

Frequently Asked Questions

[1] What is the aim of the seminar?

The seminar is designed to encourage greater insight into the role of honesty and trust in promoting a good life and a sustainable society. Ethical development in this context is influenced by provocative readings, questions, and self-examination, not the study and memorization of ethical codes or precepts.

[2] What readings do you use?

All of our seminars contain selected stories. One story we routinely use is Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Illyich*. We are influenced in this regard by the work of Professor Robert Coles at Harvard. Here's a short summary of Cole's perspective by Scott London (an Associate of the Kettering Foundation):

Coles feels that we learn our most lasting moral lessons through stories . . . One of the courses Coles teaches at Harvard is called "The Literature of Social Reflection." Also known as General Education 105, it was for several years the most popular undergraduate offering at the University, attracting more than 600 students. The course centers on the lives and literature of writers such as Emerson, Thoreau, Orwell, and Agee. These writers all sought to connect moral ideas to the practice of everyday life, Coles explains -- to link stories and experience in meaningful ways. He believes that this is the challenge we all face as we try to make sense of our lives and those of others.

[3] Your readings often focus on philosophical questions, like the definition of a "good life." Why?

We want to inspire reflection at the deepest level. Exploring the components of a "good life" means *thinking about a definition of happiness*. We have yet to encounter a student who can't become engaged in that topic. We're influenced in this regard by the work of University of Virginia English Professor Mark Edmundson, author of *Teacher: The One Who Made The Difference*. Edmundson outlined his views in a 2003 *New York Times* article titled "[How Teachers Can Stop Cheaters](#)":

I'm not naive enough to think that more personal and immediate teaching would put DirectEssays.com out of business. But it would make a difference, I'm sure. Speaking of his exchange with his pupils, Socrates, the founder of humanistic education, once observed: 'What we're engaged in here isn't a chance conversation but a dialogue about the way we ought to live our lives.' The closer we professors come to following Socrates, the less cheating we're likely to see.

The potential for student engagement in ethical dialogue can be seen in answers students at the University of Maryland have authorized us to share:

See: <http://www.academicintegrityseminar.com/Teaching/StudentResponses.html>

[4] Are there suitable readings for students contemplating careers in business, law, or medicine?

Yes. Our core readings are relevant to those fields (consider Tolstoy's criticism of insensitivity and arrogance in the medical profession in [The Death of Ivan Ilyich](#)), but we also include readings like [Alan Greenspan's 1999 Harvard Commencement Address](#) (business ethics) and Patrick L. Schiltz's classic *Vanderbilt Law Review* article on ["Being a Happy, Healthy, and Ethical Member of an Unhappy, Unhealthy, and Unethical Profession"](#) (legal ethics). There are many other examples. We welcome ideas for new readings, including readings that may be of special interest on your campus.

[5] Are students sometimes asked to review relevant ethical professional codes or statements?

Yes, especially students enrolled in graduate and professional programs. Our focus is on asking students to think about and *critique* the codes, suggesting possible modifications. Being familiar with an ethical code or values statement is not in itself an inducement to ethical action. We presume in this regard that most of the top executives at Enron could recite key components of the Enron "Visions and Values" Statement ("*respect, integrity, communication, and excellence*"). Abiding by the Statement, however, was another matter.

[6] Do students receive individual attention?

Yes. Personal attention is essential to what we do. This is not a machine-graded

enterprise. We draw upon a common core of reading options, but individual readings and questions are suggested by a tutor who personally evaluates student answers.

Our senior tutors have taught many of our assigned readings to hundreds of different students. They understand and are familiar with typical student responses and can structure their evaluations accordingly. It is not uncommon for tutors to ask follow-up questions designed to help individual students better understand and reflect upon the readings.

[7] What are the privacy and [FERPA \(Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act\)](#) implications?

Students are alerted to our website and knowingly send their answers directly to us. We remind them in our initial response that their answers and our evaluations are typically shared with designated officials at their home institution.

