-19-09): Aptitudes, Talents, and Work-as-a-Calling

Read: BP#19-24

Activity: Group discussion of Gallup StrengthFinder results

Class 7 (2-26-09): The Problem of Purpose

**\*Journal # 3 Due – Correcting an “Errata” in my life.**

Read: BP #25-31

Activity: Group discussion of “errata” work; purpose work.

## III. The Mind Power School

Class 8 (3-5-09): Success through Beliefs, Mental Focus, and Positive Mental Attitudes

Read: Napoleon Hill, Think and Grow Rich (1937) Introduction and Chapters 1-4, 6, 9, & 15 in (feel free to look into some of the parts we are skipping – some of it is repetitive but some is very strange). BP #32-33.

Activity: Watch Byrne video -- The Secret.

Week of March 9-13, 2009: SPRING BREAK

Class 9 (3-19-09): Mind Power’s Roots: Roman Philosophy

**\*Journal #4 Due – My Virtues, Vices, Strengths and Weaknesses, with Comments from My Circle of Friends and Family**

Read: BP #34-38.

Activity: Group discussion on journals -- virtues, vices, strengths and weaknesses. Also students bring most and least favorite quotes from Stoic philosophers and be ready to discuss selections.

Class 10 (3-26-09): Mind Power’s Tools – Goals, Models, Self-Talk, GRIT, Rituals

**\*Short Paper Due**

Read: BP # 39-46.

Activity: Group work on findings of short papers and personal techniques for exercising self-control.

Class 11 (4-2-09): Success Case Studies: Charles Lindbergh and Mary Kay Ash

Read: BP#47-49

Activity: Group activities on review questions in Reading Guide. Also, each student should be prepared to present information on at least one of the people he or she intends to use as a role model in the Final Project.

#### IV. The Social Influence School

Class 12 (4-9-09): Social Influence and Success

Read: BP# 50-52; Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People (1937)

(Parts 1 and 2 – roughly the first 100+ pages -- only)

Activity: Group discussion on authenticity vs. social “technique.” Is there such a thing as purely “altruistic” social interaction?

Class 13 (4-16-09): Social Manipulation, Social Constraints

Read: BP#53-55.

Activities: Group discussions on Greene’s The 48 Laws of Power and the role of social class and social environment on the potential for individual success. Survey of the two lives and additional reading(s) you intend to use in your Final Project.

Class 14 (4-23-09): Class Wrap-up

Activity: Bring these things: 1) your outline for the “2019 magazine article” about yourself – what magazine are you in and what have you accomplished?, 2) a final report on your virtue practice for the semester, 3) a summary of the “success practices” you intend to continue using after the course is over to help you on your path, and 4) a favorite, “signature quotation” from the readings to share with the class – come prepared to explain why you picked that passage.

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE:** 12 noon on Monday May 4th. No extensions and penalties will be imposed for late papers! I have to submit grades for graduation by May 14 at 10 AM.

**Class participation and contribution (25 points):** This score is a combination of professor and student ratings. Students will peer-rate each other at the end of the term on a 1-10 scale based on perceptions of each classmate's overall contribution to the class learning experience. The professor will also rate each member of the class in terms of overall effort and insight. The final allocation of the 25 points will be given by the professor by combining both inputs and identifying the top, middle, and lower groups in terms of class contribution. Note that class contributions are not measured solely by the amount people talk in class (although people who do not say anything will have trouble excelling on this aspect of the grade). Class contributions are occasions when students trigger lively, informed debate and discussion by what they say – either in class or in small group discussions. People who speak up simply to reinforce or restate something someone else just said are not contributing as much as people who raise new points, deepen areas of discussion with relevant personal experiences, or challenge points of conventional wisdom that everyone else has assumed to be true. You will be mixed in small groups with different classmates to give everyone a chance to engage with lots of other people.

Deductions for missing classes (-10 points for each missed class after 1 free missed class) will be taken from the final score a student receives after taking both the peer and professor rating into account.

**Reading Response Papers (6 points) (sample provided):** All students are expected to do the readings for each class. But to assure that there will be in-depth discussions, each student will turn in six 1-2 page (single-spaced) reading response papers during the semester that will include reactions and responses to the assigned readings as well as a proposed debate/discussion topic for the class's consideration springing from one or more of the assigned readings. There will be five groups (randomly assigned) and reading response paper assignments for each group are as follows (papers are due at the beginning of the relevant class):

Group 1: Classes 2, 4, 6, 8, 12, 13

Group 2: Classes 2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13

Group 3: Classes 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 13

Group 4: Classes 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13

Group 5: Classes 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, 13

One point will be awarded for each paper turned in that meets the standard indicated by the sample. Three points will be deducted for each paper not turned in on time and 2 points deducted for a paper that is turned in but is not a good-faith effort to meet the standard. Papers turned in late can earn back 2 of the 3 lost points if they meet the standard.

**Personal Journal Entries (20 points).** There will be 4 personal journal entries, each worth 5 points. Length: 1-2 pages, single-spaced. They due on dates noted in **bold** the syllabus.

