NEW COURSE SYLLABUS

HRMT 5530
Science of Quality Service in Hospitality

DAY/TIME/LOCATION:
Tuesday and Thursday
1:00 pm – 2:15 pm
Room 144 Spidle Hall

FACULTY INFORMATION
Dr. Martin O’Neill
328 Spidle Hall
Tel: 844 3264
Email: moneill@auburn.edu
Fax: 844 3279
Office Hours: 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

REQUIRED TEXT(S)

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS
Students will be referred to additional supplemental reading material on the tentative lecture schedule.

PROGRAM MISSION
To educate exceptional leaders for the Global Hospitality and Tourism industries. We concentrate on service excellence, social and ethical responsibility and diversity in a practically oriented and intellectually challenging learning environment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will examine the premium service concept and its relationship to the hospitality industry. The management mechanisms required for the provision of quality service and their subsequent application to hospitality operations will form the basis of the course. Special emphasis shall be given to the concept of continuous quality improvement through informed decision making. Students will be introduced to a range of tools and techniques designed to assist the hospitality operator in ensuring quality throughout their supply chain and customer retention based upon the provision of premium customer service.
COURSE OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

On completion of this unit, students will have:

• An understanding of the continuous quality improvement and total quality management concepts and their relevance to the modern day hospitality industry
• Developed an appreciation of the emerging quality management paradigm as a modern day leadership philosophy
• Evaluated the various challenges faced by hospitality professionals in the implementation of the continuous quality improvement policies and practices
• A broad appreciation and understanding of the continuous quality improvement literature and its relation to the broad hospitality industry

Grading and Evaluation Procedures – Undergraduate

Course requirements: attendance, papers, projects, quizzes, examinations, class participation etc:

a. Students are expected to attend and come prepared for class. Consequently you must complete any pre-class reading and/or assignments.

b. Semester paper

All available evidence points to the fact that profitability, market share and growth are all a function of quality in the hospitality industry. Based upon your experience to date discuss whether you agree or disagree with this statement in the context of Auburn’s hospitality industry.

This paper should be NO LESS than 1500 words in length. It should be introduced in context with appropriate aims and/or objectives. The main body of your debate should demonstrate background reading in the subject matter, cite all work used, and apply yourself based upon your reading and/or direct experience to date. Feel free to offer recommendations where you deem them appropriate. Please define all terms carefully throughout.

Due date/time – To be determined

c. Mid-term case examination

Students will be given a case study one week in advance of the mid-term exam period. They will be required to review the case materials with a view to answering questions pertaining to same during a mid-term examination to be administered in class the following week.
d. **Term project**

This project aims to showcase your depth of understanding and learning within the course. In-groups of NO MORE than four you are required to identify a national chain restaurant operation in the Auburn Opelika area in order to assess their commitment to and understanding of the concepts of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Customer Satisfaction (CS).

To this end, the project has four principal research components, all of which must be reported on in your final bound report and during your final group oral presentation:

1. A detailed search of all background company literature (online and pint format) designed to testify to the company’s:
   - Commitment to quality – normally expressed in the form of a company mission statement.
   - The logic/reasoning behind the company’s quality efforts.
   - The aims and objectives of any such approach.
   - Any policies, practices and/or procedures they may have initiated in pursuit of these goals.
   - Their means of implementing their quality program and any problems encountered along the way – timing and/or buy-in.
   - Approach to involving staff and customers in their quality drive – HR practices.
   - Approach to measuring success, if any!
   - The consequences, both operational and strategic, for the organization and customers alike.

2. You are then required to reach out to your local chain operation and arrange for a personal interview designed to lend support to preceding secondary information search. The goal here is to identify the “local service quality promise” and whether or not this promise and/or supporting practices differs in any way from the corporate company line.

3. Having ascertained the chosen establishment’s commitment and approach (promise) to CQI and CS you are then required to **TEST** this promise. This you will do in anonymous form via both direct (Mystery Shopping) and indirect (multiple telephone inquiries) methods of assessment. By way of note – all visits and telephone inquiries should be made over a number of days and across a range of shift times. Your goal is not to make life difficult, rather to test for consistency in response and action from the service provider across all encounters. As an example, your inquiry may relate to an ever changing dinner reservation &/or social function. **Remember, you are testing the promise and delivery mechanism - so do just that!**
Take note of all relevant event details and diarize each encounter – for example:

- The date &/or time of call(s) and/or visit(s)?
- Whether pre-booked or not?
- The number & type of people involved?
- The nature of the services received?
- The responses of people involved?
- Any attributions that you as a customer made towards the staff & the organization of the service provider?
- Any bad customer/employee behavior that occurred?
- The roles played by individual employees (dramaturgy perspective)?
- Core and supplementary services?
- Types of costs involved to customer?
- Any relevant promotions being undertaken by the service provider?
- Note relationship marketing efforts made by the service provider?
- Highlight the various fail points – IF ANY!

