University of Minnesota
HRIR 6503 Employer Sponsored Employee Benefit Plans
9/12/2016—10/24/2016 (7 weeks)

Instructor
Mr. Robert (Bob) Leone
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rleone@umn.edu

Class Day/Time
Monday nights—5:45 pm–9:05 pm
September 12, 2016—October 24, 2016

Classroom
Class will meet in Carlson School of Management 1 - 127

Overview of This Course
HRIR 6503 offers an introduction to the issues surrounding employee benefit plans, their design, and their implications for human resource management. The class will focus on employee benefits from a broad perspective rather than addressing employee benefits at any particular organization. Topics will range from health benefit plans to retirement plans with a focus on the information and process necessary to make effective decisions as a corporate plan sponsor of employee benefits. Other types of benefit plans (social plans) will also be discussed (e.g., Social Security, Medicare, etc.), but only as it relates to the overall objectives for the course. During the course, you will learn how to consider and evaluate an organization’s non-wage employee benefits to gain competitive advantage, and design benefit plans consistent with Corporate and Human Resource objectives.

Please Note: This course is designed for those with relatively little experience in the field of employee benefits. If you have been working, and have already established a knowledge base in employee benefits you may find our discussions familiar as a result of your experiences. While the course work could provide a new and alternative perspective, it should be kept in mind that the course is designed for those with limited experience in the field. Feel free to contact me if you are interested but unsure of the value it might have for your specific situation.

Course Goals
The primary goal is to prepare the student to more effectively manage employee benefits personally and as human resource managers in business, government and/or other organizations. The class will meet for seven weeks and cover:

- An overview of employee benefits;
- The objectives employers have for providing employee benefits;
- The psychology of employee benefits (why they are so important to a successful employee relationship);
- The design of employee benefit plans (financing, competitive aspects, levels of coverage, etc.);
**Course Goals (continued)**
- Detailed information about various employee benefit areas;
- The strategies related to the creation, communication, administration, and updating a plan sponsors employee benefit plans; and
- How an employee benefit specialist can contribute to the development, implementation and delivery of successful employee benefit programs.

**Learning Goals**
After the completion of the seven week class, the student will be able to:
- Evaluate an organizations employee benefits from a competitive and strategic perspective;
- Tailor an organizations employee benefit plans to meet the company’s hiring, compensation, and retention objectives;
- Communicate the value provided to the employees via non-wage benefits; and
- Evaluate the alternative ways to deliver employee benefits to maximize their value.

**Text and Other Resources**
The class will use the book *Employee Benefits—A Primer for Human Resource Professionals*. The book is in its 5th edition (5e) and the University bookstore carries the 5th edition. The 5th edition of the textbook includes notable updates from earlier versions. For example, it includes a discussion about health care reform and nonqualified deferred compensation for executives.

Current event information will come from business related periodicals (e.g., The Wall Street Journal, Money Magazine, Time, Plan Sponsor, etc.). There are many interesting articles related to Employee Benefits and we will plan to start each class with a short discussion about something that appeared in a recent news article or publication. Even the Star Tribune may have articles about local employers and their benefit plans. Students are encouraged to bring articles related to employee benefits to class for purposes of discussion.

**Assignments and Grading**
The grading for the course will be based on the following:

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Home Quiz</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Project</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>40%</td>
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**Take Home Quiz** – There will be an open book, take home quiz given after the third class. The quiz will be on retirement and health care benefits and will be worth 25% of your grade. The quiz will be multiple choice and short answer.
In **Class Participation** – There will be ample opportunity to contribute to class discussions. Questions and comments are encouraged! In addition, we will plan to review relevant case studies each week during class time. The case studies are designed to solicit the classes’ thoughts on business situations and challenges often faced by Human Resource Professionals and other employees as they relate to employee benefits. Case studies may be provided prior to class or during the class itself.

Also, I would like students to send me an email each week by end of day on Friday (before the Monday class) about the week’s reading. This information will be used to help me understand the overall class comprehension of each week’s subject(s). The email should just reference in the subject line the week’s topic (e.g. Overview, Health Care Benefits, etc.) and two comments:

- An aspect of the reading the student found particularly challenging; and,
- A question about the readings or an area where the student believes we need to cover during class.

I will review, organize and develop the class discussions based on the student feedback.

