

CE 890 Graduate Seminar

SPEAKER: Michelle Wilson (Distance Learning M.S. Student) (Advisor: Dr. Steve Starrett)

TOPIC: “Engineering Ethics Today”

DATE: February 17, 2010

TIME: 4:00 p.m. (refreshments at 3:45 p.m.)

PLACE: 2144 Fiedler Hall

ABSTRACT

Ethics in engineering practice is about professional responsibilities of engineers. Professional ethics have been recognized as an important foundation in the practice of engineering for several decades.

Codes of ethics have been invoked as a basis for professional engineering licensure. Violations of such ethical codes have led to many well-known tragic engineering failures that endangered human life and jeopardized public welfare.

U.S. engineers, like employees in much of the rest of the U.S., are reeling from a great recession, beginning in December 2007, and the stock market meltdown of September 2008. They are grappling with layoffs, higher expenses, diminished retirement savings, reduced employer contributions for retirement, and the end of defined benefit programs.

This paper will take a brief look at what engineering ethics are, the history of them, and how they are influenced. The effect of the recent economic difficulties on ethics will be addressed by comparing interviews with practicing engineers regarding ethical pressures taken in 2006 and again in 2009. The results of a NBES survey that measures trends in overall ethics, by examining key behaviors that change if a company is effectively adhering to high standards of conduct, will also be used to judge the economic influence on ethics.