This course was initially designed to develop an understanding of the personal and professional ethics required within the state code for the practicing Texas Licensed Professional Geoscientists (PGs). PGs that successfully completed those courses received professional development hours credit necessary for maintaining their licensed status with the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists.

THE PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:

Why bother with taking an ethics course? As a PG you took it because it was a license requirement. As an aspiring natural science professional, you take it because you will be expected to display in practice a coherent ethical integrity that utilizes a consistent code of ethical principles as well as a consistent set of moral values. Not an easy commitment for ethical quandaries that neither follow the usually simple code rules nor do they account for the outstanding human ability to rationalize questionable unethical decisions. The point of the course is to help you develop your own standard of professional core values of integrity, professional excellence, independence, and objectivity by primarily utilizing the study of fundamental principles, codes, and case studies.

Ethics is the formal study within the system of moral philosophy. The written and unwritten codified duties of moral philosophy are basically knowing the fundamental differences between: good and evil, right and wrong, and innate and acquired knowledge. Not an easy task at all, one has to assume that mankind is somewhere between mostly good (e.g., Plato, Kant, etc.) or mostly evil (e.g., Nietzsche, Machiavelli, etc.). Ethical problems and decisions erupt from wide varieties of sources. Some common examples would include:

1. Law - euthanasia, death penalty, knowingly defending a guilty person, etc.;
2. Biology – human clones, organ transplants, [Does a dead person have rights?],
   human cloning, genetic privacy, synthetic bioethics, etc.;
3. Business – trans-border problems that are exemplified by some U.S.-Mexico
   border businesses (pelon, mordida, etc.), fraudulent accounting, cyber-related
   kick-backs and payoffs, etc.
4. Religion – This is probably the most emotionally charged and dramatic ethical
   battleground to be observed. Despite similarities of the major global religious
   (Christian, Judaic, Islamic and Buddhist religions and their derivatives) there
   are fundamental moral differences that exist between them. Additionally, the
   coexisting secularists, agnostics, atheists, and other competing religious
   societies further add to today’s ethical chaos. However, faith, or the lack of it,
   must be recognized as either forming a basis for or having an influence on an
   individual’s moral values and consequently his ethics.