**Class Project** – There will be a class project that will require a short write up prior to the 5th class and discussion during the 5th class. Student preparation and participation in the discussions will count toward the student’s grade. Further information about the case study, what will be expected of the students, etc. will be covered during the 4th class to help the students prepare.

**Final Exam** – The last class will include a final exam. The final will be comprehensive and will be completed in class before leaving. The final examination will be a combination of short answer and essay.

**Important Overall Comments** – You are expected to come to each class and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings. In order to minimize classroom disruption, you are expected to come to class on time.

I reserve the right to use your attendance and the quality of your class participation in determining your final grade. However, with the exception of extreme circumstances, attendance and participation will not affect an overall grade by more than one grade level.

Thank you for your interest in HRIR 6503 – Employer Sponsored Employee Benefit Plans.

If you have any questions you can contact me at rleone@umn.edu.
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<tr>
<td><strong>September 12—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm</strong></td>
<td>Overview of Employee Benefit Plans. <em>Employee Benefits</em> 5e – Chapters 1 and 2 (Pages 3-28 and 34-55)</td>
<td>The first class will provide an introduction to employee benefits. It will include comments about the various benefit plans, how organizations tailor its programs for their employees and the economics of employee benefits.</td>
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<td><strong>September 19—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm</strong></td>
<td>The Regulatory Environment and Retirement Plans. <em>Employee Benefits</em> 5e – Chapters 3 and 4 (Pages 61-84 and 99-127)</td>
<td>The second class will continue to build the student’s general knowledge on employee benefits, and include a more in-depth discussion on retirement plans. The retirement topic will include commentary on recent trends in the retirement space, and we will conclude tonight’s conversations with the various legislative activities that have impacted employee benefits (e.g., ERISA, Health Care Reform 2010).</td>
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<td><strong>September 26—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm</strong></td>
<td>Health Care and Related Benefit Plans. <em>Employee Benefits</em> 5e – Chapter 5 (Pages 133–167)</td>
<td>Health Care has been one of the highest profile benefit areas over the last ten years, and has become the most expensive employee benefit for many organizations. Today’s employers are always looking for ways to control their health care costs. Tonight’s class will focus on today’s health care systems, designs and trends. We will also discuss the long-term issues U.S. health care will continue to face in the future.</td>
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<td><strong>October 3—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm</strong></td>
<td>Time Off, Accommodation and Enhancement Benefits. <em>Employee Benefits</em> 5e – Chapters 8 and 9 (Pages 225–244 and pages 247–263)</td>
<td>Tonight’s conversations will focus on time-off, flexible work arrangements as well as accommodation and enhancement benefits. Company efforts in the accommodation and enhancement area have been creative and fast growing over the last several years. Many employers look to differentiate themselves by how well they can help employees with their work/life balance as well as providing subtle perks to the employees to enhance the working experience. We will spend tonight’s class discussing the many aspects of these programs.</td>
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## Class Outline for Sept. 12, 2016—Oct. 24, 2016 HRIR 6503 Employee Benefits

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<td><strong>October 10—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm</strong></td>
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<td>Life Insurance, Disability and In Class Group Case Study</td>
<td>Employee Benefits 5e – Chapter 6 (Pages 171-192)</td>
<td>The life insurance and disability discussions will be during the first half of the class. We will also cover at a high level Worker’s Compensation. The second half of tonight’s class will involve an in-class case study. We will discuss the case study, pre-work, and expectations the week prior to the class to help the students prepare for the in-class project.</td>
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<td><strong>October 17—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm</strong></td>
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<td>Managing Employee Benefits, Deferred Compensation and Preparation for Finals</td>
<td>Employee Benefits 5e – Chapter 10 and 11 (Pages 269–290 and 293–309)</td>
<td>It is as important to manage and communicate your employee benefit plans as it is to sponsor them. Also, deferred compensation and other programs designed for executive leadership are of high importance to the benefits professional. This class will cover both topics and include a review for our final examination.</td>
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<td><strong>October 24—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm</strong></td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>No required reading</td>
<td>Tonight we will have a short discussion about what we have learned over the course of the class and then take a final examination. The final examination will be comprehensive. Students will have 80 minutes to complete.</td>
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The course outline should be viewed as the expected structure for each week’s class. Modifications may be made as the class progresses over the course of the semester.