

SYLLABUS

"American Gun Policy: Arming and Informing the Debate,"
University of Toledo

Students of Brian Anse Patrick are learning how to arm themselves with propaganda from both sides of the debate over how best to apply the Second Amendment. That's the one that establishes "the right of the people to keep and bear arms," and its application is only bound to get more controversial in the wake of the recent shootings at Virginia Tech.

"American gun policy is a site where many lines of social influence converge," says Mr. Patrick, an assistant professor of communication who teaches the honors seminar on the subject. His aim, he says, is to help students "understand how information is marshaled, and how it's focused, and how it's created to support various political positions."

At the start of the semester, each student is required to join a gun-policy association of his or her choice as a way to attach them to a community of people active in the debate. Students read and discuss research articles from scientific journals, book chapters, and papers presented at national conferences to understand how each side builds its argument. Throughout the course, politicians and pro- and anti-gun activists are invited to address the class.

"My impression is that people in general believe more about guns and gun policy than they really know," says Mr. Patrick, who owns several hunting and hand guns. While some of his students did not know anything about firearms before the class, a few were very pro-gun, and "a few are just frightened of guns," he says. While the issue sparks heated debates across the country, especially now, Mr. Patrick says he asks students to support their opinions with facts, and class discussions are generally very civil.

Students say:

Hillary H. Voss, a junior majoring in biology, says besides having two uncles who hunt deer, she had little exposure to guns before the class. But the class has gotten her interested in "going to a shooting range and maybe learning the proper way to handle a gun," she says. Before taking the class she thought only a small group of "weird and not normal" people liked using guns. "But my eyes have been opened to the millions of people who do this on a regular basis."

Reading list:

Guns in America: A Reader, by Jan E. Dizard, Robert Merrill Muth, and Stephen P. Andrews Jr. (New York University Press, 1999); *The Gun Control Debate: You Decide*, edited by Lee Nesbit (Prometheus Books, 2001); *The National Rifle Association and the Media: The Motivating Force of Negative Coverage*, by Brian Anse Patrick (Peter Lang 2002).

Assignments:

Students write weekly papers responding to readings and must make a final presentation. —LAUREN SMITH

Do you have a great course? E-mail syllabus@chronicle.com

THE FACULTY

<http://chronicle.com/faculty>

Bruce E. Roselle (right) runs Roselle Leadership Strategies. His son, Ben, switched from psychology to an M.B.A. program so that he could help run the company: "I had an idea about restructuring it to enable it to grow."

Look Who's Minding the Store

New M.B.A. programs focus on family businesses

BY KATHERINE MANGAN

BRUCE E. ROSELLE has more than a passing interest in his son's M.B.A. course work at the University of St. Thomas's Opus College of Business, in Minneapolis, Minn. The business plan, financing, growth plan, and marketing strategies his son has been plugging away at for the past few semesters could help determine the future of the family's leadership-development company.

Ben Roselle is pursuing an M.B.A. for the same reason a growing number of students are: to develop the skills they'll need to help their family's businesses prosper. Business schools are responding with a flurry of new courses that focus on the unique challenges of homegrown businesses: the patriarch who insists that the approach he inherited from his father works better than any plan a whippersnapper with an M.B.A. could come up

with; the siblings whose squabbling is threatening to sink the business and ruin Thanksgiving, and the brother-in-law with a high-school education who insists he's management material.

They are also hoping to teach business students of all kinds some of the traits that make many family-run businesses multigenerational success stories, the ones whose employees are willing to work long hours for modest pay because they believe in the company and care about their co-workers, and the companies that don't obsess over quarterly profits as long as their long-term vision remains intact.

Family businesses can range from the mom-and-pop grocery store on the corner to multibillion-dollar corporations like Ford Motor Company or Wal-Mart. They employ 62 percent of the nation's work force, and

generate about 64 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product, according to U.S. Census figures, but until recently, many M.B.A. programs paid scant attention to them.

Arthur Kraft, chairman of AACSB International: the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, said interest in offering courses on family businesses has been growing, often as an outgrowth of programs in entrepreneurship. In addition to M.B.A. programs, many colleges and universities offer undergraduate courses on the subject, and some have institutes that work with local businesses.

The association's Web site lists nearly 50 colleges and universities with family-business programs in the United States, Canada, and Britain. Among them are Babson College.

