

# HRIR 6503 Employer Sponsored Employee Benefit Plans

Sec 060, Fall 2019

## Course Instructor

### Mr. Robert (Bob) Leone

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## Teaching Assistant

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## Course Description, Goals, & Objectives

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.

## Course Prerequisites

**Please Note:** This course is designed for those with relatively little experience in the field of employee benefits. If you have been working and already established a knowledge base in employee benefits you may find our discussions familiar because 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;
- Objectives employers have for providing employee benefits;
- Why employee benefits are so important to a successful employer and employee relationship;
- The design of employee benefit plans (financing, competitive aspects, levels of coverage, etc.);
- Information about various employee benefit areas with an emphasis on Retirement, Health Care and Accommodation and Enhancement benefits;
- Strategies related to the creation, communication, administration, and updating a plan sponsored 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;
- Identify the important decisions needed within each employee benefit area;
- Communicate the value provided by employee benefits to the employees and employer; and
- Start to assess his or her own employee benefit needs.

## Course Meeting Information

**Time: Monday nights—5:45 pm–9:05 pm**  
**September 9, 2019—October 21, 2019**

**Place:** Class will meet Hanson Hall 1 - 109

## Final Exam

The final exam will be held **October 21—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm**

## Textbook & Reading Materials

## Required Course Materials

The class will use the book ***Employee Benefits—A Primer for Human Resource Professionals***. The book is in its 6<sup>th</sup> edition. The 6<sup>th</sup> edition has been out for over a year. There should be new and used versions of the book available. The library will also have a few copies for reference.

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 class with a short discussion about a recent news article or publication. Even the Star Tribune may have articles about local employers and their benefit plans. Students are welcome to bring or suggest articles related to employee benefits for class discussions.

## Assignments & Grading

### Grading Criteria

The grading for the course will be based on the following:

Activity	Percentage of Final Grade
In Class Participation	10%
Take Home Quiz	30%
In Class Quiz	30%
Final Examination	30%

**In Class Participation** – There will be ample opportunity to contribute to class discussions. Questions and comments are encouraged! In addition, we will review relevant case studies each week during class. The case studies are designed to solicit the classes' thoughts on business situations and

challenges faced by Human Resource Professionals. Case studies may be provided prior to class or during the class itself.

Also, I ask students to send me an email each week by 8PM Sunday night BEFORE Monday's class about the week's reading. This information will be used to help me understand class comprehension of each week's subjects and help me structure the class. The email should 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 the student believes we need to cover during class.

I will review, organize and develop the class discussions based on student feedback. Each student's weekly submission and attendance will count towards their overall participation grade.

**Take Home Quiz** – There will be an open book, take home quiz opened to students after the second class. The quiz will cover the first two classes and will be worth 30% of the overall class grade. The quiz will be multiple choice and short answer or essay.

**In Class Quiz** - There will be an in class quiz at the start of the 5th week's class. The quiz will cover the subjects from the two prior weeks: Health Care, Time off, and Work/Life benefits. The quiz will be multiple choice and short answer.

**Final Exam** – The last class will include a final exam. The final will cover information reviewed in the prior two classes, as well as defined contribution retirement plans and health care. The final examination will be a combination of short answer, multiple choice and essay.

**Contacting Bob** – I plan to be in the adjunct office for a couple hours before each class. You are welcome to contact me there or email me for a specific meeting time.

**Final Thoughts** – You are expected to come to each class (on time) and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings. **Make it a point to be there. We only meet six times, and you will miss the discussion of a key topic if you are not there.** I do include something on the final exam from each class. You should do well on the final exam if you have attended class and participated in the discussions.

I do use your attendance and the quality of your class participation in determining your final grade. However, except for extreme circumstances, attendance and participation will not affect an overall grade by more than one grade level.

