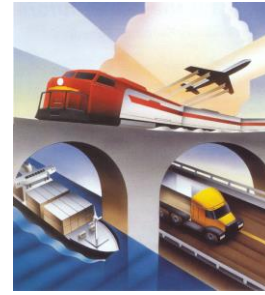




LSCM 3960.007/.777

LOGISTICS & SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Spring 2022



Office: 336A BLB
Phone: Office: (940) 565-4368 (565-GENT)
 UNT Student Helpdesk (940) 565-2324 or helpdesk@unt.edu
eMail: Canvas messaging only
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 9 PM to 10 PM
<https://unt.zoom.us/j/85134642486>
 Meeting ID: **851 3464 2486**

NOTE: The design of the course allows the student to move at a pace faster than the schedule but still requires minimum progress. **BEST ADVICE** is to stay ahead of the schedule.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Analysis and design of domestic and international logistics systems. Topics include transportation, warehousing, inventory control, materials handling and packaging, and plant and warehouse locations within and between firms. Emphasis on concepts and practices that provide firms with global competitive advantage. Section .777 is for students living more than 50 miles from the Denton campus.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

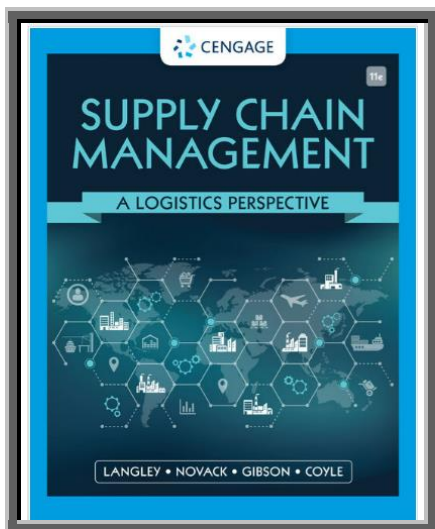
1. Explore the role of logistics and supply chain management as it relates to the goals of the organization and interacts within the supply chain.
2. Gain an understanding of how each component operates and fits into the overall scheme of the field.
3. Enable strategic understanding of key principles which must be considered when managing the process.

COURSE MATERIALS:

Coyle, Langley, Gibson, Novack, and Bardi
Supply Chain Management: A Logistics Perspective. 11th Edition: Cengage.
 Print ISBN: 978-0357132296; 0357132297
 eText Print ISBN: 978-0357132302; 0357132300

GRADING:

Your final grade will be based on your resume submission, on-line quiz performance, attendance of two (2) logistics executive lectures (available remotely), and your performance on the cumulative final examination. Grades are based on the performance of all students officially enrolled in the course. The top 20% performers will receive an “A”, the next 40% will receive a “B”, etc. Your final grade cannot be more than one letter grade above the grade attained on the final exam. If your total score exceeds 90% Dr. Farris revert to a 90%-80%-70% grading scheme IF it is in favor of the student.



A = Top 20%
B = Next 40%
C = Next 20%
D = Next 10%

Resume	50 points
Quizzes	1,000 points
Executive Lecture Series (attend 2)	250 points
Final Exam	<u>1,000 points</u>
TOTAL	2,300 points

NO OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTRA CREDIT

No extra credit will be available. With 20 measurements already in the course there is no need to add any more.

RÉSUMÉ (50 points):

Time to start thinking about graduation! Do you have your résumé ready? You never know when you will be asked for a copy. In order to be prepared you will be required to submit a résumé for this class.

- In order to receive credit you must electronically submit your résumé in CANVAS ASSIGNMENTS for this course no later than 5:00 PM on Saturday, January 29. There is a 100% penalty for late submissions. Students adding the course 27-January or later will have 48 hours from the time they add the course to complete their résumé submission.
- You must use the following naming convention for your WORD document upload into Canvas.

Full or Intern_StudentLastName_SemesterofGraduation_YearofGraduation.

For example,

Full_Farris_Autumn_2050.DOC OR Full_Farris_Autumn_2050.DOCX¹

Student Farris is seeking a full-time position and will be graduating Autumn 2050.

