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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 discretion and ethical decision-making. Much of your learning will result from your participation in a variety of case study discussions 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 textbook, 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.

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.
Plagiarism Policy

**Policy on Plagiarism:** *Plagiarism is the act of appropriating the written, artistic, or musical composition of another, or portions thereof; or the ideas, language, or symbols of same and passing them off as the product of one’s own mind. Plagiarism includes not only the exact duplication of another’s work but also the lifting of a substantial or essential portion thereof (UNC definition).* Regarding written work in particular, direct quotations, statements which are a result of paraphrasing or summarizing the work of another, and other information which is not considered common knowledge must be cited or acknowledged, usually in the form of a footnote. Quotation marks or a proper form of indentation shall be used to indicate all direct quotes. Regarding class projects, you are not to use as your entire presentation the completed works of faculty members, fully imported websites, or any other body of work in which you are not the author. Of course, with proper referencing, you can import portions of such works and websites to enhance and illustrate your presentation, and you can provide references to these other works for students who have an interest in pursuing a topic further. For further information, go to the following website: [http://www.unco.edu/dos/academicIntegrity/students/definingPagiarism.html](http://www.unco.edu/dos/academicIntegrity/students/definingPagiarism.html)

Inclusivity Statement

The College of Education and Behavioral Sciences (CEBS) supports an inclusive learning environment where diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, appreciated and recognized as a source of strength. We expect that students, faculty and staff within CEBS will be accepting of differences and demonstrate diligence in understanding how other peoples’ perspectives, behaviors, and world views may be different from their own. Furthermore, as stated by UNC, “The University will not engage in unlawful discrimination in...educational services against any person because of race, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, or veteran status. It is the University’s policy to prohibit discrimination in...educational services on the basis of sexual orientation or political affiliation.” (See [http://www.unco.edu/hr/AAEO_TitleIX.htm](http://www.unco.edu/hr/AAEO_TitleIX.htm)).

Please visit the CEBS Diversity and Equity Committee website for more information on our commitment to diversity ([http://www.unco.edu/cebs/diversity](http://www.unco.edu/cebs/diversity)).

Students with Disabilities

**Accommodations Statement:** Students who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Disability Support Services, Voice/TTY (970) 351-2289, or fax (970) 351-4166, or visit [www.unco.edu/dss](http://www.unco.edu/dss) as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.
Grading Scale

The points for all the assignments in a course will add up to 100 and letter grades are assigned as follows for UNDERGRADUATE classes:

- **A** = 100 - 91 superior achievement of course objectives
- **B** = 90 - 81 above average achievement of objectives
  (Reminder: you must maintain at least a “B” per class to meet graduation requirements)
- **C/D** = 80 - 61 below acceptable achievement of objectives
  60 or below is considered not passing.

Late Assignment Policy

Late assignments will be accepted and graded for up to 72 hours after the due date and time but the final grade will be dropped one letter. Late assignments submitted after the 72 hours that have not been approved in advance with the respective Section Facilitator will NOT be graded and students will receive a zero as the assignment grade.

Extensions for assignment due date and time must be approved in advance with the respective Section Facilitator based on the following criteria:

- The extension is requested at least 24 hours in advance of the due date and time.
- An extension is requested no more than once during any given semester.
- **No late work will be accepted in the last three days of this course.**

Exceptions to the above criteria will only be considered based on documented evidence of special circumstances—such as illness, hospitalization or death of a family member.
Required Materials

Textbook

Workbook

Readings (eReserves)
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.


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 6. 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 put 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Done!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pp</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Assignment 1 – Case study discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pp</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Assignment 2 – Online journal entries</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Lesson 1 – Core Values**

**Lesson 1 – Objective**
- Explore the meaning of core values and examine your personal belief system.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Done!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/12-13</td>
<td>1.1 Online Discussion: Post your introduction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/13</td>
<td>1.2 Workbook: Chapter 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/14</td>
<td>1.3 Textbook: Chapter 4, “Core Values”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>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</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pp</td>
<td>1/16-18</td>
<td>1.5 Case Study #1: “Happy Trails” Post your response to a discussion question associated with the case.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Points | Dates | Activities | Done!
---|---|---|---
| pp | 1/20 | **Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #1:** Journal exercise on your Memory Box in Chapter 1 of the workbook | ☐
| | 1/21-22 | **Web Activity:** Explore quizzes from workbook along with the one at: [http://confessonline.com/quiz.asp](http://confessonline.com/quiz.asp) | ☐

#### Lesson 2 – Exploring Your Identity

**Lesson 2 – Objectives**
- 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td><strong>Workbook:</strong> Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/24</td>
<td><strong>Online Reading #3:</strong> “Moral Courage: A White Paper” by Rushworth Kidder and Martha Bracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pp</td>
<td>1/25-1/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/29</td>
<td><strong>Web Activity:</strong> Self-assessment quiz on the Johari Window and discussion posting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/31</td>
<td><strong>Online Readings 4 &amp; 5:</strong> “Playing the Drama Triangle” and “Feedback, Correction/Direction…” by Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pp</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Lesson 3 – Constructing a Framework for Intellectual and Ethical Maturity