It takes time and experience to become an employee benefits "expert". Our half a semester class is meant to give students a solid foundation and begin to build your expertise in employee benefits. We will make sure you have been introduced to the important topics in the field, and create an awareness of the key things you should know about each topic. I teach from a practitioner perspective, so this will be geared to your future life in Human Resources and will be helpful to your future job and personal needs.

## **Make-up for Missed Attendance, Assignments, & Exams**

Please review the [university policy on make-up work](https://policy.umn.edu/education/makeupwork) [\(https://policy.umn.edu/education/makeupwork\)](https://policy.umn.edu/education/makeupwork)

## Carlson Course Grading Policy

Carlson School uses a grading policy based upon a class median aggregate GPA. Learn more about the [Carlson Course Grading Policy](https://z.umn.edu/policy-carlson_graduate_grading) [\(https://z.umn.edu/policy-carlson\\_graduate\\_grading\)](https://z.umn.edu/policy-carlson_graduate_grading).

## Carlson & University Policies

### Student Academic Misconduct and Scholastic Dishonesty

The Carlson School defines academic misconduct as any act by a student that misrepresents the student's own academic work or that compromises the academic work of another. Scholastic misconduct includes (but is not limited to) cheating on assignments or examinations, plagiarizing, i.e., misrepresenting as one's own work any work done by another, submitting the same paper, or substantially similar papers, to meet the requirement of more than one course without the approval and consent of the instructors concerned, or sabotaging another's work. Within this general definition, however, instructors determine what constitutes academic misconduct in the courses they teach. Students found guilty of academic misconduct face penalties ranging from lowering of the course grade or awarding a grade of F or N for the entire course, to suspension from the University.

Review the [Student Conduct Code](https://z.umn.edu/policy-carlson_student_conduct_code) [\(https://z.umn.edu/policy-carlson\\_student\\_conduct\\_code\)](https://z.umn.edu/policy-carlson_student_conduct_code) and [Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website](https://z.umn.edu/student_conduct_academic_integrity) [\(https://z.umn.edu/student\\_conduct\\_academic\\_integrity\)](https://z.umn.edu/student_conduct_academic_integrity).

If you are interested in learning more about how to cite sources and avoid plagiarism, U of M Libraries offers online [tutorials and tools related to citations](https://z.umn.edu/research_citation_tools) [\(https://z.umn.edu/research\\_citation\\_tools\)](https://z.umn.edu/research_citation_tools). You can also visit the [Center for Writing](https://z.umn.edu/center_for_writing) [\(https://z.umn.edu/center\\_for\\_writing\)](https://z.umn.edu/center_for_writing) for additional assistance.

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing all students equal access to learning opportunities.

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. Students registered with the DRC, who have a letter requesting accommodations, are encouraged to contact the instructor early in the semester. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. psychiatric, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical, or systemic), are invited to contact the DRC for a confidential discussion at 612-626-1333 (V/TTY) or at [drc@umn.edu](mailto:drc@umn.edu) (<mailto:drc@umn.edu>). Additional information is available on the [Disability Resource Center website](https://z.umn.edu/disability_resource_center) [\(https://z.umn.edu/disability\\_resource\\_center\)](https://z.umn.edu/disability_resource_center).

## Title IX

**Title IX** ([https://z.umn.edu/title\\_ix\\_process](https://z.umn.edu/title_ix_process)) prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, and relationship violence, in education.

## Students with Mental Health and Stress Management

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. Learn more about the broad range of confidential **mental health services** ([https://z.umn.edu/mental\\_health\\_services](https://z.umn.edu/mental_health_services)) available on campus.

## Student Writing Support

As a student, you may experience challenges in your writing. The University of Minnesota has a **student writing support resource** ([https://z.umn.edu/student\\_writing\\_support](https://z.umn.edu/student_writing_support)) to help with your writing.