4. **This will require that you develop an evaluative framework (measure), which can then be used for the purpose of actual evaluation – it is CRITICAL that you do this.**

A useful starting point in this respect is Dr. Colin Armistead’s (1989) paper entitled: Customer Service and Operations Management in Service Businesses, *The Service Industries Journal, Vol. 9 No 2.* pp. 247-260. This will also serve as a useful framework when it comes to preparing your groups oral presentation. You must identify each of the variables to be included in this measure as well as the scales you intend to use to evaluate them – for example a 1-5 Likert type scale anchored at Highly dissatisfied (1) through to Highly satisfied (5). You may also wish to consider the issue of future behavioral intention and whether the particular service encounters you and your group members have will impact your willingness to revisit or recommend this establishment into the future.

Upon completion of this exercise you are required to prepare and submit a bound and typed research report addressing your research methods (with justification), findings, analysis and recommendations for your chosen establishment. This should be no more than 5000 words in length.

This report should be introduced appropriately with an appropriate contextual literature review (1000 words maximum) addressing the broad quality issue, its importance to the hospitality environment and the problem solving ethos. Your **total report** should be no more than 5000 words in length. Written reports are to be submitted on either the date of oral presentation (to be notified) or the last day of class – your choice.

The following layout is suggested:
• Contents page
• Introduction with aims and objectives (approx. 200 words) – set in context
• Generic literature review on the quality issue / CQI and its importance in today’s business environment - Explain in 1000 words the importance of service quality, it’s measurement and the mystery shopping technique as one such evaluation method aiding in the continuous improvement process.
• Methodology (eg: interview, mystery shopper, evaluative approach, service diaries, observer) – no more than 1000 words
• Background information on company, encompassing their mission, quality policies, practices and procedures.
• Diarised service encounter – including how you tested the systems flexibility.
• Assessment of how the establishment performed & whether it delivered on its promise
• Recommendations, if any!

Note – please note that this is a group assignment and free-loading will not be tolerated. As such, and if there are problems at the end of each semester, each group member will be asked to assign a grade for each other group member to the course tutor. This will be based upon their perception of each individual’s contribution to the project. Each group member will then be assigned a final mark based upon an average of the total mark awarded by the tutor. Be advised that this mark is final and not up for debate unless there is a serious deviation from the mean (+/- 5%) across the range.

Where groups are having problems with individual group members’ commitment, I expect to hear about it sooner, rather than later.

5. **Oral presentation** – groups are required to make a 20 minute oral presentation of their research objectives, methods and findings in the closing weeks of semester. You will be notified of the appropriate date when groups are formed.

6. **Final exam** – consisting of a series of short answer and essay style questions on the course content.
CLASS POLICIES

1. Academic honesty
The University Academic Honesty policy (TITLE XII) will be strictly enforced. Students are responsible for familiarity with this policy and its adherence. Please review the current edition of the Tiger Cub for specifics regarding this policy.

2. Grading for course requirement
   Semester Paper  25%
   Mid-term examination  20%
   Group report  25%
   Oral presentation  10%
   Final examination  20%

3. Grading scale
   90 - 100% = A
   80 - 89% = B
   70 – 79% = C
   60 – 69% = D
   59% & < = F

4. Unannounced quizzes, attendance and participation
   There will be no unannounced quizzes. Class and laboratory attendance is mandatory for all HRMT classes and only official university excused absences (please refer to the Tiger Cub) supported by the relevant documentation will be accepted by Faculty for non-attendance. All supporting documentation must be date stamped and turned into the relevant faculty member at the beginning of the next class (no late excuses will be accepted). Students will be permitted ONE unexcused absence per class, per semester. Each class missed thereafter without an official university approved excuse and supporting documentation will result in a letter grade deduction (one letter grade per class missed) at the end of each semester. In the event that a student misses more than three classes without an official university approved excuse and/or supporting documentation, this will result in an automatic fail grade for the class. Late assignments will not be accepted after the due date other than with an approved and stamped university excuse.

5. Special Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
   Students who need special accommodations in class, as provided for by the American Disabilities Act, should arrange a confidential meeting with the
instructor during office hours the first week of classes - or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately. You must bring a copy of your Accommodation Memo and an Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. If you do not have these forms but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center, 844-2096.
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