

Business Ethics – Practice and Norms

Phil 20428 - Spring 2020
Instructor: Dr. Ting Cho Lau
Contact: tlau1@nd.edu
Office Hours: T 2-3, or by appointment
Meeting Time: 12:30-1:45 MW
Classroom: DeBartolo Hall 333

§1 Course Description and Objectives

Description: This course will examine and apply a number of foundational normative theories to specific problems in business ethics. The course is roughly divided into three units. The first unit covers three broad Western normative traditions: Aristotle, Kant, and Mill. We will also consider non-Western approaches to normative theory. The second unit applies these normative theories to ethical issues that arise in business ethics: market limits, negotiation and truth-telling, employee rights and obligations, conflicts of interest, non-fiduciary duties (e.g. to the environment), ethical advertising, etc. Each topic will examine specific cases. The third unit focuses on specific business contexts and issues – in particular, students will have the option of presenting projects that apply ethical thinking to a specific business context (perhaps ones that they are currently engaged in, one presented in media, or one that they will be engaged in after college).

Objectives:

- Grasp the strengths and weaknesses of different normative theories
- Analyze and develop positions on contemporary issues in business ethics.
- Develop philosophical skills in writing, reading, and speaking
- Become principled and morally upstanding members in the business community

§2 Materials

- All materials will be provided in the course folder.

§3 Assessment and Grading

Your final grade is determined by the following components:

Participation (10%)

- This course is discussion based. The easiest way to gain participation points is to simply prepare the materials before class and be ready to speak once class starts. Quality of participation does not have to correlate with quantity of participation.
- If discussion is difficult for you for whatever reason, e-mail me or meet me in office hours. We can work out non-discussion-based ways of participation.
- I aim to provide notes of class readings before we have covered it in class. However, this will not always be the case. You are responsible for the material!

Two Papers (20%, 30%)

- The first paper will be 3-4 pages
- The second paper will be 6-8 pages
- More details
 - Double-spaced, Times New Roman/Garamond, standard one-inch margins.
 - Please e-mail me a copy of your paper along with a hard copy in class.

- Papers topics will be given. Papers will require you to either assess and critique an argument or to come up with your own argument for a position. Paper grading rubrics will be provided.

Project (40%)

- Either:
 - [Preferred Option] 25 min project to be presented in class. Options include:
 - Leading discussion of an instructor-approved article
 - Organize and lead an in-class debate on an instructor-approved topic
 - Present a podcast or video that either (a) explores and defends a philosophical topic related to love and friendship not explicitly covered in class or (b) applies philosophical theories to a piece of art (visual art, music, etc.).
 - [Less Preferred but Equally Legitimate Option] – 15-page paper on a topic subject to my approval.

Additional Point

- I suspect the average grade will be a B+/A-. That said, I don't have a grade distribution in mind. If everyone, does good work, everyone can get an A. If no one does good work, then I am not obliged to give an A to anyone. Do good work and you'll get a good grade.
- Participation generally works to your advantage. If your participation is excellent, I will bump your grade as determined by your papers and final project by 1/3 of a letter grade.

§4 Policies

Mutual Respect:

- Please show mutual respect and cordiality in discussion. Let the force of the arguments speak for themselves.
- I aim to give your papers back to you within two weeks. If you wish to challenge a grade, wait until at least the next session we meet. Advice: These meetings go best for you if you have an attitude open to improvement.
- We will discuss some sensitive topics and I will try to provide some context ahead of time. If you have any concerns before, during, or after a class session, feel free to contact me.

Academic Integrity:

- Do not plagiarize or cheat!
 - First, we're taking an ethics course! I want all of you to become good persons. It is an act of intellectual theft and dishonest to represent another's work as your own.
 - Second, if you do, **I will throw the book at you!** You will be punished to the full extent of the honor code.
 - Third, I won't penalize you if your paper is a day or two late.
 - Fourth, **if you end up being unoriginal and paraphrasing someone else's work, at least cite it and put it in your own words. Unoriginal papers that are at least accurate and clear can still get a C.**
- Avoiding plagiarism: (1) When borrowing an idea from a source, first paraphrase it in your own language and be sure to give a parenthetical citation (e.g. Smith (2004)). There is no penalty for "overciting". (2) When using a direct quotation, make sure that I have enough information to track it down if needed (e.g. website link, page number etc.)