Failure to properly name your file, incorrect file formats (anything other than a WORD Doc such as PDF), or missing the submission deadline will receive 0 points.

1. In addition to fulfilling the course requirements by submitting your résumé in CANVAS, if you want your résumé to be visible to employers through Career Services you must also submit your résumé via Eagle Careers powered by Handshake <http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center/eagle-careers>. You need to have a profile created as well. When you have your résumé ready to upload into Handshake you must do the following:
2. Under 'Personal Goals', you need to select either, 'I want a job' OR 'I want an internship', then click 'Done'
3. You need to choose in the 'Other' dropdown 'Has Public Resume' if you want to have recruiters see your résumé.

QUIZZES:

Testing for the course will involve a combination of on-line quizzes (multiple choice, true/false, and calculation questions) and a cumulative final examination (multiple choice, true/false, and calculation questions). Tests/quizzes require the student to pull together key logistics concepts to devise an answer and are intended to test understanding, not memorization skills.

Course testing begins with a quiz concerning the mechanics of the course using this syllabus as the basis of your information. Complete the syllabus quiz first. It **must be completed no later than 5 PM, Saturday, 29-January**. You may take the syllabus quiz as many times as you wish for the score of your last attempt. You are allowed two attempts for all other quizzes (with the exception of the quantitative questions revisited (QQR) quiz which you may also take as many times as you wish before the deadline. Your last attempt will be recorded for all quizzes.

The quiz schedule is intended for you to prepare for the cumulative 73 question 50-minute final examination at a steady pace over a 15-week period. All quizzes are available at the beginning of the course to accommodate students who would like to get an early start on the material. For all quizzes, first, complete the text reading and view any support materials which help you understand the material. Students learn differently so a lot of support material is provided. It is up to the student to determine which support materials best help you learn the content. Each individual learner will utilize a different mix of support materials. Then complete the on-line quiz. Some concepts are

repeated throughout the course and may appear on multiple quizzes. Each question is valued at 5 points. The time limit for the quizzes is based on 45 seconds per question. So, if a quiz has 15 multiple choice questions you have 12 minutes to complete the quiz. It is not intended to be a look-it-up quiz and you will not have enough time to look up all the quiz answers in the textbook so you must have read and digested the material BEFORE you take the quiz. Running out of time during the quizzes is a clear indication that you have not prepared sufficiently prior to taking the quiz.

¹ This student obviously does not plan to pass LSCM3960 on the first attempt!

The quizzes are intended to help prepare you for the 50-minute cumulative final examination. To no surprise, past experience has shown a strong correlation between successfully completing all the quizzes and the final examination score! All quizzes are available at the beginning of the course to accommodate students who would like to get an early start on the material. In order to encourage students to cover the material in a timely fashion and not wait until the last minute, you must complete each quiz before a specified deadline stated in this syllabus. The deadline period for each quiz is **5 PM** on the specific date. Since the design of the course allows you to take the quizzes as early as you wish, there are **NO ACCEPTABLE EXCUSES** for missing a quiz and there are no make-ups or re-opening of quizzes. It is the responsibility of the student NOT to miss quizzes and accept the responsibility of lost points if a quiz is not completed by the designated deadline(s). Your best protection is to stay ahead of the shut-off schedule. Missing a quiz does not spell doom however but it certainly does not help. Spring 2021 the average “A” student missed 0.75 quizzes, “B” students missed 1.4 quizzes, “C” students missed 2.5 quizzes, and “D” students missed 6.5 quizzes. Summer 2021 the average “A” student missed 0.44 quizzes, “B” students missed 0.71 quizzes, “C” students missed 1.6 quizzes, and “D” and “F” students missed 5.3 quizzes. Notice a pattern?

