

**MGMT 5140.001/026 ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR\*\*\*  
ONLINE  
8-Week 2—Spring 2022  
March 21 to May 13**

*“Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection.” Mark Twain*

*“You can’t push people to reach their potential. You can choose to leave the door open for them, but they must walk through.” John C. Maxwell*

**Instructor:** Dr. Joan C. Hubbard  
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**Office Hours:** By ZOOM appointment or email

***Note:** The College of Business Administration complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodation for qualified students with a disability. If you have an established disability as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act and would like to request accommodation, please see me as soon as possible. My office hours and office number are shown on this syllabus. University policy requires that students notify their instructor within the first week of class that an accommodation will be needed.*

*CANVAS is committed to making certain that online courses are open and accessible to people with disabilities. As a result, CANVAS complies with Section 508 of the US Rehabilitation Act of 1973, enabling people with disabilities and using assistive technologies, such as screen readers, to fully use the software. CANVAS has worked with the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre (ATRC) at the University of Toronto on compliance requirements.*

In a hybrid (blended) course, the class will meet face-to-face part of the time while using an online learning environment for completing other course activities and assignments. additional assignments are posted online for additional lecture material.

**PLEASE REFER TO MY.UNT.EDU FOR IMPORTANT DATES.**

**Course Objectives**

1. To study human behavior in organizations at the individual and group level including the topics of international organizational behavior, research methods,

- individual differences, perception, attribution, motivation, leadership, communication, decision-making and performance, and stress.
2. To recognize key qualities and characteristics of leadership.
  3. To become familiar with research on selected topics in organizational behavior.
  4. To articulate and discuss emerging issues in organizational behavior.
  5. To explain organizational effectiveness in terms of culture, structure, and change.

### **Required Text**

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR: IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND COMMITMENT IN THE WORKPLACE (6<sup>th</sup> edition) by Colquitt, LePine, and Wesson.. Published by McGraw-Hill Education. 2019. ISBN: 978—1-259-92766-9

**CONNECT access is required for this class.**

### **Course Policies and Procedures**

Please refer to the syllabus, the bulletin board, and the calendar for specific information about this class. If you have questions, please e-mail me ([joan.hubbard@unt.edu](mailto:joan.hubbard@unt.edu)). I will post your question and my answer on the bulletin board for you and the rest of the class to read, if relevant.

***Online Testing.*** All chapter quizzes and exams are administered online through *CANVAS*. (If you have internet issues, you will need to send me a screen shot so I can determine whether or not to reset your exam or quiz.)

I will also include questions on the major exams that relate to the lecture and to additional supporting media readings/videos..

**Assignments/Activities:** Assignments/Activities are intended to help students actively process (e.g., analyze, synthesize, and evaluate) chapter content. All assignments and activities will end at **10:00 p.m.** (See schedule at the end of the syllabus.)

***Introduce Yourself:*** To kick off the semester, all students will introduce themselves. (See tab under Modules) Be sure to include such information as your name, your major, your projected graduation date, your career goals, your hobbies, etc. Do **NOT** include anything of a personal nature. Try making this *interesting* rather than giving only facts. If you want, you can interface with fellow students in this area.

***Questions for Discussion:*** Part of an effective class is the synergy created with peers discussing course topics. Your assignments require that you participate in online discussions. Our course calls these participation/discussions: Questions for Discussion

(QFD). Our QFD online discussions require you to post an Original Response to all of the question(s) I have posted as part of online chapter assignments, and you must Reply to one of the answers a classmate (i.e. peer) has posted. As part of your course grade, you are required to post at least 6 Original and 6 Reply postings on the discussion area of CANVAS. All QFD postings are time-sensitive as indicated in the syllabus. No discussion credit will be given if you do not post timely responses to the QFDs. No partial credit -- you must make both posts and answer all questions to receive credit for the week's QFDs. Discussion credit (points) will be assigned as quickly as possible following the close of a discussion. Discussion Forums are intended to promote discussion between and among students.