## Additional University Policies

1. Grade definitions from the Administrative Policy: ***Grading and Transcripts: Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris, Rochester*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-grading\\_definitions\\_transcripts](https://z.umn.edu/policy-grading_definitions_transcripts)).
2. Scholastic Dishonesty (see Board of Regents Policy: ***Student Conduct Code*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-student\\_conduct\\_code](https://z.umn.edu/policy-student_conduct_code)) and the Administrative Policy: ***Teaching and Learning: Instructor and Unit Responsibilities: Twin Cities, Morris, Rochester*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-instructor\\_unit\\_responsibilities](https://z.umn.edu/policy-instructor_unit_responsibilities))).
3. Administrative Policy: ***Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences: Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris, Rochester*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-makeup\\_work](https://z.umn.edu/policy-makeup_work)).
4. Board of Regents Policy: ***Student Conduct Code*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-student\\_conduct\\_code](https://z.umn.edu/policy-student_conduct_code)); Administrative Policy: ***Teaching and Learning: Student Responsibilities (Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris, Rochester)*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-student\\_responsibilities](https://z.umn.edu/policy-student_responsibilities)).
5. Board of Regents Policy: ***Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking and Relationship Violence*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-sexual\\_harassment\\_assault\\_stalking\\_relationship\\_violence](https://z.umn.edu/policy-sexual_harassment_assault_stalking_relationship_violence)).
6. Board of Regents Policy: ***Equity, Diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Affirmative Action*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-equity\\_diversity\\_eo\\_aa](https://z.umn.edu/policy-equity_diversity_eo_aa)).
7. Board of Regents Policy: ***Disability Services*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-disability\\_services](https://z.umn.edu/policy-disability_services)).
8. Board of Regents Policy: ***Academic Freedom and Responsibility*** ([https://z.umn.edu/policy-academic\\_freedom\\_responsibility](https://z.umn.edu/policy-academic_freedom_responsibility)).

## Class Outline

Class Date

Reading

Lesson Plan

**September 9—5:45 pm –  
9:05 pm**

	<i>Employee Benefits</i>	
	Preface, Chapters 1 and 2	
Overview of Employee Benefit Plans	(Pages vii-viii, 3-26, 31- top of 39 and bottom of 42 - 55)	The first class will introduce 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.

**September 16—5:45 pm –  
9:05 pm**

	<i>Employee Benefits</i>	
	Chapters 3 and 4	
The Regulatory Environment and Retirement Plans	(Pages 61-83 and 91- 121)	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 conclude with a high-level review of various legislative activities that have impacted employee benefits (e.g., ERISA, Health Care Reform).

**September 23—5:45 pm –  
9:05 pm**

Health Care and Related Benefit Plans	Employee Benefits Chapter 5	Health Care has been one of the highest profile benefit areas over the
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(Pages 127–163)

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.

**September 30—5:45 pm –  
9:05 pm**

*Employee Benefits*  
Chapters 8 and 9

(Pages 219–238 and  
pages 243–261)

Time Off, Accommodation and  
Enhancement Benefits

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.

Class Date	Reading	Lesson Plan
<b>October 7—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm</b>	<i>Employee Benefits</i> Chapter 6  (Pages 167-185)	<p>Life insurance and disability discussions will take place during tonight's class. This will round out our discussions about qualified employee benefit plans. We will also talk at a high level, about Worker's Compensation.</p> <p>During the first part of tonight's class there will be a short quiz. The quiz will cover the topics covered during the prior two week's: health care, time off and work/life benefits. The quiz will be completed in class.</p>
Life Insurance, and Disability		
<b>October 14—5:45 pm – 9:05 pm</b>	<i>Employee Benefits</i> Chapter 10 and 11 (Pages 267–285 and 289–307)	<p>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.</p>
Managing Employee Benefits, Deferred Compensation and Preparation for Finals		
<b>October 21—5:45 pm –</b>		

**9:05 pm**

Final Exam	No required reading	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.
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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.

## Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
	 <b>Case work</b> ( <a href="https://canvas.umn.edu/courses/139218/assignments/561637">https://canvas.umn.edu/courses/139218/assignments/561637</a> )	