**PHI 334: Business Ethics**

Instructor: Eric Peterson

Room: Section 003 CB 243; Section 004 CB 203

Email: eric.peterson@uky.edu

Office: POT 1402

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 2:00-2:50 PM

**Required Materials:**

There is no required textbook. All readings, articles, or handouts will be provided through Bb or Canvas. (Please note that there is a good chance that I will opt to use Canvas instead of Bb this semester.)

Please note that one assignment will require you to view a documentary. I will do my best to (legally) help you attain a free copy (or stream); however, it is possible that you will need to rent it. (more info to come later in the semester).

**Course Overview**

This is a philosophical course where the broad content is ethical thinking about the business world at large. These issues will range from global economic issues to interpersonal issues between coworkers and employers, etc… Unfortunately in some circles business ethics is still thought of as an oxymoron. Yet I am convinced that many issues in the business world come from ethical issues. When ethics is understood properly and applied rightly, I think all of life (including business) can flourish.

**Student Learning Goals**

The purpose of this course is to enable you to critically evaluate moral problems in your life and career, by focusing on the following learning goals:

a) Students will learn *tools* for ethical reflection and evaluation.

b) Students will learn to *write* *an argument* for a position on an issue using clear writing and good argument structure.

c) Students will learn to *empathize* *with views* other than their own

d) Students will learn to *see nuance* in complex contemporary problems

e) Students will learn *important concepts* and theories in ethical theory

f) Students will learn to *have meaningful discussion* and debate with their peers through the application of the above skills to class conversation.

**Class Conduct and Participation**

This has the potential to be an enjoyable and fruitful class, but for it to be so, you must do your part! This is *not* a lecture-based course. Over half of our class time will be spent in group projects and student-led discussion. It is vital that you come to class prepared, by completing all assigned reading and coming to class with all homework completed. Most days, you will be asked to come to class with questions for the instructor or your peers.

Class participation is very important to the success of our course, so my assessment of your participation is worth 10% of your grade. If you know that participating is difficult for you, come talk to me about how to make sure your grade doesn’t suffer. I completely understand how difficult it can be to talk in class with your peers, and strive to make my classroom an environment that is inclusive and welcoming for every student.

Because this goal of inclusivity is so important to me, please consider your role in our classroom environment. Class discussion is a place for you to ask your questions, test your thoughts, and voice your perspective. It is not a free-for-all; I value participation that is thoughtful and contributes to our discussion and understanding. Furthermore, I absolutely do not tolerate comments that are racist, sexist, or otherwise carelessly harmful to your classmates. If you feel you have a legitimate question or concern that may make one of your peers feel violated, hurt, or silenced, write it down, and ask it to me in private. Controversy is a great thing – I hope to have lots of it in our class. However, comments that are harmful to classmates simply cannot be tolerated.

One final note about ‘controversy’ in our classroom. Being able to have a productive classroom discussion on controversial topics is a primary goal of this course. Articulating yourself well, listening actively, and responding respectfully are all *skills* you must work on to improve. As mentioned above, our classroom will be an open place where you should feel free to vocalize your questions and concerns. We will not be afraid of controversial questions and topics in this classroom, and it is imperative that you have the maturity to think carefully and respond intelligently about topics that may be personal or politically inflamed.

Lastly, I absolutely do not allow cell phone use – expect a steep reduction in your participation grade if you routinely text or opt out of class by using your phone. Also, laptops, ipads, etc… are very helpful tools for learning/notetaking if you are mature enough and strong enough to not succumb to the temptations (FaceBook, etc…) that arise from their use. If I feel that they are becoming more of a distraction, I reserve the right to ban their use from this class.

**Class Structure/assignments:**

*Attendance:*

After five unexcused absences, each unexcused absence will cost you 3% of your final grade (taken from participation), such that after ten unexcused absences you will receive a zero in participation, and your highest possible grade in the class will be 85%. Beginning with your tenth unexcused absence, each unexcused absence will cost you 10% of your final grade. After thirteen unexcused absences, you fail.

Please note:

Even excused absences, if exceeding 20% of the total class time for the semester, may have a negative effect, as per the University Senate. [If attendance is required by the class policies elaborated in the syllabus or serves as a criterion for a grade in a course, and if a student has excused absences in excess of one-fifth of the class contact hours for that course, a student shall have the right to petition for a "W", and the Instructor of Record may require the student to petition for a "W" or take an "I" in the course. [US: 2/9/87; RC: 11/20/87]]

*Class Presentation:*

Students will work in groups of 3 - 4. The class ‘presentation’ is actually more of a student-led discussion. The group will be expected to research and present on various issues in business ethics. You will also be responsible for assigning at least two articles for the class to read before your presentation. You will be graded two separate things: 1) your success in summarizing the material effectively to the class, and 2) your ability to keep class discussion going through your questions, comments, and concerns. Be ready to ask and field questions for 15-20 minutes after your summary, for a total presentation of 30-40 minutes. More info to come.

*Reflections:*

You will turn in two short reflection papers over the course of this semester. The first one is due rather quickly, but it is pretty easy. I want you to write a reflection answering these questions: What is business ethics and why does it matter? For this first reflection paper (1.5-2 pages), I do not want you to consult any research. I want your raw opinions, thoughts, and intuitions about the questions. Your second reflection paper (due later in the semester) will be a reflection on the same questions; however, you will now discuss these questions in light of what you have learned in the class. This paper should be 2-3 pages long.