To respond, simply click on REPLY to my discussion question(s) and enter your answer. Do not create a new Discussion thread. You will use the same "click on REPLY" in replying to a class-mate's post. Please address the person to whom you are replying so we all know whose post you are commenting on. (For example—Hello Nancy) New threads are started when you hit "Compose [New] Discussion Message" and change the Subject Line. **DO NOT START A NEW DISCUSSION THREAD (BY COMPOSING A NEW MESSAGE) WITHIN A DISCUSSION FORUM - REPLY ONLY TO MY OR SOMEONE ELSE'S POST(S).**

**REMEMBER THAT IT TAKES 2 POSTED RESPONSES TO RECEIVE FULL CREDIT. IF YOU REPLY TO MY DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) BUT DO NOT POST A RESPONSE TO YOUR ONE OF CLASSMATE'S POSTS BY THE TIME STATED IN THE SYLLABUS, YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO FOR THAT ASSIGNMENT. All responses to my original post must contain a minimum of 125 words each; responses to a class member's response must contain a minimum of 100 words. Anything less than this will not receive any credit. Your responses should be much the same as if you were in a traditional classroom situation. Substitutive material only! (Put your word count at the end of each post, with the specification that your post is either an ORIGINAL or a RESPONSE.)**

Public Discussion replies from me in our QFDs are unusual. A QFD reply post from me will be rare simply because of the volume involved. I do READ AND EVALUATE EVERY POST. I often comment on posts, but I will let you know PRIVATELY if you are not on the right track.

I suggest that you save all messages/mail/posts until the end of the course. I do so I can prove what was/was not sent/received during the semester.

Although discussion posts are not accepted after specific dates and times, grades will NOT be posted until I read, evaluate & process all posts. This will usually be a couple of days following the close of discussion. In other words, there is not an immediate return of QFD evaluation/grades as there is with exams.

***NOTE: See schedule at the end of the syllabus. All assignments are due at 10:00 on the date listed in the syllabus. Please read carefully your assignment instructions in***

*each course module and refer to the CANVAS calendar for specific dates. **No assignments will be accepted or graded after the due time and date. This is a very good reason for you to develop and practice good time management skills! Further, it is strongly advised that you do not wait until the last minute to post your discussions. Technology doesn't always work when you want/need it to!***

**CONNECT Assignments:** Connect is a homework designed to enhance engagement and learning. SmartBook, the adaptive reading experience, helps students break down the content into manageable pieces, then asks questions to ensure understanding. Each student has his or her own path through the content based on what they know and what they don't. Those who engage with Connect have seen an increase in their overall grade and a boost in their confidence. You will be assigned 12 CONNECT exercises, which are open the first day of class. but close at 10:00 p.m. on the date listed at the end of the syllabus.

### **Chapter Quizzes and Exams**

To ensure that you have read this document (the syllabus), you will take a syllabus quiz (under the Introduction tab in your modules section). It has 10 questions and is worth 10 points. You will have 10 minutes to complete this quiz.

All chapter quizzes open the first day of class but close at 10:00 p.m. on the date listed at the end of the syllabus. Each online chapter quiz will consist of 5 multiple choice or true/false questions from textbook material. You will have 10 minutes to complete each quiz. No allowances will be made for a missed chapter quiz. If you miss it, you will be assigned a zero.

Two (2) timed exams will be administered online on the dates, at the times, and having the coverage and format indicated in the class schedule. Complete the exams without the help of anyone else. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple choice questions, and you will have 60 minutes to complete the exam. **THERE IS NO PROVISION FOR MAKING UP A MISSED EXAM AND NO EXAM WILL BE GIVEN AT A TIME DIFFERENT THAN THAT PROVIDED IN THE COURSE SYLLABUS, SO PLAN ACCORDINGLY.**

**Availability.** Exams will be available during (and only during) the time outlined in the Course Syllabus. Failure to take an exam during the scheduled availability period will result in your receiving a zero on the exam.

You can start your exam anytime in the "availability window" and still have the budgeted time to complete. If you have problems connecting or accessing your exam, call the **CANVAS/Learn Student Help Desk at: 940-565-2324** for immediate help.

After you are connected and started your exam during the availability window and have problems, **YOU MUST EMAIL ME IMMEDIATELY. Do not leave your testing area. I will get back to you with help.** IF YOU DO NOT ACCESS YOUR EXAM

DURING THE WINDOW, I cannot help you. You have missed your exam. Do not wait until the last minute to assess your exam; you might miss the window and I cannot help you.