CAUTION: When you open a quiz, the timer will automatically start. If you have problems immediately contact the UNT Student Helpdesk (940) 565-2324 or helpdesk@unt.edu. Each quiz, by definition, is open-book and open-note and is intended to help you determine how well you have mastered the material. Be wary of your time restriction. The time limit for the quizzes is based on historical data. There IS enough time if you are prepared. Running out of time during the quizzes is a clear indication that you have not prepared sufficiently prior to taking the quiz (usually this means you need to be more comprehensive in your reading. “Reading” a chapter is not the same as “comprehending” the chapter). After completing each quiz you will immediately receive a total grade for the quiz. Detailed results will be released after the quiz deadline and will be available only until the deadline for the following quiz. Take advantage of the feedback while it is available.

RESPONDUS LOCKDOWN BROWSER REQUIRED FOR THE FINAL EXAM:

The final exam uses Respondus Lockdown Browser and requires use of a webcam. No exceptions. Lockdown Browser uses artificial intelligence to review the video of students taking the exam. If something is amiss it offers recommendation for review at different levels (High, Medium, and Low). This may be triggered for any number of reasons so the student should read and follow the recommendations offered in Lockdown Browser to ensure this will not happen. Past issues have included things that should not have occurred including low level lighting, misdirected cameras that do not capture the facial features (it will send you a warning message if this occurs), and students who turn off the camera during the exam. Students who turn off their camera will automatically fail the course. ALL “High Review” recommendations will result in Dr. Farris reviewing the recorded video who may seek review by two other parties. If the three parties agree there are issues, the student will automatically be awarded an (I) Incomplete grade and be required to physically come to campus to take a live, human proctored make-up exam which covers the same material but is in a fill-in-the-blank/short essay format. The student will be graded using the same final grading scale for the course.

PSSST...THE “SECRET” TO DOING WELL – MASTER THE QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS REVISITED EARLY:

There are a few quantitative calculations that are key to logistics principles which you should understand. Learning the quantitative portion is an iterative process. To help you master these calculations a Quantitative Questions Revisited (QQR) quiz has been set up. Unlike the other quizzes, you may take this quiz as many times as you wish for the score of your last attempt. It will automatically grade and immediately provide useful feedback to help you master the concepts. Reading the grading feedback is important as it provides information about solving the problem. It is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** to master this early because you will also see the same questions selectively seeded into the regular quizzes.

Teaching evaluations offer an interesting insight regarding key elements of the course missed by students which would enhance learning and simplify the course:

1. The course is designed for flexibility. ALL quizzes are available starting on the first day of the class so students can work ahead instead of being forced to complete quizzes within a limited window. The quizzes close at **5 PM** but the shut-off time should not matter unless you lose sight of the fact you can complete them any time before the **5 PM** shut-off. Use the flexibility of the course design to your advantage.

2. Students have complained about the lack of feedback but ignore the fact that when each quiz closes feedback is automatically provided up until the next quiz closes. Students that do not access this feedback when it is available are missing out on an important aspect of the course pedagogy. Determine what you do not know and this will simplify your preparation for the final exam. There is no formal final exam review or midterm in the course because feedback is provided on a weekly basis enabling students to learn in small chunks throughout the term.

Additionally, the instructor posts “Class performance” each time a quiz closes to indicate how the class performed on the quiz. Many times throughout the course, students are given an idea of where they stand in the course relative to the rest of the students by reading this posting. Additionally, the Discussion section is always active but can only benefit by students joining in.

Dr. Farris religiously holds ZOOM office hours on Monday and Wednesday and is also available other times (by request) if this is not convenient. Just ask! Two teaching evaluations from last semester indicated that Dr. Farris “did not help students that were struggling” but nobody used office hours or sent a CANVAS note with “issues” other than for missing a quiz.

