

PHL 306: Business Ethics

Spring 2013

section E01

Syllabus

Instructor

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What Is This Class About?

This is an ethics course, designed to give you a basic understanding of morality, specifically within the context of business. At the same time, the course should supply you with some of the tools that you will need in order to think critically, be rational, better argue for what you believe, and investigate the question of how to live morally. The course will be divided into four units:

First Unit: The Nature of Morality. What is morality? Is it something that we decide, or are there some objective, unchangeable moral truths? Should I be concerned with what is best for *me* alone, or should I consider others as well? Are there morally wrong *actions*, or are there only morally wrong *consequences*? You're about to find out.

Second Unit: The Moral Responsibility of Corporations. Morality applies to PEOPLE, sure, but businesses are not people... Or are they? Do corporations have moral obligations just like we do? If so, what kinds of obligations do they have? Stay tuned.

Third Unit: Good Business. In this unit, we'll explore several specific issues regarding morality and business. For instance, is it permissible to knowingly sell a defective product? Is it immoral to mislead consumers with false advertisement? Is preferential hiring based on race or gender morally permissible; or perhaps even obligatory? If your co-worker or company is engaging in an immoral activity, is there an obligation to tell someone? We'll explore these issues together.

Fourth Unit: The Interests of Others. In this final unit, we will ask what our obligations are to others in business. For instance, Is it permissible to factory-farm animals for meat? Are sweatshops immoral? Do we have a moral obligation to protect the environment? Or to refrain from patronizing industries that promote suffering? Let's find out.

Required Text

Business Ethics: A Textbook With Cases, 7th edition, William H. Shaw, 2011, Wadsworth-Cengage Publishing; ISBN: 978-0-495-80876-3

Readings from the textbook are marked as (BE) in the class schedule below. A number of additional readings will also be supplied in .pdf form, marked as (pdf) below. These will be made available on our course website on Blackboard.

Course Requirements

1. *Exams (50%)*. You will take two exams: A mid-term and a final exam (25% each).
2. *Papers (25%)*. You will write two papers. The first (10%) will be a short diagnostic paper, 450-750 words (i.e., about 2 pages), and the second (15%) will be a longer paper, 900-1500 words in length (i.e., 3 - 5 pages). *Topics and more info: TBA.*
3. *Reading Quizzes (15%)*. You will take 15 weekly open-book reading quizzes. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped; i.e., your 14 best scores will constitute your quiz grade (~1% each). All quizzes must be completed on time. Late work will not be accepted.
4. *Class Participation (10%)*. A portion of your grade will be based upon your contribution to our regular Blackboard discussion posts. The discussion board is reached by clicking the link for “Class Discussion Board / Virtual Office” on Blackboard. More information about class discussion is found there.

Office Hours

Since this is an online course, there are not regular office hours. However, feel free to visit my “virtual office” on Blackboard to ask me a question. The forum for my virtual office is reached in the same way as the forum for class discussion.

Class Lectures

Again, since this is an online course, there will not be traditional lectures. However, each week I will post my lecture notes on Blackboard (along with instructions for each week, copies of any readings that are not in the textbook, and reading quizzes). Reading the lecture notes will be considered equivalent to attending a lecture in person. The notes (and all of the other course materials just mentioned) can be found by clicking the link for “Course Materials.” The materials will be divided into 15 folders—one for each week of class.

Course Schedule

Below is a schedule of the topics that we will cover, along with which reading(s) you should complete for each class meeting. Please note the **paper due dates**, as well as the **exam dates**.

Unit One	The Nature of Morality	
Week 1		
Mon 1/14	Introduction	• “The Nature of Morality” (BE: 4-13; note: stop at “Professional Codes” on page 13)
Wed 1/16	Irrationality	• Video: TEDx Talk: Why People are Irrational
Fri 1/18	No new topics	No new readings