If you have a problem after accessing an exam, you will need to send me a screen shot of what you see. **I strongly suggest that you start at the earliest available time to assure you can get into the exam during the availability window.**

**Duration, Beginning, Finishing.** The maximum time allowed for an exam is 60 minutes. No answer will be allowed after this time allocation has expired. Only one (1) exam attempt is allowed. Your completion time is measured from when you click "Begin Assessment" to when you click "Finish". Again, your 60 minutes begins when you click **BEGIN ASSESSMENT**. Once time has expired, you will not be able to save any more answers.

**New Browser Window/Loading.** The *quiz screen* will appear in a new browser window. Please allow the quiz to load completely before attempting to do anything else.

**Exam Instructions.** Read all exam instructions carefully! Among other directions, the exam Instructions will read: "Please read each question carefully. You can return to any question to change the answer. To do so, you will need to select the radio button associated with the question # on the right side of your screen to view the question and change the answer. You can change your answers before you submit your exam, but not after. You can revisit each question by clicking on the buttons on the right side of your exam."

**Question Delivery.** The questions will be delivered one question at a time. Any question can be revisited during the time limit. The questions may be answered in any order. If you wish, you may revisit questions after you have answered them.

**Exam Scores Not Immediately Released.** *Exam score will NOT be released until (1) the availability period has ended, and (2) all questions have been graded, Further, the posting of exam grades under your "MyGrades" icon may vary from one (1) hour after availability ends to no later than 24 hours following the exam.*

**What action do you take when you are ready to start an Exam?** Click on the Assessment word shown on the toolbar from your course's Home Page. When you are ready to start, you will click on Begin Assessment shown below the summary information. You will proceed to answer each question and Save by clicking on the word, Save. After you have answered all the questions, you must click on the word, Finish. You will be prompted by a question "if you are sure you wish to submit" your quiz/exam.

**Answering questions.** To save your answer to a question, click Save answer. This will ensure that any work you have done is not lost in the event of any technical problems (see Troubleshooting below). This also allows you to revisit questions and make changes.

**Submitting the exam for grading.** To submit the exam for grading, click Finish. A confirmation message appears. Click OK. The Quizzes and Surveys screen appears. You must click OK for your exam to be submitted for grading.

**Troubleshooting.** Enable JavaScript and TURN POPUP BLOCKERS OFF BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE EXAM. Since questions open in a new window (popup) YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SEE THE EXAM OR QUESTIONS IF POPUP BLOCKERS ARE ENABLED. Set your browser to check for newer versions of pages every time. CANVAS/Vista Student Help Desk personnel will help you with your JavaScript and Popup Blockers if you will call while you are 'in front of your computer'. Again, if you take the exams from your personal, home, or office computer, you are responsible for the software, service provider connections.

**Study Tips.** You must be **prepared** for Exams to do well on them. Try to answer as many questions as possible WITHOUT referring to the book or your notes. I DOUBT THAT YOU WILL HAVE TIME TO EFFECTIVELY "LOOK UP" THE ANSWER TO MORE THAN 1-2 QUESTIONS -- you simply will not have time to do so. Said another way, you must know the material well enough to answer the question the first time around without going to the book if you are going to complete the exam within the time limit. It goes without saying that you should have complete peace and quiet as you take your exam.

**Good Luck!!**

Please consider this class as your "job" when it comes to assignments, quizzes, exams, and projects and the due dates/times. I know you have a personal life, but what would your boss say or do if you asked for an extension on a project because you had a flat tire on the way home or your grandmother was in the hospital, so you couldn't complete the assignment on time? You've had several weeks to complete the assignment, so I doubt if your boss will be very sympathetic. Neither will I. I feel I give you ample time to complete all assignments IF you practice effective time management. Remember—this is an 8-week session!!!!

## **Assignments and Grading Scale**

Introduce Yourself—10 points

Syllabus Quiz—10 points

6 Online Questions for Discussion (QFDs) @ 5 pts. (1 response; 1 reply)—30 pts.

15 chapter quizzes @ 5 points—75 pts.

12 CONNECT exercises (points vary for each)—106 pts.

2 exams @ 100 points—200 pts.