Late Policy:

- Due dates are given to help facilitate grading and feedback. Aim to turn in papers by those dates for both our sakes. I will not be penalizing students if they miss these suggested deadlines. The one hard deadline is the date of the final exam scheduled for our course (though we won't have an exam). All papers must be turned in by that point.

Attendance Policy

- Excused absences will not entail automatic reductions, but frequent absences will affect your participation grade.

§5 Schedule of Readings

Some Comments

- I try to keep readings within 35 pages per meeting. If the reading goes beyond that, I will tell you where to focus and will also provide a summary or overview in class.
- You can use the suggested reasons to dive deeper or discuss them in a paper or student presentation.
- **Note – this is an extremely ambitious reading schedule for an upper level philosophy class. An introductory level class will have far fewer readings and will spend at least a full week on each of the major political theories.**

Week 1: What is Political Philosophy	1/15 Ethics in Business Course Overview, Ethical Reasoning, and <i>Succession</i>
Week 2: Normative Theory (1)	1/20 Aristotle – <i>Timmons Chapter 10</i> 1/22 Kant – <i>Timmons Chapter 8</i>
Week 3 Normative Theory (2)	1/27 Mill – <i>Timmons Chapter 5</i> 1/29 Chinese Ethics – <i>SEP Article</i>
Week 4: Recap and	2/3 Normative Theory Recap 2/5 3 Philosophical Reasoning
Week 5: Markets and Morality	2/10 Sandel: <i>What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets (Tanner Lectures)</i> 2/12 Brennan and Jaworski: <i>Markets without Limits (ch. 1, 9, 10, 12)</i> Case:
Week 6: Negotiation: Truth and Lies	2/17 Carr (1968) – <i>Is Business Bluffing Ethical?</i> 2/19 Strudler (2010) – <i>The Distinctive Wrong in Lying, Respectful Lying</i> Case:
Week 7: Employees (1): Getting a Position	2/24 Mason(2017) – “Appearance, Discrimination, and Reaction Qualifications.” 2/26 Anderson (2011) – <i>The Imperative of Integration (Ch. 7)</i> Case:
Week 8: Employees (2): Meaningful Work and Whistleblowing	3/2 Yeoman (2014) – “Conceptualising Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need.” 3/4 Davis (2003) – “Whistleblowing.” <i>Mid-Term Paper – 3/6</i> Case:
Week 9: Spring Break	3/7-3/15
Week 10: Obligations to Consumers (1): Big Data	3/16 TBD 3/18 TBD Case:
Week 11: Obligations to Consumers (2): Advertising and Safety	3/23 Johnson (2010) – “A New Take on Deceptive Advertising: Beyond Frankfurt’s Analysis of ‘BS’” 3/25 Velasquez (1983) – “Why Corporations Are Not Morally Responsible for Anything They Do.” Case:
Week 12: Obligations to Consumers (3): Price Differentiation	3/30 Marcoux (2007) - “Much Ado about Price Discrimination.” 4/1 – Zwolinski (2008) – “The Ethics of Price Gouging.” Case:
Week 13: Obligations to Society (1): Politics	4/6 US Supreme Court: <i>Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission</i> 4/8 3 Student Presentations
Week 14: Easter Break and Presentations	4/13 (Easter Break) 4/15 3 Student Presentations
Week 15: Obligations to Society (2): Corporate Social Responsibility and the Environment	4/20 Friedman (1970) – “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits.” Strudler (2017) – “What to Do with Corporate Wealth?” 4/22 TBD Case: Merck and River Blindness
Week 16	4/27 – 3 Student Presentations

Phil XXXX –Social and Political Philosophy – Syllabus
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	4/29 – Wrap Up Lunch, <i>Final Papers Due</i>
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