# Business Ethics (Spring 2020)

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| **Instructor** | Brendan Shea, Ph.D. | **Course number** | PHIL 2130-71 |
| **Contact Info** | [Brendan.Shea@rctc.edu](mailto:Brendan.Shea@rctc.edu)  507-722-1146 | **Prerequisites and Other Requirements** | College-level Reading and Writing |
| **Office** | M2403Q | **Class location** | Online |
| **Office hours** | Mon 9-11; Wed 2-5 | **Class time** | Asynchronous |

Welcome to PHIL 2130: Business Ethics! I’m your instructor, Brendan Shea (I prefer “Brendan”; “Dr. Shea” or “Prof. Shea” work if you are feeling formal). This is the syllabus for the course. If you have short questions that are NOT answered here, email is generally the best way to get ahold of me. For more detailed questions about the class, I’d encourage you to talk to me during office hours (either in person or over the phone), or to set up an appointment.

**Course Description:** This course will help students to develop and improve their ability to make ethical decisions in the business world. Students will become familiar with common types of ethical dilemmas that arise in business, and will learn how to apply ethical concepts to help resolve them. The course will cover stakeholder relationships, conflicts between personal morality and organizational norms, and the relationship between law and ethics. We will also discuss the social responsibilities of business regarding issues such as discrimination and diversity, the environment, and international relations (3 cr, 3 hours lecture per week)

## Course Content and Learning Outcomes

**Outline of Major Content Areas:**

1. The Basic Concepts of Business Ethics
2. Using Moral Theories to Make Practical Decisions
3. The Role of Stakeholders: Who are they? Why Do They Matter?
4. Corporate Culture and Ethical Leadership
5. Ethics and the Law
6. Ethical Issues in Marketing
7. Ethical Issues in Finance and Accountancy
8. Diversity and Discrimination in the Workplace
9. Business Ethics in a Global Economy
10. Business and the Environment

**Learning Outcomes (General):** The student will be able to:

1. Distinguish between ethical and practical dilemmas.
2. Identify common ethical issues that arise in business activity.
3. Understand how ethical considerations can be applied in practical decision-making.
4. Evaluate the cogency of arguments concerning business ethics.
5. Apply moral reasoning to particular case studies and defend the conclusions of that reasoning.
6. Formulate extended verbal and written arguments.

**Learning Outcomes (MnTC):**

Goal 6/The Humanities-the Arts, Literature, and Philosophy: The student will be able to:

1. Respond critically to works in the arts and humanities.
2. Understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within a historical and social context.
3. Articulate an informed personal reaction to works in the arts and humanities.

Goal 9/Ethical and Civic Responsibility: The student will be able to:

1. Examine, articulate, and apply their own ethical views.
2. Understand and apply core concepts (e.g. politics, rights and obligations, justice, liberty) to specific issues.
3. Analyze and reflect on the ethical dimensions of legal, social, and scientific issues.

**RCTC Core Outcomes.** This course contributes to meeting the following RCTC Core Learning Outcome(s):

* **Personal and Professional Accountability**. Students will take ultimate responsibility for achieving their educational and personal goals. They will (1) exhibit honesty and respect, (2) know policies and the consequences of their actions, (3) prioritize tasks to maintain balance, (4) be active learners, (4) face experiences and challenges with a positive attitude, (5) seek resources and services as needed, (6) maintain physical and spiritual wellness, and (7) take pride in self and in one’s work.

## Required Course Materials

* Joanne B. Ciulla, Clancy Martin, and Robert C. Solomon, 2018, *Honest Work,* 4th edition (New York: Oxford University Press).
* This course will require that you have reliable, regular internet access (to complete online quizzes, etc.).

## Grading and Course Policies

**Grading Scale:**: >=90.0 (A), 80.0-89.9 (B), 70.0 -79.9 (C), 60.0-69.9 (D), <60 (F).

Your final grade is a weighted average of the following:

* **D2L Quizzes (20%).** For textbook readings, there will be a short D2L reading quiz made up of T/F or multiple-choice questions intended to help you focus on key points in the reading. You will get TWO chances to do each quiz, and your grade will be the BEST of the scores.
* **Activities (20%).** Online students will post 400 to 600-word posts (plus a 100-word comment) to the discussion board for this portion of the grade. Online students can find the grading criteria for discussion boards below. Over the course of the semester, you should plan on posting EIGHT posts (with comments). If you do more than eight, I will keep your best grades.
* **Three Essay Exams (60% total).** Each exam will consist of three essays, each of which you can answer in 500 to 1,000 words total (1,500 to 3,000 words total). I will DROP your lowest exam score. However, everyone is required to take the first and second exams. You don’t need to take the third exam if you are happy with your grade on the first two.
* **Extra Credit (up to +2%).** There may be occasional opportunities for extra credit, which I will let you know about. For reasons of fairness, I can’t offer extra credit opportunities to individual students, so please don’t ask.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity.** Your work should be your own—please don’t use your classmates, friends, parents, internet sites, etc. to help you write your papers or answer test questions. And when you do use outside sources, make sure to given appropriate citation and acknowledgment for any words, ideas, or arguments. If the preponderance of the evidence suggests cheating has occurred (that is, if the evidence suggests that this is *more likely than not)*, you will receive a failing grade on the assignment. A second violation will lead to failing grade for the course. Please also see the RCTC statement on academic integrity later in the syllabus.