## **GRADING SCALE**

388-431      A

345-387      B

301-344      C

258-300      D

Below 257    F

## Tentative Schedule for Course—March 21 to May 13, 2022

*\*\*\*Instructor Reserves the Right to Make Changes to this schedule, if necessary*

DATE	TOPIC	INSTRUCTIONS, POSTING DEADLINES, AND TEXT READINGS
3-21 to 3-27	<p>Course Overview (See syllabus)</p> <p>Chapter 1: Introduction to Organizational Behavior</p> <p>CONNECT CASE ANALYSIS: Flashlights and Pop Tarts</p>	<p><b>Syllabus quiz due on or before Sunday, March 27 by 10:00 p.m.</b></p> <p><b>QFD 1 due on or before Sunday, April 3 by 10:00 p.m.</b></p> <p><b>Introduce Yourself due on or before Sunday, April 3 by 10:00 p.m.</b></p> <p>Part 1 Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9 quizzes will close on <i>Sunday, April 10 at 10:00 p.m.</i></p> <p>Part 1 CONNECT exercises will close on <i>Sunday, April 10 at 10:00 p.m.</i></p> <p>Be sure to read/view additional media articles/videos presented for each chapter on CANVAS.</p>
3-21 to 3-27	<p>Chapter 9: Personality and Cultural Values</p> <p>CONNECT VIDEO CASE: Disney Imagineering</p>	
3-28 to 4-3	<p>Chapter 2—Job Performance</p> <p>CONNECT CASE ANALYSIS: Performance Appraisals at St. Jude</p>	<p><b>QFDs 2 due on or before Sunday, April 3 by 10:00 p.m.</b></p>

3-28 to 4-3	Chapter 8—Learning and Decision Making  CONNECT VIDEO CASE: Manager’s Hot Seat: Decision Making—A Hurricane of a Choice	
4-4 to 4-10	Chapter 3: Organizational Commitment  Chapter 4: Job Satisfaction  CONNECT VIDEO CASE: iSeeIt! Animated Video: Job Characteristics Model	<b>QFD 3 due by or before Sunday, April 10 by 10:00 p.m.</b>
4-4 to 4-10	Chapter 6: Motivation  CONNECT CASE ANALYSIS: High-Pressure Goals at Kraft Heinz	<b>Part 1 CONNECT exercises due on Sunday, April 10 by 10:00 p.m.</b>  <b>Part 1 Chapter quizzes close on Sunday, April 10 at 10:00 p.m.</b>
4-10 to 4-11	<b><i>EXAM #1: CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 IN ADDITION TO MEDIA ARTICLES, VIDEOS, POWERPOINT AND LECTURE MATERIAL</i></b>	<b>EXAM WILL OPEN ON SUNDAY, APRIL 10, AT 11:00 P.M. AND CLOSE ON MONDAY, APRIL 11 AT 11:59 P.M.</b>  Part 2 Chapters 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 16 quizzes will open on Monday, April 11 at 6:00 a.m. and will close on <i>Sunday, May 1 at 10:00 p.m.</i>  Part 2 CONNECT exercises will close on <i>Sunday, May 1 at 10:00 p.m.</i>
4-11 to 4-17	Chapter 5: Stress  CONNECT CASE ANALYSIS: Capital One	<b>QFD 4 due by or before Sunday, April 17 by 10:00 p.m.</b>
4-11 to 4-17	Chapter 7: Trust, Justice, and Ethics  CONNECT VIDEO CASE: Manager’s Hot Seat: Whistleblowing	

4-18 to 4-24	Chapter 10: Ability  CONNECT CASE ANALYSIS: Sorry, You're Too Smart	
4-18 to 4-24	Chapters 11 and 12: Teams  CONNECT VIDEO CASE: Manager's Hot Seat: Groups & Teams—Diagnosis Dysfunction	<b>QFD 5 due by or before Sunday, April 24 by 10:00 p.m.</b>
4-25 to 5-1	Chapters 13 and 14: Leadership Chapter 16: Organizational Culture  CONNECT VIDEO CASE: iSeeIt! Animated Video: Hersey and Blanchard's Theory of Leadership  CONNECT CASE ANALYSIS: General Electric and Enron	<b>QFD 6 due by or before Sunday, May 1 by 10:00 p.m.</b>  <b>Part 2 CONNECT exercises due on or before Sunday, May 18 by 10:00 p.m.</b>  <b>Part 2 Chapter quizzes close on Sunday, May 1 at 10:00 p.m.</b>
5-1 to 5-2	<b><i>EXAM #2: CHAPTERS 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 IN ADDITION TO MEDIA ARTICLES, VIDEOS, POWERPOINT AND LECTURE MATERIAL</i></b>	<b>EXAM WILL OPEN ON SUNDAY, MAY 1 AT 11:00 P.M. AND CLOSE ON MONDAY, MAY 2 AT 11:59 P.M.</b>