*Exam*

You will have one exam over ethical theories. It will consist of t/f, multiple choice, and some shortanswer/essay.

*Documentary Papers:*

These papers will require you to critically interact with either one aspect of a documentary or the whole documentary (depending on the length of the documentary). Each paper will be 3-5 pages. Each paper will have a summary and a critical interaction section. In the critical interaction section you will raise ethical questions and then answer them using the philosophical approaches that we have discussed in class. The first will be over the documentary “Inside Job”, and the second will be over a documentary of your choice approved by me. More info will come in class and on Bb.

*Final Project Rough Draft:*

You will turn in a rough draft of your final project (see below) on the date it is due. I may require you to meet with me to discuss this draft.

*Final Case Study Project: (2 options)*

Option #1: Students will write up a 10-13 page case study of their own, based on a current real-world topic of their choice. They will write a factual summary of the topic, pose ethical questions of it, and answer these questions using the philosophical approaches they have practiced throughout the semester.

Option #2: Students will develop a media campaign for either an existing business or a made-up business that promotes an integration of ethics and business. More info will come on Bb.

**Academic Integrity**

In case you are unclear as to what constitutes plagiarism, a link to a paper “Plagiarism: What is it?” may be found on the Ombud web site: <http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/Plagiarism.pdf>. Plagiarism includes deliberately stealing another person’s work, quoting without citation, presenting someone else’s work as your own, and making use of academic resources that inspire your own thoughts without proper citation. If you are in doubt as to whether it is appropriate to attribute something to the source in which you found it, then it almost surely ***is*** necessary that you do so. Again, see the link above for a complete explanation of what counts as ‘plagiarism.’

If you choose to plagiarize, expect to be penalized to the fullest extent possible. This could include an automatic failing grade for the course, even on a first offense. The University’s policy on plagiarism can be found in SR 6.4.3(3) of your handbook.

**DRC Accommodation:**

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodation, please contact me **within the first two weeks of class.** In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center. Please register, if you have not done so, with the Disability Resource Center (Room 2 Alumni Gym, [jkarnes@uky.edu](mailto:jkarnes@uky.edu)).

**Grading standards:** *Due Percentage*

Participation Every Class 10%

First Reflection 09/02 5%

Second Reflection 12/04 5%

Exam on ethical theories 09/25 10%

Class Presentations TBD 15%

“Inside Job” Paper 10/19 15%

Documentary Paper 11/16 10%

Final Paper Draft 12/02 5%

Final Paper/project 12/16 25%

90-100 A; 80-89 B; 70-79 C; 60-69 D; 59 or below E.

**Schedule:** *Open to revision!*

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| Date | Topic/Assignment |
| August 26 | Introduction: Syllabus, etc… |
| August 28 | Intro to philosophical and ethical thinking |
| August 31 | Intro to writing philosophy/ Read Mill’s Utilitarianism (Link of Bb) |
| September 2 | Mill -1st Reflection paper is due |
| September 4 | Mill / Read excerpts from Kant “Grounding…” (Link on Bb) |
| September 7 | **Labor Day- No Class** |
| September 9 | Kant |
| September 11 | Kant |
| September 14 | Kant/ Read excerpts from Aristotle’s “Nicomachean Ethics” |
| September 16 | Aristotle |
| September 18 | Aristotle |
| September 21 | Aristotle |
| September 23 | Review |
| September 25 | Exam over ethical theories |
| September 28 | Intro/overview of documentary “Inside Job” |
| September 30 | Watch and discuss intro and part I of “Inside Job” |
| October 2 | Watch and discuss part II of “Inside Job” |
| October 5 | Watch and discuss part III of “Inside Job” |
| October 7 | Watch and discuss part IV of “Inside Job” |
| October 9 | Watch and discuss part V of “Inside Job” |
| October 12 | “Social Responsibility of Business?” |
| October 14 | Group 1 Presents |
| October 16 | Continue In-class discussion, group projects |
| October 19 | “Lying, cheating, trust, and honesty” “Inside Job” Paper is due by 11:59 PM on Bb. |
| October 21 | Group 2 Presents |
| October 23 | Continue In-class discussion, group projects |
| October 26 | “The ethics of advertising and marketing” |
| October 28 | Group 3 Presents |
| October 30 | Continue In-class discussion, group projects |
| November 2 | “Justice, Fairness, and Inequality” |
| November 4 | Group 4 Presents |
| November 6 | Continue In-class discussion, group projects |
| November 9 | “Is Greed Good?” |
| November 11 | Group 5 Presents |
| November 13 | Continue In-class discussion, group projects |
| November 16 | “Leadership” 2nd Paper is due by 11:59 PM on Bb. |
| November 18 | Group 6 Presents |
| November 20 | Continue In-class discussion, group projects |
| November 23 | TBD |
| November 25-27 | **Thanksgiving: No Class** |
| November 30 | “Environmental Ethics and Business” |
| December 2 | Group 7 Presents; Final paper/project draft due by 11:59 PM on Bb |
| December 4 | Continue In-class discussion, group projects Reflection 2 due by 11:59 PM on Bb. |
| December 7 | Topics TBD |
| December 9 | Meet to discuss draft |
| December 11 | Meet to discuss draft |
| December 14-18th | Final Exams- **Final Paper/project due on December 16th by 11:59PM on Bb** |