3. Students learn differently so a lot of support material is provided. It is up to the student to determine which support materials best help you learn the content. Each individual learner will utilize a different mix of support materials.
4. At least one teaching evaluation comment addressed the lack of live interaction. Pleased be aware that this is an asynchronous on-line course and NOT a synchronous offering. Other than ZOOM office hours there is no live element. If live interaction best enhances your learning this course is not for you. We offer live classroom sections on the Denton campus.
5. Throughout the term Dr. Farris frequently recommends forming a study group instead of “going it alone.” This is a common technique used in Big Ten and Ivy League schools and works well for upper level courses such as this. Use ZOOM, set up a standard meet time, no travel, and you don’t even have to buy coffee for everyone. Discuss a concept you do not understand. Miss a quiz and work with your group to get the visibility of the questions missed. A student comment from teaching evaluations “For the first part of the semester I ignored the recommendation to join a study group and floundered. Desparate, (sic) I set one up and got back into the ‘A’ range. Best advice I almost didn’t take.” Work smarter not harder.
6. In addition to your exposure to industry executives (via attending two Executive Lecturer presentations) this course is comprised of two parts. The first part forces you to go through the text and support materials to learn the material. The quizzes are essentially look-it-up-and-report. The second part is the final exam which consists of similar questions and is NOT intended for you to show that you can look up material but to test your command of the material. Use the quizzes and feedback to learn/understand the material and prepare for the closed-book, cumulative final exam.

LOGISTICS EXECUTIVE LECTURE SERIES (ELS):

The Center for Logistics & Supply Chain Management provides multiple opportunities for students to connect to business experts and acquire useful insights beyond the classroom. The Executive Lecture Series events will be held on Fridays from 12:00 NOON to 1:00 PM and will be presented this semester in both in-person and virtual formats. Registration is required. Registration closes at 12:00 noon on the day before the event. Virtual meetings will be recorded and post-event attendance reports are sent to the professors. Reports include a list of registered participants, and what times each participant arrived and left the event.

For this course you are required to attend any two (2) of the ELS presentations though you are welcome to attend more but only receive course credit for the first two. They are shown in blue on the “Key Dates” page. If you cannot attend any of the sessions an alternative may be offer IF you let Dr. Farris know no later than 5 PM on February 1. Students must register online to attend all events. Registration closes at 12:00 noon on the day before the event. Students will immediately receive an email confirmation to the email address provided on the registration form. The in-person classroom location and the link to the virtual event will be sent to the same email address one day before the event. The class number entered on the registration form will be the class for which the student receives the attendance credit

(LSCM 3960.007). Students have the ability to change the class number for a registered event by logging in and clicking 'edit' in the event they have registered for. Students also have the ability to cancel registration for a registered event by logging in and clicking 'cancel' in the event they have registered for. If a student has registered for an event and is not be able to attend, they should cancel their registration no later than 24 hours before the start time of the event. The registration system will allow students to register for an event until capacity restrictions have been met (In-person = 50, Virtual = 300). Students should register early in the semester as events fill up very quickly!

Students need to abide by all the following policies to receive credit:

- Participation in an event will count towards only one course, identified by the student during registration.
- Students receive credit for registering, arriving on time, and staying for the duration of the event.
- Failure to register, validated from the attendance report generated after the event, will prevent students from receiving credit.
- Failure to participate at least 66% of the scheduled time of the event, will prevent students from receiving credit.
- Failure to attend an event, after prior confirmed registration, will lead to loss of points from the student's final grade, unless the student cancels the registration at least 24 hours before the start time of the event.

To access event registration go to Executive Lecture Series: <https://cob.unt.edu/logistics-center/executive-lecture/speakers> To better assist students with navigating the events in the Logistics Executive Lecture Series, there is an informational session on January 21st. The event is only being offered virtually (<https://eagleaccess.unt.edu/0069/1949/67>) and will be held from Noon to 1 PM. This is an 'open door' event. Registration is not required and students can come and go as needed.

FINAL EXAM:

Students MUST complete a 50-minute 73 question cumulative final examination **Monday, May 9** and which is available to complete between 8 AM and 4 PM. **No exceptions.** The final exam consists of 73 multiple choice and quantitative questions emphasizing the basic principles of logistics. A variation of the questions (identical or similar) asked on the quizzes will be used. Documented (following university guidelines) missed final exams will be replaced with a live, proctored fill-in-the-blanks/short essay exam offered on campus only to students registered in the .007 section (living within 50 miles of campus).