### EXAM SCHEDULE

Exam available Sunday, April 10 at 11:00 p.m. to Monday, April 11 at 11:59 p.m.	Exam 1
Exam available Sunday, May 2 at 11:00 p.m. to Monday, May 3 at 11:59 p.m.	Exam 2

### QUIZ AND CONNECT SCHEDULE

Syllabus Quiz will close on Sunday, March 27 at 10:00 p.m.	Read your syllabus!
Quizzes and Part 1 CONNECT exercises for Exam #1 close on Sunday, April 10 at 10:00 p.m.	Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9
Quizzes and Part 2 CONNECT exercises for Exam #2 close on Sunday, May 2 at 10:00 p.m.	Chapters 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16

### QFD SCHEDULE

QFD NUMBER	OPEN DATE	DUE DATE
QFD #1	Monday, March 21 at 6:00 a.m.	Sunday, March 27 by 10:00 p.m.
QFD #2	Monday, March 28 at 6:00 a.m.	Sunday, April 3 by 10:00 p.m.
QFD #3	Monday, April 4 at 6:00 a.m.	Sunday, April 10 by 10:00 p.m.
QFD #4	Monday, April 11 at 6:00 a.m.	Sunday, April 17 by 10:00 p.m.
QFD #5	Monday, April 18 at 6:00 a.m.	Sunday, April 24 by 10:00 p.m.
QFD #6	Monday, April 25 at 6:00 a.m.	Sunday, May 2 by 10:00 p.m.

## IMPORTANT DATES FOR SPRING 2022

Key Semester Dates	Full Term Jan 18- May 13	3 Week 1 Session Dec 13- Jan 14	8 Week 1 Session Jan 18- Mar 11	8 Week 2 Session Mar 21- May 13
<p><b>Regular Registration Ends</b> 3W1 registration ends at 4:30pm and Tuition and Fees due by 5pm. Full Semester &amp; 8W1 registration ends at 5:30pm and Tuition and Fees due by 6 p.m.</p> <p>8WK2 registration ends at 11:30 a.m. and Tuition and Fees due by 12 p.m. See <a href="#">Student Financial Services</a> for payment deadlines.</p>	Jan 13	Dec 10	Jan 13	Mar 17
<p><b>Late Registration - For Students not Registered for the Term</b> Students registering late will incur a late registration fee of \$75. 3W1 registration ends at 4:30pm and Tuition and Fees due by 5pm. Full Semester &amp; 8W1 registration ends at 5:30 p.m. and Tuition and Fees due by 6 p.m.</p> <p>8W2 tuition and fees due by 5 p.m. on the same day as class registration. See <a href="#">Student Financial Services</a> for payment deadlines.</p>	Jan 14- 21	Dec 11-14	Jan 14-21	Mar 18-25
<p><b>Last Day to Withdraw from Entire Term on myUNT</b> Courses do not appear on the transcript. Eligible for 100% refund. After this date see Dean of Students to withdraw from the entire term.</p>	Jan 17	Dec 12	Jan 17	Mar 20
<b>Classes Begin</b>	Jan 18	Dec 13	Jan 18	Mar 21
<p><b>Last Day to Add a Class Section</b> See <a href="#">Student Financial Services</a> for payment deadlines.</p>	Jan 21	Dec 14	Jan 21	Mar 25
<p><b>Census - Official Enrollment Determined</b> Last day to drop a course section to no longer appear on the official transcript and to receive a full refund for the course section. <i>(Dropping courses may impact</i></p>	Jan 31	Dec 14	Jan 24	Mar 26