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THE FACULTY

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Kennesaw State University Loyola University Chicago, Northeastern University, Northwestern University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

BEFORE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Babson's program, which is part of the business school's top-ranking entrepreneurship program, is geared toward helping family businesses grow—not just survive. “This is not just about going home to take over Dad's bakery, but learning how to expand it to catering, franchising it, and perhaps selling online,” says Michael Chmura, a spokesman for Babson.

Maria Sinanis, a second-year M.B.A. student at Babson, has spent much of her year analyzing her family's Detroit-based company, which offers rustproofing, metal work, and other services to the auto industry.

During her first semester, she conducted an economic assessment of the family's business, Detroit Electro-Coatings Company LLC, in a course called “The Family as Entrepreneur.” Her analysis examined, among other things, the company's vision, governance, and business strategy.

Over winter break, she assembled the company's founders—her father and uncle—and their successors—herself, her brother, and her two cousins—in the company boardroom to go over her findings and hear what they had to say. Despite being in the room with the relatives she'd be sitting down to Christmas dinner with in a few days, she was all business.

“This was the first time we had all had a formal discussion about where we wanted to go,” Ms. Sinanis says. “I wanted to be sure that I wasn't the only one driving this just because I had the course work. I wanted to be sure we had buy-in as a team.”

Among her ideas was the possibility of naming an advisory board of impartial industry experts who could help steer the business along the difficult road that they and other auto-industry companies in Detroit faced. The group also discussed the systems they would need to have in place to make a smooth

leadership transition when her father and uncle retire.

During the spring semester, she traveled back to Detroit with a team of Babson M.B.A. students to interview her family members as part of a course called “Leading Change and Growth in Family Firms.” Ms. Sinanis bounced back and forth between subject and student, interviewing her relatives and then answering questions about the business from her Babson teammates.

The students made a point of soliciting everyone's advice and opinions and Ms. Sinanis says her relatives were receptive to suggestions about clarifying a vision for the

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company and considering salary incentives when the younger generation takes over the company.

EXPERIENCE VS. YOUTH

Mr. Kraft says students hoping to shake up their family businesses often encounter resistance from the older generation, especially when they aren't careful to seek their relatives' counsel. “They've had a history of doing things a certain way, maintaining traditions passed on from father to son or mother to daughter,” says Mr. Kraft, who also serves as business dean at Chapman University. “Then a maverick comes along and says, ‘I'm going to do things differently,’ and it can cause some tensions. Maybe he's not satisfied with a \$50-million company. He wants a billion-dollar company.”

Ben Roselle's ambitions for Roselle Leadership Strategies are more modest. After following his father around as an intern for several summers during college and starting advanced study to become a psychologist and consultant for the company, he found himself more interested in the strategic end of the family business.

“I had an idea about restructuring it to enable it to grow,” Mr.

Roselle says, describing a business plan in which consultants would work billable hours from home and visit clients in their homes or businesses.

“This would eliminate some overhead, as well as the monotony and burnout for our consultants, and it would be more convenient for clients,” he says.

“My father was a little nervous about how the plan would work, since he'd been running the company the same way for 10 years,” Ben Roselle adds. “He was excited though.”

His father recalls the initial conversation. “I was actually shocked when Ben called me, halfway

through his Ph.D. program, and said he had had an epiphany,” the senior Mr. Roselle says, referring to his son's plans to switch to an M.B.A. program, help expand the company, and eventually run it.

“My first thought was that it was running just fine as it was, but the more I talked to him, the more I warmed up to his idea.”

Being open to employees' ideas—whether or not those em-

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ployees are relatives—is key to the success of many family businesses. Instead of having a rigid, top-down structure, these businesses are also more likely to encourage employees to discuss their concerns, says Joseph H. Astrachan, director of Kennesaw State University's Cox Family Enterprise Center. Privately held businesses can learn from this approach, he said.

“Sometimes you have to ask, how would you treat your sister if she needed to leave work early today?” he says. “Maybe that's how you should treat an employee. When you do nice things for people, there's a quid pro quo. That atmos-

phere tends to permeate family businesses.”

Kennesaw State offers four undergraduate and graduate-level courses on the family business, and beginning in 2009, it plans to offer an executive M.B.A. in the topic. But it is also interested in making sure that all students—not just those who are going into family businesses—learn about the special characteristics of companies that might be their customers or suppliers.

“Over the last 15 years, we've been developing enough research and theory to integrate family business into just about any topic taught in the business-school curriculum,”

says Mr. Astrachan, who is also chairman of family business and the editor of the journal *Family Business Review*. The enterprise center also publishes case studies about family businesses.