**Lesson 3 – Objectives**
- 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| 2/4 | **Workbook:** Chapter 3 | ☐

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<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Done!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|        | 2/4   | 3.2 Online Reading #6:  
Read: “A Framework for Ethical Decision Making”, “Approaching Ethics”, “Can Ethics Be Taught?”, and “Common Good”. | ☐   |
| ![calendar.png] | 2/5-8 | 3.3 Case Study #3: “Creating a Life”  
Post your response to a discussion question associated with the case. | ☐   |
| ![calendar.png] | 2/9   | 3.4 Textbook: Chapters 1 - 3 | ☐   |
| ![calendar.png] | 2/12-15 | 3.5 Online Discussion: Applying right vs. right –  
Discuss scenarios | ☐   |
| ![calendar.png] | 2/16  | Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #3:  
Journal exercise about you as an interpreter in Chapter 3 of the workbook | ☐   |

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

**Lesson 4 – Objectives**
- Develop strategies for addressing and resolving conflict.
- Apply conflict resolution to ethical decision-making.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>4.1 Workbook: Chapter 4</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
| 2/20 | 4.2 Textbook: Chapter 7  
“Resolution Principles” | ☐   |
| ![calendar.png] | 2/23-26 | 4.3 Case Study #4: “In the Best Interest of the Children”  
Post your responses to one of the questions about the case. | ☐   |
| ![calendar.png] | 2/27  | Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #4:  
Journal exercise about a personal conflict situation in  
Chapter 4 of the workbook | ☐   |
| ![calendar.png] | 3/6   | Assignment 3: Cases #5 – #9  
Collaborative work on case of choice | ☐   |

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

**Lesson 5 – Objectives**
- Identify the core values and guiding principles that underwrite professional codes of conduct.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Done!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 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.</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>Workbook: Chapter 5</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/9-12</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Online Discussion: Conflict of Interest situations</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/16-24</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spring Break at UNC!</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment 2 Online Journal Entry #5: Journal exercise about professional codes of conduct in Chapter 5 of the workbook.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment 4: Codes of Ethics Investigate similarities and differences between the NAD-RID Code and the code from one other profession.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 6 – Application of Ethical Decision-Making: Case Study Analysis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 6 – Objective</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Apply ethical standards of practice and consider resolution of case studies related to interpreting.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/27</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Workbook: Chapter 6</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/30 - 4/2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Case Study # 11: “On the Spot” Post your responses to one of the questions associated with the case.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Textbook: Chapter 8 “There’s Only Ethics”</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment 5: Create and analyze a case.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 7 – Business Practices</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 7 – Objective</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify and discuss ethical conflicts that arise in the “business” of interpreting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/14</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Workbook: Chapter 7</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<td>Points</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Done!</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>4/15-18</td>
<td><strong>Case Study #12</strong>: “Determining Rates” Post your responses to one of the questions associated with the case.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/21</td>
<td><strong>Textbook</strong>: Chapter 9, “Ethics in the 21st Century”</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>4/22-4/25</td>
<td><strong>Online Discussion</strong>: Case Examples and Discussion Post your responses to one of the questions associated with the cases.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>4/28</td>
<td><strong>Workbook</strong>: Chapter 8</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</table>

**Lesson 8 – Lifelong Learning – Continue to Sharpen the Saw**

**Lesson 8 – Objective**

- 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.

| PP     | 5/1 - 5     | **Case Study #13**: “Behind the Times” Post your responses to one of the questions associated with the case. | ☐    |
| PP     | 5/5         | **Assignment 6**: Professional Development Plan                              | ☐    |

<p>| By 5/8 |            | <strong>Complete online course evaluation</strong>&lt;br&gt;End of semester, congratulations!&lt;br&gt;Final grades will be posted within 3 days of the end of the semester. | ☐    |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Assignment 1 | Participation  
Post your introduction (1 point), then post responses to a variety of Discussion Questions/Activity Responses indicated throughout the course. You are required to post in six of the eight discussions that are marked for points. Each posting is worth two points. (12 points total) | 13 | Ongoing |
| Assignment 2 | 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 | Ongoing |
| 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 | 3/6 |
| Assignment 4 | Codes of Ethics  
Compare and contrast the NAD-RID Code of Ethics with the code(s) of ethics from another profession, identifying similarities, differences, and gaps. | 25 | 3/24 |
| 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 | 4/12 |
| Assignment 6 | Professional Development Plan  
Prepare an outline of your Professional Development Plan. | 10 | 5/5 |

For more detail:  
A complete description of each assignment is included as an activity in the appropriate lesson found on Blackboard as well an overview and rubrics are provided under the Assignments tab.
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.

**Next Steps**

While this course is still fresh in your mind, pause to review your learning, looking through the lens of your final portfolio that is due at the end of your ASLEI journey. Consider the following:

1) Identify any applicable Entry-to-Practice Competencies that may be related to the course objectives;

2) Identify possible evidence items;

3) Identify potential reflection pieces that could be used in the narrative of the Coversheet;

4) Use your organizational system to house these items and thoughts until you are ready to work on writing future Coversheets; (Hint: If it’s possible to work on all or part of a Coversheet at this time, why not draft it now?!) and finally,

5) Check in with classmates to see if some collaborative thinking might be worth your investment of time – what did others identify and how are they thinking of using the learning from this course?
Quality Instruction
Preparing Qualified Interpreters