Week 2		
Mon 1/21	Martin Luther King, Jr.	No classes
Wed 1/23	Relativism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Ethical Relativism" (BE: 17-20) • Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (pdf)
Fri 1/25	Egoism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Moral Principles and Self-Interest" (BE: 22-24) • Case 1.1 (BE: 37-39) • "Egoism" (BE: 49-53) • "Ethical Egoism" (pdf)
Week 3		
Mon 1/28	Utilitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Introduction/Consequentialist and Nonconsequentialist Theories" (BE: 46-49) • "Utilitarianism" (BE: 53-60)
Wed 1/30	Utilitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachels, "The Debate Over Utilitarianism" (pdf)
Fri 2/1	No new topics	No new readings
Week 4		
Mon 2/4	Absolute Deontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Kant's Ethics" (BE: 60-67)
Wed 2/6	Moderate Deontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Other Nonconsequentialist Perspectives" (BE: 67-73) • "Moral Decision Making" (BE: 76-78)
Fri 2/8	No new topics	No new readings
Unit Two	The Moral Responsibility of Corporations	
Week 5		
Mon 2/11	Group Responsibility DUE: Paper 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Individual Integrity & Responsibility" (BE: 25-29) • "Chapter 5: Corporations" (BE: 168-176; note: stop at "Rival Views of Corporate Responsibility" on page 177)
Wed 2/13	Group Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio Interview: Philip Pettit on Group Agency • Stanford Encyclopedia Entry, "Group Agency" (pdf)
Fri 2/15	No new topics	No new readings
Week 6		
Mon 2/18	Shareholder Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Rival Views of Corporate Responsibility/Debating Corporate Responsibility" (BE: 177-189)
Wed 2/20	Shareholder Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits" (pdf)
Fri 2/22	No new topics	No new readings
Week 7		
Mon 2/25	Stakeholder Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case 4.3 (BE: 162-163) • "Institutionalizing Ethics Within Corporations" (BE: 189-195) • "The Johnson & Johnson Credo" (pdf) • Almeder, "Morality in the Marketplace" (pdf)
Wed 2/27	Stakeholder Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freeman, "Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation" (pdf)
Fri 3/1	No new topics	No new readings
Week 8		
Mon 3/4	Distributive Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Chapter 3: Justice and Economic Distribution" (BE: 90-118) • "Case 3.3" (BE: 123-125)
Wed 3/6	No new topics	No new readings
Fri 3/8	Mid-Term Exam	No new readings
Spring Holiday		
3/11 – 3/14	Spring Holiday	No Classes

Unit Three		Good Business
Week 9		
Mon 3/18	Whistleblowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Introduction/Obligations to the Firm" (BE: 384-390) • "Conflicting Obligations/Whistle-Blowing/Self-Interest and Moral Obligation" (BE: 402-412)
Wed 3/20	Whistleblowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duska, "Whistle-Blowing and Employee Loyalty" (pdf)
Fri 3/22	No new topics	No new readings
Week 10		
Mon 3/25	Product Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Chapter 6: Consumers, part 1" (BE: 210-225; note: stop at "Other Areas of Business Responsibility" on page 225)
Wed 3/27	Product Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case 6.2 (BE: 252-253) • Video: Too Little Restriction? • Video: Too Much Restriction?
Fri 3/29	Holiday	No Classes
Week 11		
Mon 4/1	Holiday	No Classes
Wed 4/3	Ethics in Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Chapter 6: Consumers, part 2" (BE: 225-249; note: begin with "Other Areas of Business Responsibility" on page 225)
Fri 4/5	Ethics in Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: PBS: Advertising Ethics
Week 12		
Mon 4/8	Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Chapter 11: Job Discrimination" (422-447)
Wed 4/10	Affirmative Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Himma, "Fair-Start Defense of Affirmative Action" (pdf)
Fri 4/12	No new topics	No new readings
Unit Four		The Interests of Others
Week 13		
Mon 4/15	Animal Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Our Treatment of Animals" (BE: 284-287) • Singer, "All Animals Are Equal" (pdf)
Wed 4/17	Animal Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: If Slaughterhouses Had Glass Walls • Norcross, "Torturing Puppies & Eating Meat" (pdf)
Fri 4/19	No new topics	No new readings
Week 14		
Mon 4/22	The Environment DUE: Paper 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases 7.1 and 7.3 (BE: 289-290, 292-294) • "The Environment" (BE: 260-284; note: stop at "Our Treatment of Animals" on page 284)
Wed 4/24	The Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlet: "Why Save Endangered Species?" (pdf)
Fri 4/26	No new topics	No new readings
Week 15		
Mon 4/29	Sweatshops and Child Labor (introduction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article: Introduction: Sweatshops and Child Labor • "Reasonable Shopper" (pdf) • Case 5.2 (BE: 198-202)
Wed 5/1	Sweatshops (for)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: The Unbelievable Truth About Sweatshops • Video: Sweatshops Help the Poor Escape Poverty • Article: Sweatshops are Actually Good for the Poor
Fri 5/3	Sweatshops (against)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: Human Trafficking and Nike Sweatshops • Article: Sweatshops: What To Know • Article: Is It Immoral to Buy an iPhone?
	Final Exam	