Our standard contract with referring institutions also states that we do not seek access to student education records and make no assumptions about the disciplinary status of students taking the seminar. Students may, for example, be referred to us for purposes of honor committee or hearing board training.

In any event, we are contractually bound not to share student responses (or other communications from students) with any unauthorized party outside AcademicIntegritySeminar.com or a referring educational institution. A sample contract can be found [here](#).

[8] Who are the tutors?

Gary Pavela and DeForest McDuff are regular tutors (see the [Who We Are](#) menu tab). We also plan to employ faculty colleagues and highly qualified graduate and undergraduate students nationwide. Student tutors drawn from members of Student Honor Committees at participating colleges and universities may be especially helpful in helping to influence their peers. See our response to the next question.

[9] May students and faculty members on our campus be employed as tutors?

Yes. We will gladly consider nominees. Campus-based tutors will receive orientation and training directly from us or our field representatives and receive a quarter of each tuition payment. College students are peer-oriented, so there's special value in involving qualified members of student honor committees as tutors. Student honor committee members will also *learn from teaching* --a value-added component of any ethical development program.

[10] What are the criteria for evaluating students' responses?

Students are expected to provide fully developed responses to essay questions. Tutors are looking for serious and thoughtful engagement with the assigned readings. There are no simple correct answers.

Creative and contrary opinions are welcome. Those opinions, however, must show critical thought and be supported by reasoned references to the sources.

[11] How do you reduce the risk of cheating, plagiarism, and identity deception?

We team with referring institutions to practice a cardinal rule in classroom and online teaching: *know the student*. Students are informed at the outset that their answers are shared with a designated official at the referring institution. We encourage those officials to meet with students and become familiar with each student's interests, background, and overall academic performance. It's helpful for referring officials to ask students to discuss some or all of their responses after the responses have been evaluated by us. Referring institutions may also ask us to incorporate interviews with campus faculty members as part of our assignments.

In any event, we strive to reduce academic dishonesty by assigning engaging materials linked to student discussion of their *personal* experiences. We also try to establish rapport and trust with each student. These are long-established characteristics of learning environments with lower levels of cheating and plagiarism.

[12] How long does it take to complete a seminar?

Most students can complete the assigned readings and answer our questions in about ten hours (one working weekend).

[13] Where can we see a sample seminar?

A sample integrity seminar can be found under the [Seminar](#) menu tab. A typical seminar is a combination of several core readings common to all students and several specific readings selected based on individual student academic and/or personal interests.

[14] How do we initiate the process of offering your seminar?

Please send us an e-mail. See the [Contact Us](#) menu tab for details. Typically, colleges and universities incorporate the seminar as a key component of their student ethical development program.

[15] Do you have a standard contract?

Yes. We generally contract directly with institutions rather than with individual students. A sample contract can be found [here](#). Clients may suggest alternative language.

[16] Do you have any customers who can evaluate your service?

Yes. Please send us an e-mail inquiry and we will provide appropriate contact information.

[17] Should the seminar be limited to students found responsible for academic dishonesty?

No. The seminars are designed to emphasize key concepts and ideas that are relevant for all students. The seminars may be especially valuable in training members of a student honor committee or hearing panel. Some of our related training materials can be found on the [Hearing Panel Training](#) menu tab.

[18] Are your seminars limited to college and university students?

No. We welcome participation from high schools or individual high school students and can tailor our assignments accordingly.

[19] May individual students subscribe to your seminars on their own?

Yes. We are willing to contract with individual participants. Most of our clients, however, are colleges and universities integrating the seminars into their ethical development programs.

[20] May we use the readings and materials on your web site even if we do not assign students to your seminars?

Yes. Use of the readings and assignments at our site (with proper attribution to [AcademicIntegritySeminar.com](#)) is authorized for any non-profit, educational purpose. Our web site is designed to be a national resource of free materials on academic integrity and student ethical development programming.