

# A PRiME focus on Corporate Sustainability in the Classroom

Ethical and moral decisions as  
a consequence...

Rebecca A. Bull Schaefer, PhD

Management & Quantitative Methods

MQM 221: Organizational Behavior

An end of the semester  
comprehensive exploration of how  
basic psychology can explain how a  
dynasty can rise and fall:

The Smartest Guys in the Room

# An Overview of MQM 221

## Organizational Behavior

- Individual differences
- Employment law
- Motivation, justice, & emotions at work
- Groups and teams
- Leadership and power
- Decision making
- Conflict
- Stress



# Focus on Sustainability

- This course: Focus on how an investment in our human resources helps to create and sustain a powerful and effective organization
- End of course focus: How can good intentions result in unethical decisions and devastating consequences for all stakeholders

# The Assignment

- Watch “The Smartest Guys in the Room”
- Write critical thinking paper
- Assignment used for multiple purposes

## CRITICAL THINKING ESSAY #3

### THE SMARTEST GUYS IN THE ROOM

**Due Thursday, November 12, 2009**

For your final critical thinking assignment, you must write about the film we watched in class “Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room.” If you missed one of the two days, I suggest that you find a copy of the film at a video store. Remember, I do not want to read a summary of the film or a statement on how Enron engaged in unethical behaviors; instead, use this essay as an opportunity to write about how the concepts discussed in class (e.g., leadership (traits, behaviors, styles), power, influence tactics, decision making, escalation of commitment, conflict reaction styles, motivation and compensation, group norms, etc.) help to explain how such a large corporation could create a culture which would accept and encourage behaviors which harm stakeholders. I will assign grades based on your ability to form \*coherent\* thoughts and opinions (do not use an outline or bullets), your ability to relate the course concepts to the Enron tragedy, and your ability to form an opinion concerning the issues being discussed in the film.

Questions to address while you are writing your essay:

1. What are the key concepts from class you believe contributed to the unethical culture at Enron and the bankruptcy of the corporation?
2. Why are these concepts important to raise in the discussion of ethics, and why is it important to acknowledge what had gone wrong with Enron?
3. What opinions do you have regarding the film and the events that lead to the rise and fall of Enron? Does the film raise questions for you with regard to your own behaviors and choices or companies where you are a stakeholder?

A clip from the film

# Outcomes

- Most students voice frustration or anger within paper (many also verbalize feelings during the film)
- Most are able to apply course concepts and theories to describe what happened
- Most are able to voice understanding but not acceptance
- This past semester, about half the students were able to relate Enron's story to the sub-prime mortgage crisis
- Some surface-level comments
- Those who have seen the movie before have been the worst performers
- Several written comments (only one negative the last three semesters) on teaching evaluations about the impact of watching and discussing the film as a comprehensive analysis



# Questions and Comments