

Instructor: Keith Buhler

Email: keith.buhler@uky.edu

Twitter: keith_buhler

Office Hours: TBA **Office:** Patterson Office Tower, 1402.

Required Readings

- *Oxford Handbook of Business Ethics*, Brenkert & Beauchamp Oxford, 2010. First Edition. Available at UK bookstore and online.

Course Description

Some of the toughest decisions we make have to do with making money working in a business or running a business. We will make tough decisions as employees, professionals, managers, investors, or entrepreneurs; even as consumers we will “vote with our dollars” when we buy product, use, re-use, and recycle.

This course helps us to think philosophically about business, wealth, fairness, social justice, politics, trade, payment, and work. The objective is that we can act well when hard decisions come.

When we conduct business, our whole world view is engaged. Philosophy in general asks questions about what is real, how we know what we know. It is on a continuum with investigations into science, mathematics, religion, and literature.

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that investigates right and wrong, good and bad. What is worthwhile or worthless and how to live a worthwhile life. What is good? Who is truly enviable? So, in business ethics, we ask about foundations: What is a good business? What is success? What is private and public 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

- 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.

Course Structure

To accomplish our course goals, the semester is broken into 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.

Grading

Your grade for the class will depend on your performance in each course 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	%
Readings (quizzes)	25%
Participation	25%
Unit Papers	50%

Outline (Short)

This outline tells you what is due when. A detailed outline is available online. Always check this outline for updates, as well as Canvas for quizzes and announcements. Dates are subject to minor changes due to weather, illness, teacher travel, etc. The online version is always up to date.

Week 1 Basics W Jan-11 Syllabus day (no reading)

F Jan-13 Basic Philosophy: Peter Kreeft, Truth Handout

Week 2 Moral Theories I Utilitarianism

M Jan-16 Business Ethics, Methods of Business Ethics

W Jan-18 Business Ethics, Methods of Business Ethics

F Jan-20 Basic Philosophy: Religion & Reason

Week 3 Moral Theories II Kantianism

M Jan-23 Business Ethics, the Place of Ethical Theory W Jan-25 Business Ethics, the Place of Ethical Theory

F Jan-27 Discussion

Week 4 Moral Theories III Virtue Ethics M Jan- Virtue Ethics Handout W Jan- Religious Ethics

F Jan- Discussion of Ethical Theories

Week 5 Inside Job M Jan- Inside Job (film) Parts I-III introduction

W Jan- Inside Job Parts I-IV

F Jan- Inside Job Part V and discussion

Week 6 Capitalism M Oct-10 The Idea and Ideal of Capitalism (Group 3)

W Oct-12 Corporate Responsibility and its Constituents (Group 4)

F Oct-14 Discussion

Week 7 Compensation

M Oct-17 Economic Justice, Executive Compensation 161-176 (Group 5)

W Oct-19 Economic Justice, Executive Compensation 176-191 (Group 6)

F Oct-21 Discussion

Week 8 Universal Norms

M Oct-24 Moral Issues in Globalization 305-312 (Group 7)

W Oct-26 Moral Issues in Globalization 313-325 (Group 8)

F Oct-28 Discussion

****Week 9**

Week 10 Universal Norms

M Oct-24 Moral Issues in Globalization 305-312 (Group 7)

W Oct-26 Moral Issues in Globalization 313-325 (Group 8)

F Oct-28 Discussion

Week 11 Information

M Oct-31 Deception and Information Disclosure 335-350 (Group 9)

W Nov-2 Deception and Information Disclosure 351-365 (Group 10)

F Nov-4 Discussion

Week 12 Incentives

M Nov-7 Business in Politics: Lobbying 501-516 (Group 1)

W Nov-9 Business in Politics: Lobbying 517-534 (Group 2)

F Nov-11 Discussion

Week 13 Employee Rights

M Nov-14 Discrimination, Affirmative Action, and Diversity 535-549 (Group 3)

W Nov-16 Discrimination, Affirmative Action, and Diversity 550-563 (Group 4)

F Nov-18 Whistle-Blowing, Moral Integrity 563-580 (Group 5); and 581-602 (Group 6)

Week 14 Employee Rights

M Nov-21 *Thanksgiving Break*

W Nov-23 *Thanksgiving Break*

F Nov-25 *Thanksgiving Break*

Week 15 Safety

M Nov-28 Environmental Ethics and Business (Group 7) **Unit Paper 3 Due at midnight – see instructions online**

W Nov-30 The Mirage of Product Safety (Group 8)

F Dec-2 Discussion

Week 16 Moral Organizations

M Dec-5 Organizational Integrity and Moral Climates 701-711 (Group 9)

W Dec-7 Organizational Integrity and Moral Climates 712-724 (Group 10)

F Dec-9 Film & Discussion

M Dec-12 Finals Week UK

W Dec-16 Final Paper Due by 11:59PM online.

F Dec-18 Grades Due UK

Links to Readings of Interest

1. How to invest
2. Regulation as panacea or placebo?

Boiler

{% include boilerplate %}