Part of your grade will be based on your performance on the cumulative final examination. Your **final grade cannot be more than one letter grade above the grade attained on the final examination.** Keep in mind that an open-book look-up-the answer quiz that you can take twice is much different than a 50-minute 73 question cumulative final exam averaging 41 seconds to answer each question. In the last two semesters students averaged 43 minutes and 41 seconds to complete their final exam. Do not take preparing for the final exam lightly. Please read above regarding use of Respondus Lockdown Browser and student responsibilities to ensure there are no issues taking the final exam remotely.

CHALLENGE POLICY:

You have until the deadline for the next quiz to submit a **written** request using a Canvas MESSAGE for a regrade (known as a "challenge"). To earn additional points, you must be able to convince Dr. Farris, **in writing**, that your answer is correct.

A WORD ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Each student should be aware of the guidelines for academic honesty as outlined in the UNT Student Guidebook. Dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating on tests, plagiarism for submissions in class, or posting copyrighted material (e.g. quiz or exam questions) in the public domain (such as Quizlet or StudyBlue). These violations are taken seriously, will be investigated, and academic sanctions will be actively pursued. The minimum penalty is an "F" in the course and referral to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action which may include expulsion from the University. For additional information about the University Integrity policy go to <http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>

FINAL GRADE APPEALS, CHANGES, AWARDING AND REMOVAL OF AN 'I':

This instructor strictly follows the guidelines set forth in the current Undergraduate Catalog for grade appeals, grade changes, and the awarding and removal of an 'Incomplete.' Please check the latest Catalog for details and procedures. If

you have CANVAS problems you should immediately contact the UNT Student Help Desk: helpdesk@unt.edu or 940.565.2324 and obtain a ticket number. The instructor and the UNT Student Help Desk will work with the student to resolve any issues that are not user-generated.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:

The College of Business complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodation through the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) 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 provide documentation to Dr. Farris prior to the first assignment deadline.

ELECTRONIC OFFICE HOURS:

Dr. Farris will monitor the course at least once (usually more frequently) every 48 hours to check for problems, respond to Canvas Messages, and interact in the Discussion section. Students are encouraged to utilize the Canvas Discussion forum section for dialog with other students, to ask a general question, or view a response to a student which is in the general interest to the class. DO NOT send emails to Dr. Farris's university email. Utilize the MESSAGING capability within Canvas to contact him for personal questions, administrative problems, or general questions. The professor reserves the right to post emails in the discussion section if they are of general interest. The identity of the student will be removed.

FINAL GRADES

It is the practice of Dr. Farris to send a confirmatory Canvas email message identifying your final grade on Canvas. Also, see *Making the Grade* attached at the end of this syllabus.

IS THIS COURSE SECTION THE RIGHT FIT FOR ME?:

Students learn differently and everyone has their own unique set of variables guiding how they approach college courses.

This course **IS** a good fit for you and will be a worthwhile learning experience if you:

- Are good at managing your time and do not wait until the last minute to complete quizzes or assignments.
- Make it a point to review the feedback provided on quizzes and assignments.
- Recognize the importance of setting up a study group where you actively interact with group members.
- Are willing to reach out during office hours if you do not understand a concept or have a question.

This course **IS NOT** for you and you are better off changing to a live, on-campus section if you:

- Need to physically show up in a classroom at a scheduled time each week.
- Prefer to have a course (traditional of lower level college courses) which is only look-up-and-report.
- Do not want to learn how to put the pieces together and must be told straight out of the textbook in hopes that your career will only be comprised of questions that can be answered directly out of a textbook.
- Prefer to have all questions handed to you in advance so you can look up the answers.
- Really need to have your hand held throughout a course.
- Do not want to be measured relative to the rest of the class.
- Once you complete a quiz you do not care about the feedback other than to know your score.
- Only want to go it alone and not tap into your peers in a study group.
- Will never seek help in office hours regardless of how confused or uncertain you are about a concept. After all, this exposes you to having the professor probe and query to understand what you do understand and what you do not understand so he can help you.

STUDY WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW

One of the most inefficient means of studying is the practice of reviewing what you already know. Your study time can be better spent by studying the materials that you do not know. Consider this instead. Pay careful attention to the feedback for the quizzes to identify which areas you do not understand. Capture this information when it is available during the quiz feedback period. THEN, study those areas that you answered incorrectly.