<i>financial aid and degree completion. See advisors.)</i>				
<b>Drop with a Grade of W Begins</b> Beginning this date students can drop a course with a grade of W. The course appears on the transcript with a grade of W and tuitions fees remain. <i>(Dropping courses may impact financial aid and degree completion. See advisors.)</i>	Feb 1	Dec 15	Jan 25	Mar 27
<b>Last day to change to pass/no pass grade option (undergrads)</b>	Feb 25	Dec 17	Feb 4	Apr 8
<b>Midpoint of the semester</b>	Mar 11	Jan 5	Feb 11	April 15
<b>Last day for a student to drop a course or all courses with a grade of W</b>	April 8	Jan 7	Feb 25	Apr 29
<b>First day to request a grade of Incomplete</b>	Apr 9	Jan 8	Feb 26	Apr 30
<b>Pre-Finals Days</b>	May 4-5	NA	NA	NA
<b>Last Regular Class Meeting</b>	May 5	Jan 13	Mar 10	May 12
<b>Reading Day - No Classes</b>	May 6	NA	NA	NA
<b>Final Exams</b>	May 7-13	Jan 14	Mar 11	May 13
<b>Last Day Term</b>	May 13	Jan 14	Mar 11	May 13
<b>University Grade Submission Deadline 4pm</b>	May 16	Jan 18	Mar 14	May 16
<b>Grades/Academic Standing posted on the Official Transcript 6pm</b>	May 18	May 18	May 18	May 18

### **Payment and Financial Information:**

Fees must be paid by the deadlines stated in the above Academic Calendar or your registration request may be cancelled, meaning you will no longer be registered.

Bills will not be mailed for the Spring semester, so make sure to review your account balance information [myUNT](#) once you complete registration.

Go to the [myUNT](#) Student Center to view your bill.

For information about making payments, please visit [sfs.unt.edu/payments](https://sfs.unt.edu/payments).

**Registration through myUNT will be unavailable from the payment cancellation deadline through 11:59 pm for processing. Registration will reopen a midnight. For information about making payments, please visit [sfs.unt.edu/payments](https://sfs.unt.edu/payments).**

For information about Financial Aid and Scholarships, visit [financialaid.unt.edu](https://financialaid.unt.edu).

### **Dropping Classes and Withdrawing from the Term**

See important information about [dropping classes](#) or [withdrawing from the university](#).

**Dropping classes or failing to complete and pass registered hours may make you ineligible for financial aid.** You must meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements to maintain eligibility for financial aid as defined by the UNT Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships. See [more information](#) on UNT's SAP policies.

In addition, if you drop below half-time enrollment you may be required to begin paying back your student loans. Please contact financial aid directly as your situation may vary.

### **Additional Resources**

As always, the Registrar's Office is ready to assist you! All transactions can be done via self-serve except for documents requiring authentication. Information can be found on our [Services](#) tab. If you have a specific need, we offer phone and Zoom and in-person appointments Monday-Friday 8:00 am-5:00 pm.

**Avoid Lines: Make virtual and in-person appointments now at: [Registrar Office Appointments](#)**

#### **Phone**

940-565-2111

#### **Email**

[registrar@unt.edu](mailto:registrar@unt.edu)

- Commencement Information available at: <https://commencement.unt.edu/>
- For those graduating, be sure to check the application deadline at the beginning of the semester.

## MY TURN: MAKING THE GRADE

BY KURT WIESENFELD

*Newsweek, June 17, 1996, p. 16*

It was a rookie error. After 10 years I should have known better, but I went to my office the day after final grades were posted. There was a tentative knock on the door. "Professor Wiesenfeld? I took your Physics 2121 class? I flunked it? I wonder if there's anything I can do to improve my grade?" I thought: "Why are you asking me? Isn't it too late to worry about it? Do you dislike making declarative statements?"

After the student gave his tale of woe and left, the phone rang. "I got a D in your class. Is there any way you can change it to 'Incomplete'?" Then the e-mail assault began: "I'm shy about coming in to talk to you, but I'm not shy about asking for a better grade. Anyway, it's worth a try." The next day I had three phone messages from students asking me to call them. I didn't.

