

## **334 Syllabus, Fall 2016**

### **PHI 334 Business Ethics**

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**Office Hours:** Wed 2-3pm, before/after class, and by appointment.

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### **Course Description:**

Business decisions are some of the hardest we will ever make. As employees, professionals, managers, investors, or entrepreneurs, we will make tough business decisions every day. Even as consumers we will “vote with our dollars” when we buy product, use, re-use, and recycle. This course attempts to help us to think deeply about the issues of wealth, fairness, politics, trade, payment, and work. The aim is that we can act well when hard decisions come.

Philosophy in general asks questions about foundations of the world and our knowledge of it: what is real, how do we know what we know, what is the meaning of life? In business, we ask about foundations: what is success? Property? Are there constraints on products and services one can provide?

These questions and more we will attempt to answer by clarifying terms, establishing secure ethical principles, being sensitive to contextual details, identifying reasonable answers, evaluating arguments for and against each reasonable answer, and coming to our own conclusions. Though we will consider arguments from Kantian, consequentialist, and religious standpoints, our official approach to these questions will be from the standpoint of traditional virtue ethics.

Each of us belongs to a tradition and a community. Our goal is to understand our own tradition and understand rival traditions, and why they disagree. We will disagree, but do so peaceably and with understanding.

The bottom line is always to think hard about hard questions, to discard wrong answers and discover and prove right answers to these questions. The hard questions will revolve around

business, wealth, justice, safety, information, incentives, globalization, etc. but may branch out to related tangents including logic, public policy, anthropology, religion, law, and more.

## **Course Goals:**

In short, our goals are:

- to understand business as part of life
- to understand business as part of applied ethics, public policy, and as a sub-discipline of ethical philosophy
- to become familiar with major ethical theories, especially: virtue ethics, utilitarianism, and deontology
- to grow intellectually by critically analyzing articles, books, studies, and news articles about business
- to understand our own ethical tradition better and make clear plans for how to make hard decisions
- Also to understand the tradition of others (religious ethics, deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics) in approaching ethical issues;
- and thereby to become more virtuous people capable of handling difficult life circumstances.

To accomplish these goals, our study will unfold in 8 units of 1-2 weeks each. Each Unit consists of (a) readings and quizzes, (b) lectures, (c) discussions, and (d) a unit paper. The readings and lectures offer analysis, the discussions and papers synthesis.

## **Course Outline**

*The online version is always up to date. Any paper version is subject to minor changes due to weather, illness, etc. Each date tells you the reading due and the topic. Each date also includes detailed lecture notes because students asked for them to help prepare.*

W Aug-24 Syllabus day

F Aug-26 Introduction to Business Ethics

M Aug-29 Basic Philosophy: Peter Kreeft, Truth

W Aug-31 Basic Philosophy: Peter Kreeft, Relativism

F Sep-2 Basic Ethics: Religion & Reason

M Sep-5 Labor Day

W Sep-7 Basic Ethics: Utilitarianism

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F Sep-9 Discussion  
M Sep-12 Basic Ethics: Kantianism  
W Sep-14 Basic Ethics: Kantianism  
F Sep-16 Discussion  
M Sep-19 Basic Ethics: Aristotle  
W Sep-21 Basic Ethics: Aristotle  
F Sep-23 Review of Ethical Theories & Exam  
M Sep-26 Inside Job Parts I-III introduction  
W Sep-28 Inside Job Parts I-IV  
F Sep-30 Inside Job Part V and discussion  
M Oct-3 Business Ethics, Methods of Business Ethics  
W Oct-5 Business Ethics, the Place of Ethical Theory  
F Oct-7 Discussion  
M Oct-10 Competitive Markets, Ideal of Capitalism  
W Oct-12 Competitive Markets, Corporate Responsibility  
F Oct-14 Discussion  
M Oct-17 Economic Justice, Executive Compensation  
W Oct-19 Economic Justice, Just Access to Health Care  
F Oct-21 Discussion  
M Oct-24 Universal Norms  
W Oct-26 Universal Norms  
F Oct-28 Discussion  
M Oct-31 Information  
W Nov-2 Information  
F Nov-4 Discussion  
M Nov-7 Incentives and Influence  
W Nov-9 Incentives and Influence  
F Nov-11 Discussion  
M Nov-14 Employee Rights  
W Nov-16 Employee Rights  
F Nov-18 Discussion  
M Nov-21 Safety, Risk, Harm  
W Nov-23 Safety, Risk, Harm  
F Nov-25 Creating Moral Organizations

M Nov-28 “Environmental Ethics and Business”  
W Nov-30 Thanksgiving Break  
F Dec-2 Thanksgiving Break  
M Dec-5 Film  
W Dec-7 Film  
F Dec-9 Last day UK  
M Dec-12 Final Exams- Final Paper/project due on December 16th by 11:59PM on Bb  
W Dec-16 Finals UK  
F Dec-18 Grades Due UK

## I. Grading

Your grade for the class will depend on your performance in each component, plus tests and applicable extra credit. To get an ‘A’: (a) read carefully every week, (b) attend and participate in class through talking and/or writing, (c) study hard for the tests, and (d) write the Unit Papers according to the given instructions.