KEY DATES

DATE	TOPIC (Attend at least two ELS activities)
Tuesday January 18	Course opens. <u>ALL</u> quizzes are available.
Friday January 28	ELS: Search Your Career, Master Your Interview, and Hit the Ground Running
Saturday January 29	Syllabus quiz (80 pts) - Take as many times as you wish for the highest score Resume submission (50 pts); both <u>must be completed by 5 PM</u>
Friday February 4 ₂	ELS: Stay Fearless: Women in Logistics
Saturday February 5	Ch 1 Supply Chain Management / Ch 3 Role of Logistics in Supply Chains quiz (90 pts) <u>both must be completed by 5 PM</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1: Supply Chain Management: An Overview • Chapter 3: Role of Logistics in the Supply Chain
Friday February 11	ELS: A Roadmap for Supply Chain Execution
Saturday February 12	Ch 7 Demand Management / Ch 8 Order Management and Customer Service quiz (80 pts) <u>must be completed by 5 PM</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Staple Yourself to an Order” (posted in module) • Chapter 7: Demand Management • Chapter 8: Order Management and Customer Service
Friday February 18	ELS: You’re Hired! Now What?
Saturday February 19	Ch 9 Managing Inventory Flows quiz – Part I (100 pts) <u>must be completed by 5 PM</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9: Managing Inventory in the Supply Chain
Saturday February 26	Ch 9 Inventory Decision Making quiz – Part II (50 pts) <u>must be completed by 5 PM</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9: Managing Inventory in the Supply Chain
Friday March 4	ELS: How to Keep Customers Running During a Global Logistics Crisis
Saturday March 5	Ch 5 Sourcing Materials and Service (50 pts) <u>must be completed by 5 PM</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5: Sourcing Materials and Services
Friday March 11	ELS: The Impact of Business Intelligence Software and Analytics Across the Supply Chain
Saturday March 12	Ch 10 Distribution quiz (50 pts) <u>must be completed by 5 PM</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 10: Distribution – Managing Fulfillment Operations

DATE	TOPIC
March 14 - 18	Spring Break
Friday March 25	ELS: 12 Mentorship Points for Young Leaders
Saturday March 26	Ch 11 Transportation quiz (90 pts) must be completed by 5 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 11: Transportation – Managing the Flow of the Supply Chain
Friday April 1	ELS: What Hiring Managers Are Looking for in a Candidate
Saturday April 2	Ch 4 Supply Chain and Omni-Channel Network Design / Ch 14 Technology quiz (75 pts) must be completed by 5 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 4: Supply Chain and Omni-Channel Network Design Chapter 14: Supply Chain Technology – Managing Information Flows
Friday April 8	ELS: Navigating Customs and Trade Issues
Saturday April 9	Ch 2 Global Dimensions of Supply Chains quiz (50 pts) must be completed by 5 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2: Global Dimensions of Supply Chains
Saturday April 16	Ch 12 Aligning Supply Chains quiz (45 pts) must be completed by 5 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 12: Aligning Supply Chains
Saturday April 23	Ch 6 Producing Goods and Services quiz (55 pts) must be completed by 5 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 6: Producing Goods and Services
Friday April 29	ELS: Man Plans, God Laughs
Saturday April 30	Ch 13 Performance Measurement and Financial Analysis / Ch 15 Challenges quiz (95 pts) must be completed by 5 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 13: Supply Chain Performance Measurement & Financial Analysis Chapter 15: Strategic Challenges and Change for Supply Chains
Saturday May 2	Quantitative Questions Revisited quiz (90 pts) must be completed by 5 PM Open ALL semester. It is recommended that you master this early. You can take it as many times as you wish for the highest score. Be smart, read through the graded results and master this early.
Monday May 9	FINAL EXAM (Using Respondus Lockdown Browser with webcam) 50-minute 73 question final exam available from 8 AM to 4 PM.

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 hyper-rational 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 starts.