“We don't just want an add-on, but a shift in the way one thinks about finance or human resources or any other subject.”

In a typical M.B.A. course, students aren't likely to grapple with issues like how to select a successor when the patriarch or matriarch dies or retires, or how to demote or fire a family member who isn't performing well.

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significant resources into this and see it as a major focus of our strategic future,” says Christopher P. Puto, dean of the business school.

Mr. Monson says he has noticed a surge of interest in family businesses nationally in recent years. The topic, which used to be taught mainly by adjunct professors, has gained academic respectability as new journals have sprung up and others have begun publishing articles relating to family business.

CHALLENGES OF CLOSENESS

William Monson, director of the Center for Family Enterprise at St. Thomas's Opus College of Business, agrees that most M.B.A. programs do a poor job of equipping graduates to tackle specific challenges they'll face when they return to work for Dad or Mom.

“Conspicuous by its absence is some opportunity to apply what I'm learning to the things that are most

distinctive about a family business,” he says.

For instance, “How do we create an environment in which conflict is constructive? In a family business, the operating assumption is that of course we have to get our differences out, but the conflict stays constructive. The premise is that we'll reach a resolution and still be able to enjoy Thanksgiving dinner together.”

“Within a hierarchy, you often assume that I'll keep saying what I'm saying, only louder,” he says. “Often in families, you figure ‘If I'm going to argue with mom, I'd better figure out how to win the argument on her terms.’” A conversation in which differences are aired and acknowledged may succeed where a power play would fall flat.

Many of those conversations will be taking place this fall when the Minneapolis business school plans to offer an M.B.A. course that brings family members together to study business issues. Mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters will learn strategies to strengthen their businesses, studying them in the context of family-business models both in the United States and overseas. A similar class is being taught to undergraduates this spring.

The class is part of Opus College's push to expand family business as a niche that will draw students and help area businesses. “We're putting

significant resources into this and see it as a major focus of our strategic future,” says Christopher P. Puto, dean of the business school.

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“Every year there are another dozen universities that have at least an elective in family business, more and more of which are taught by full-time faculty members with a research agenda,” said Mr. Monson. “I expect there will be a scholarship explosion in this area, and that will be exciting for everyone.” ■

FACULTY NOTES

Education Scholars Debate Social Justice

In a heated discussion of anti-gay violence, social inequality, and the obligations of teacher-training programs, scholars attending the business meeting of the American Educational Research Association in mid-April accused the organization of neglecting its commitment to the public good.

The business meeting, held each year during the association's mammoth national conference, is usually quiet, pro forma, and sparsely attended. But this year the meeting

was consumed by a long debate over the association's position on “social justice” as a component of teacher education. At least two dozen activists wore bright red clothing in protest of what they view as the organization's cowardice in recent policy disputes.

The debate was an offshoot of the controversy over teacher-training programs' assessments of their students' “professional dispositions.”

Some conservative activists and civil-rights organizations have recently condemned such assessments, claiming that universities unconstitutionally use them to bully prospective teachers into accepting left-wing or-

thodoxies. In an essay in the current issue of *Education Next*, Laurie Moses Hines, an assistant professor of educational foundations at Kent State University's Trumbull campus, likens disposition evaluations to the loyalty oaths and “mental hygiene” requirements that teachers faced during the first half of the 20th century.

Last summer the field's largest accrediting body, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, or NCATE, responded to such criticisms by announcing that it would remove the term “social justice” from its accrediting standards.

But the association's removal of the term—combined with its deci-

sion not to include detailed material about anti-gay bigotry in its proposed new diversity standards—has angered some activists on the left. Last fall scholars began a campaign to pressure the group to restore its “social justice” language. As part of that effort, the campaigners asked the research association to officially denounce NCATE's moves. The research association declined to do so. ▶

—DAVID GLENN

AAUP Criticizes Professor's Suspension

The American Association of

University Professors has protested the University of Tulsa's decision to suspend an assistant professor of law and ban him from the campus without a hearing and without any charges being brought against him.

The faculty member, Gregory M. Duhl, allegedly violated the law school's practice of grading anonymously by favoring certain students, according to two students who complained to campus administrators. Mr. Duhl was also prohibited from contacting colleagues or students. He will continue to be paid during his suspension.

Two faculty committees have asked the university's administra-