Time was, when you received a grade, that was it. You might groan and moan, but you accepted it as the outcome of your efforts or lack thereof (and, yes, sometimes a tough grader). In the last few years, however, some students have developed a disgruntled consumer approach. If they don't like their grade, they go to the "return" counter to trade it in for something better.

What alarms me is their indifference toward grades as an indication of personal effort and performance. Many, when pressed about why they think they deserve a better grade, admit they don't deserve one but would like one anyway. Having been raised on gold stars for effort and smiley faces for self-esteem, they've learned that they can get by without hard work and real talent if they can talk the professor into giving them a break. This attitude is beyond cynicism. There's a weird innocence to the assumption that one expects (even deserves) a better grade simply by begging for it. With that outlook, I guess I shouldn't be as flabbergasted as I was that 12 students asked me to change their grades after final grades were posted.

***Many  
students  
wheedle for  
a degree  
as if it were a  
freebie T  
shirt***

That's 10 percent of my class who let three months of midterms, quizzes and lab reports slide until long past remedy. My graduate student calls it hyperrational thinking: if effort and intelligence don't matter, why should deadlines? What matters is getting a better grade through an unearned bonus, the academic equivalent of a freebie T shirt or toaster giveaway. Rewards are disconnected from the quality of one's work. An act and its consequences are unrelated, random events.

Their arguments for wheedling better grades often ignore academic performance. Perhaps they feel it's not relevant. "If my grade isn't raised to a D I'll lose my scholarship."

"If you don't give me a C, I'll flunk out." One sincerely overwrought student pleaded, "If I don't pass, my life is over." This is tough stuff to deal with. Apparently, I'm responsible for someone's losing a scholarship, flunking out or deciding whether life has meaning. Perhaps these students see me as a commodities broker with something they want -- a grade. Though intrinsically worthless, grades, if properly manipulated, can be traded for what has value: a degree, which means a job, which means money. The one thing college actually offers -- a chance to learn -- is considered irrelevant, even less than worthless, because of the long hours and hard work required.

In a society saturated with surface values, love of knowledge for its own sake does sound eccentric. The benefits of fame and wealth are more obvious. So is it right to blame students for reflecting the superficial values saturating our society?

Yes, of course it's right. These guys had better take themselves seriously now, because our country will be forced to take them seriously later, when the stakes are much higher. They must recognize that their attitude is not only self-destructive but socially destructive. The erosion of quality control--giving appropriate grades for actual accomplishments--is a major concern in my department. One colleague noted that a physics major could obtain a degree without ever answering a written exam question completely. How? By pulling in enough partial credit and extra credit. And by getting breaks on grades.

But what happens once she or he graduates and gets a job? That's when the misfortunes of eroding academic standards multiply. We lament that schoolchildren get "kicked upstairs" until they graduate from high school despite being illiterate and mathematically inept, but we seem unconcerned with college graduates whose less blatant deficiencies are far more harmful if their accreditation exceeds their qualifications.

Most of my students are science and engineering majors. If they're good at getting partial credit but not at getting the answer right, then the new bridge breaks or the new drug doesn't work. One finds examples here in Atlanta. Last year a light tower in the Olympic Stadium collapsed, killing a worker. It collapsed because an engineer miscalculated how much weight it could hold. A new 12-story dormitory could develop dangerous cracks due to a foundation that's uneven by more than six inches. The error resulted from incorrect data being fed into a computer. I drive past that dorm daily on my way to work, wondering if a foundation crushed under kilotons of weight is repairable or if this structure will have to be demolished. Two 10,000-pound steel beams at the new natatorium collapsed in March, crashing into the student athletic complex. (Should we give partial credit since no one was hurt?) Those are real-world consequences of errors and lack of expertise.

But the lesson is lost on the grade-grouching 10 percent. Say that you won't (not can't, but won't) change the grade they deserve to what they want, and they're frequently bewildered or angry. They don't think it's fair that they're judged according to their performance, not their desires or "potential." They don't think it's fair that they should

jeopardize their scholarships or be in danger of flunking out simply because they could not or did not do their work. But it's more than fair; it's necessary to help preserve a minimum standard of quality that our society needs to maintain safety and integrity. I don't know if the 13th-hour students will learn that lesson, but I've learned mine. From now on, after final grades are posted, I'll lie low until the next quarter star