Personal Journal Topics:

1. A significant failure or major disappointment in my life and its effect on me.
2. A personal role model in my life with specific examples of how this person has affected my character. Could be anyone (parent, teacher, coach, tutor, friend, etc.) but must be someone you have known personally and who made a deep impression on you.
3. My real-time experience identifying and correcting an “erratum” in my life with someone I have wronged, neglected, or failed to appreciate adequately.
4. An essay on my VIA “virtues” (including the virtues I need to work the hardest on improving) and Top 5 Gallup StrengthFinder “talents,” with maximum feedback and comment from my circle of family and friends. The goal: come to some conclusions about what your virtues, vices, and talents actually are.

**One short research paper of 8 pages, double-spaced (20 points):** Topic –Throughout the course, we have struggled with the idea of “happiness” and its relationship to the idea of “success.” Write a paper in which you explore what “happiness” really is. You should motivate the paper using your own personal experience as a reference point, but understand that this will be graded as a research paper. Thus, illustrate your thesis and deepen your own understanding of the topic using as many research sources as appear to you to be relevant: from social science, literature, and history to philosophy and hard science (i.e. neuro-science, medicine, etc.). Papers will be graded on the basis of depth and originality of research from materials outside the course, (i.e. Seligman, Haidt, Aristotle, and Nozick do not count as original sources), original thesis development, clear organization, illuminating examples, careful editing, and outstanding writing.

**Final Project: One longer paper of 15-20 pages, doubled-spaced (30 points)**

Topic -- “My 2008 theory of what success is and how to achieve it, illustrated by the course readings, at least one major additional ‘reading’ (see note below) that inspires me, and the lives of two people I admire as examples of success from business, social, or political history.” You will be placed in groups of 4-5 students and meet throughout the semester to discuss your evolving ideas on how to write this Final Project.

*Note on grading: this is a research paper as well as a statement of personal philosophy. Hence, the biographical examples must be of people who are no longer living and who were not represented in the course. The “additional reading” can be any form of personal or artistic expression – a poem, painting, short story, film, success book, religious writing, play, photograph – you name it. The more original and thoughtful the paper and examples, the better. Hence, someone who picks the famous “Serenity Prayer” (“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.”) as his or her original reading may not get as much credit as someone who finds a less-known but equally powerful reading or other expression that delivers the same wisdom. And someone who chooses to use the person who founded his or her country as a biographical*

*example may not get as much credit as someone who finds a less-known but equally inspiring figure who displayed equally admirable actions and beliefs. The best papers also typically go beyond course concepts (or outside course concepts altogether) in defining what success means for the writer. Writers who simply survey the “success schools” studied in class and pick bits and pieces from each will not do as well as those who find novel ways to expand, deepen, or invent new ways to think about and/or measure success and connect these ideas to both the lives of their role models and their own lives.*

SAMPLE READING RESPONSE PAPER – LGST 227

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reading: Mary Kay Ash, Miracles Happen

Class # \_\_\_\_\_

Class Debate Question: Is Mary Kay's success philosophy dated? Would it sell to this generation of women or is it limited to an era when women were more-or-less barred from pursuing conventional careers?

Response: Surprising book – I think I thought it would be more of a bio. A lot of the material was a how-to book on motivation. While I was put off by the tone of the book (as much as Mary Kay touted feminism she sounded a little too effeminate for me to take her seriously – although that is also probably a function of the changes in societal views over time) in general – her ideas on motivation were great – especially the concept of incremental rewards. For example, her “ladder of success” pins effectively motivated her employees to constantly compete against their past performance. Obviously more important than the actual jewel in the pin is the recognition of achievement that it affords the Consultant. Motivating the directors of my student organization is something I have been struggling with recently – there are several people who are not giving a desirable amount of time and attention to their committees and to our group in general. With the rest of the board, I have been trying to think of ways to incentivize them – and unfortunately, I don't think that a Mary Kay-esque recognition scheme (or even objects that symbolize recognition) will work. People are motivated by different things – I remember reading in a Consumer Behavior textbook about McClelland's achievement theories - that people are motivated by achievement, authority, or affiliation (or some combination of the three). Mary Kay's ladder pin is based on a need for achievement, while for example, one of the directors in my group is motivated by authority – and he has not been performing highly since he lost his election to by Chair.

I saw a lot of similarities between the messages found in this reading and that in Covey's book. One idea that particularly stood out was the need to prioritize with the greater end in mind. Ash writes “if you were going to drive to your vacation destination, you wouldn't start without a road map. The same should be true of your life. Without a plan – a road map – you will never get where you want to go. To accomplish anything significant, you must sit down and decide what you want from life.” Like Covey, she stresses the need to keep a manageable but important list of daily goals (the “\$35K list”), and also that this list should be shaped by a broader life plan (Covey's mission statement). (Mary Kay's message was conveyed with lots more exclamation points than Covey's... but same idea).

I had trouble taking some of this seriously. As hard as Mary Kay clearly worked, her excessively positive attitude made me discount some of what she had to say. This is something that I have experienced – one of my signature strengths was positivity – something I didn't need to take a personality assessment to notice – but there have been points where this has disadvantaged me. A lot of times when you constantly come off as happy, nice, enthusiastic, etc. people don't take you seriously and they think you are naïve, even if that is not the case. It is important to “manage” positivity – and use it to your advantage but to avoid letting it detract from your perceived professionalism. One has to find Aristotle's “mean” even for smiling if you are going to be successful.