Business Ethics, Spring 2017 Syllabus

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Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, 12-1pm; after class; by appointment
Text: *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 business and money. As employees, managers, business owners, and even as consumers, we buy, use, create, or recycle the products of business. This course helps us to think philosophically about business, capitalism and wealth, fairness, social justice, product safety, bribery and lobbying, globalization and trade, privacy and whistle blowing. We may branch out to related tangents including logic, public policy, anthropology, religion, law, and more.

Ethics is a branch of philosophy. So we will also reflect on the basics of right and wrong. We will practice deep and careful thinking about fundamental topics and apply such thinking to business: what is worthwhile? Who is truly successful? What is private property?

Although each of us comes to this course from their own moral tradition and background, we will challenge ourselves and others with respect, understanding ourselves better, and disagreeing respectfully. We will clarify our terms, evaluate arguments for and against reasonable positions and come to our own conclusions.

Despite the abstractness of these topics, the ultimate objective is that we can act well when hard decisions come.

Goals

•   to understand business as part of life, and part of ethics, public policy, and philosophy
•   to become familiar with major ethical theories, especially: virtue ethics, utilitarianism, and deontology
•   to understand our own ethical tradition better and that of others
•   to grow intellectually by critically analyzing articles, books, studies, and news articles about business
•   and thereby to become more virtuous people capable of handling difficult life circumstances.

Scope and Sequence

The course is broken into 10 units of 1-2 weeks each.

- Unit 1. Basics of Business Ethics (weeks 1-2)
- Unit 2. Ethical Theories (3-4)
- Unit 3. Capitalism and Socialism (5-6)
- Unit 4. Relativism (7)
- Unit 5. Inside Job (8)
- Unit 6. Privacy (9)
- Unit 7. Lobbying (10)
- Unit 8. Employees (11-12)
- Unit 9. Safety (13)
- Unit 10. Moral Businesses (14-15)

Each Unit consists of (a) readings and quizzes, (b) lectures and discussions, and (c) every other unit has a paper. The readings and lectures are an opportunity to do 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)

The outline tells you the reading due each day, the topic. The outline is *subject to minor changes* for weather, sicknesses, 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 Methods and Business Ethics

M Jan-16 MLK Day

W Jan-18 Green and Donovan, "Methods of Business Ethics"

F Jan-20 Discussion of Methods

Week 3 Ethical Theories I

M Jan-23 Audi, "the Place of Ethical Theory" 46-56

W Jan-25 Audi, "the Place of Ethical Theory" 56-66

F Jan-27 Discussion of Ethical Theories

Week 4 Ethical Theories II

M Jan-30 Virtue Ethics Handout

W Feb-1 [Religious Ethics Handout]

F Feb-3 Writing Workshop for Unit Paper Disputation

Week 5 Capitalism

(Unit paper 1 - Ethical Theories, due Monday by midnight)

M Feb-6 Gaus, "The Idea and Ideal of Capitalism"

W Feb-8 Gaus, "The Idea and Ideal of Capitalism"

F Feb-10 Discussion of Capitalism and Stock Market

Week 6 Economic Justice

M Feb-13 Goodpastor, "Corporate Responsibility and its Constituents"

W Feb-15 Boatright, "Executive Compensation"

F Feb-17 Discussion of Economic Justice and CEO Pay

Week 7 Universal Norms

(Unit paper 2 - CEO pay Due Monday at midnight)

M Feb-20 Beauchamp, "Relativism, Multiculturalism, and Universal Norms" (Group 1)

W Feb-22 Gould, "Moral Issues in Globalization" (Group 2)

F Feb-24 Kreeft, "Moral Law" handout, and Discussion of Moral Norms

Week 8 Inside Job

M Feb-27 Inside Job (film) Parts I-III introduction
W Mar-1 Inside Job Parts I-IV
F Mar-3 Inside Job Part V and discussion

Week 9 Information

(Unit paper 3 - Moral Law Due Monday at midnight)
M Mar-6 Deception and Information Disclosure (Group 3)
W Mar-8 Intellectual Property Rights (Group 4)
F Mar-10 Discussion

Break Mar 13-17

Week 10 Incentives

M Mar-20 Conflicts of Interest (Group 5)
W Mar-22 Business in Politics: Lobbying (Group 6)
F Mar-24 Discussion

Week 11 Affirmative Action

(Unit Paper 4 - Deception or Lobbying, Due Monday at midnight)
M Mar-27 Boxill, Discrimination, Affirmative Action, and Diversity (Group 7)
W Mar-29 Boxill, Discrimination, Affirmative Action, and Diversity
F Mar-31 Discussion of Affirmative Action

Week 12 Employee Rights

M Apr-3 Brenkert, Whistle-Blowing, Moral Integrity (Group 8)
W Apr-5 Brenkert, Whistle-Blowing, Moral Integrity
F Apr-7 Discussion

Week 13 Safety

M Apr-10 Arnold, Working Conditions (Group 9)
W Apr-12 Hasnas, The Mirage of Product Safety (Group 10)
F Apr-14 Discussion of Safety

Week 14 Moral Organizations

(Unit Paper 5 - Affirmative Action or Safety)

M Apr-17 Bowie, Organizational Integrity and Moral Climates

W Apr-19 Bowie, Organizational Integrity and Moral Climates

F Apr-21 Discussion of Organizational Integrity

Week 15 Christmas Carol (Dead week)

M Apr-24 Writing Workshop for Term Paper

W Apr-26 Christmas Carol (film)

F Apr-28 Christmas Carol

Finals Week

M May-1 Final Paper Due by 11:59PM online.

W May-3 Reflection paper due / Extra Credit due F May-5 Grades in

Links to Readings of Interest

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

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