Assessment category	Percent of semester grade
Readings (quizzes)	20%
Participation (talk, write, present)	20%
Tests (midterm, final)	30%
Unit Papers (pass/fail)	30%

## Readings

**Required Textbook:** Brenkert & Beauchamp, *Oxford Handbook of Business Ethics* Oxford, 2010. First Edition. (Should be less than \$60 new, \$40 used).

**Handouts:** (All posted online)

1. Peter Kreeft, Truth.
2. Peter Kreeft, Goodness.

## Reading Tips

- Read ahead.
- Read carefully. You will get faster, but start slow and careful.

- Try to read *and understand* the book. What is the main thesis? Is it true?
- Read actively: Take notes. Talk with each other before class.
- More tips available online.

## Quizzes

Short reading quizzes assess that you read the day's text. These are easy points. Also, read to *understand*. Come to class with thoughts, questions. Ask yourself: What is the main point? What confused me?

## Attendance

We need you here! Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken each class. (Repeated tardies count as absences.) 1 to 4 absences are “freebies” – the first four are excused no matter what. No credit lost. After the 4th, I need an excuse or points will be deducted. 5-7 absences cause major deductions; 8 is a letter grade. You are paying for this education including this class, so why wouldn't you make the most of it?

## Participation

This is a dialogue-oriented class. Every person is responsible to participate. You are expected to participate once per week at minimum, either by writing or speaking or both. **Writing Emphasis:** “Internal processors” emphasize writing. To earn participation points, you will post class reflections online every week. You may elect to speak in class as well, and may be called upon. **Speaking Emphasis:** “External processors” emphasize talking. You will be on my “go to” team to talk in class (instead of posting reflections after class).

Everyone starts at an 80% for the discussion grade; you can move up from there or down, depending on whether you speak or write once per week, pay attention, and offer helpful contributions. Come *prepared*. Read, take notes, reflect, and come ready to share your viewpoint, defend it, listen to others' viewpoints, and critique theirs.

## Critical Reading and Group Presentation

Every student will present two “critical readings.” These are days when your group summarizes the assigned article and presents your analysis. You then present your reading as a group to the class. Instructions are posted online.

**Tests:**

There is a midterm and final. The “Study Guide” with all the questions will be posted online.

**Unit Papers:**

Every student will write about 5 Unit Papers. These Unit Papers help you synthesize your own views after doing the readings and listening to lectures and participating in the discussions. This assignment is pass/fail, so follow the instructions closely. Be careful to cite your sources correctly. I will not tolerate plagiarism — unintentional or intentional. If I detect plagiarism, I will contact you. The assignment will receive a zero, and disciplinary action may follow. The instructions are posted online.

**Extra Credit:**

Those who opt for extra credit may do so. Instructions are posted online.

**Miscellany:**

1. **Bring your** textbook every day.
2. **Participate.** Challenge yourself to talk.
3. **No smartphones.** If you need to take a text message or phone call, step out, respond, and come back.
4. **Laptop/tablet users must sit in the front row.**
5. **Be respectful of others:** no teasing, and pay attention when a neighbor is talking. Don't pack up early. Don't come late. Don't talk while your neighbor is talking.
6. **Contact me.** Best method is to chat after class. I read every email but may not respond to every email. If I don't respond within three (3) business days, email again with the subject “nudge”.
7. For short, quick questions, use Twitter (keith\_buhler)
8. Disabilities can be accommodated if you are registered with the Disability Resource Center. See <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/>
9. Plagiarism has been an issue. Even unintentional plagiarism earns a zero for the assignment and, in intentional or egregious cases, failing the course and receiving a permanent mark on your academic record. You'll submit your papers to SafeAssign on Blackboard to help avoid accidental plagiarism. Don't even think about stealing someone else's thought/work.
10. **Enjoy philosophy.** We are not merely solving abstract puzzles here, but digging deeply into human thinking in a way that could change your life forever. The more you and your

fellows allow yourselves to acquire a “taste” for the material, the more inclined you will be to give it the real effort required to master it.

**Links to Readings of Interest**