**Attendance.** Students in face-to-face classes are expected to attend class regularly, while online students are expected to participate in the class discussions and activities. If you miss more than two weeks consecutively, or 1/3 of the total class sessions, you may receive a failing grade of FW. This may endanger your ability to receive financial aid. With this in mind, it is *your* responsibility to withdraw from the class if you decide not to continue. I am willing to make exceptions if circumstances require, but you need to let me know about these in a timely manner.

### Policy on Late Work: Please read before emailing me!

**Please read the following *before* e-mailing me to request an extension on an assignment.** If you a quiz or activity due to a brief sickness, work conflict, class trip, computer malfunction, wedding, auto problem, court date, funeral, sporting event, etc., you do NOT need to email me (though it’s fine if you want to give me a heads up). Here are my policies for making up missed or late work:

* Over the course of the semester, you can make up to TWO missed activities, discussion board posts, or quizzes by writing a 500 to 700-word response on the relevant material. This response should (1) clearly explain the main ideas in your own words, and (2) offer a thoughtful, considered response to it (the review questions on the handouts are a good place to start). **They should be submitted within ONE WEEK of the missing assignment**. Full or partial credit will be assigned based on how complete/accurate your response is. A special D2L assignment folder will be set up to submit these. When submitting this, please clearly indicate:
  + Which activity or quiz you missed, and what the initial due date was.
  + What resources (textbook, lecture notes, etc) you used to prepare this essay.
* Take-home essay exams CANNOT be made up for full credit. For exams 1 and 2, your grade will be capped at 90% if it is submitted within 48 hours of the due date, and 80% if it is submitted within one week. Extensions past one week require my prior approval, and may result in additional penalties. Exam 3 cannot be submitted late.
* I will make exceptions to these policies if you can demonstrate a genuine need. Please come talk to me if anything comes up that is preventing you from succeeding in class.

ALL late work should be submitted to the D2L “Late Work” assignment folder. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED DURING THE LAST WEEK OF CLASS (again, absent exceptional circumstances).

### Discussion Board Posts (Online Students only)

For students taking the course entirely online, the “activities” portion of your grade will be determined by your participation in the class discussion board. While the details may vary a bit from week to week, here are my general expectations:

1. **Initial Posts.** Your initial post should (1) be between 400 to 600 words long and (2) show detailed knowledge of the reading/handouts/etc. (page numbers, short quotes, etc.). You’ll also need to (3) leave a comment (see below).
2. **Comment Due on Classmates’ Posts.** Within TWO DAYS after the due date of the initial post, you should review your classmates’ posts from last week, and leave (at least) ONE 100+ word comment. This comment should indicate something you thought the person did well AND offer one possible idea on something the person could expand/improve on (this can be as simple as asking them a question about something you wanted to know more about—it doesn’t require that you be mean ☺). This part really does matter, especially since this material may come up again on exams (see below):
3. **Exams.** When you are writing your exams, you are free to use material from your discussion board posts when/if it is relevant. Some discussion board posts will essentially be “rough drafts” for your exam essays (though the grading criteria for the exams is more demanding/strict).

**How will my response be graded?** The discussion board posts will be graded on a scale of 0 to 4. There are no intermediate grades (of 3.5, etc.). Here are the grading criteria.

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| Grade | Description |
| 0 | No post submitted, or plagiarism (this includes *any uncited use of information besides that provided in the notes/books*). |
| 1 | A response was submitted, but fails to address course material or add to the course discussion in a meaningful way. Very short or off topic posts may receive this grade. |
| 2 | The response falls significantly below (<50% in terms of content and/or word count) minimal expectations. Essays that simply report what “you believe” about the issue without seriously engaging the course material may receive grades of 2 or 3. |
| 3 | The response falls below (50%-99%) of minimal expectations. The post may fall short of the word count or fail to address relevant course material in sufficient detail. |
| 4 | Good response! The response meets the minimal word count, and shows significant engagement with course material. The post provides convincing evidence that you have thought carefully about this week’s material. You don’t need to get everything “right” in the discussion board post to get full credit, but it should show genuine effort. |
| Comments Penalty (-1) | Each missed, short, or inappropriate comment will result in a -1 penalty. |

### RCTC Common Policies

This course will be taught in accordance with the following policies, which apply to ALL RCTC courses. If you have any questions about these, please let me know!

**Academic Integrity Statement**. The primary academic mission of Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC) is the exploration and dissemination of knowledge, and academic honesty and integrity are integral to the academic process. Academic dishonesty - cheating, plagiarism, and collusion - is a serious offense which undermines the educational process and the learning experience for the entire college community. RCTC students are expected to understand and adhere to the concept of academic integrity and to the standards of conduct prescribed by the College’s Academic Integrity Policy. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a student at Rochester Community and Technical College is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

**Americans with Disability Act.** Rochester Community and Technical College is committed to ensuring its programs, services and activities are accessible to individuals with disabilities, through its compliance with state and federal laws, and System Policy. Appropriate accommodations are provided to those qualified students with disabilities. If you believe you qualify for an academic accommodation, please contact the Director of Disability Support Services, Travis Kromminga at 507-280-2968 or through the Minnesota relay TTY 1-800-627-3529. The office can also be reached via e-mail at [DisabilityServices@rctc.edu](mailto:DisabilityServices@rctc.edu)

**Military Friendly Statement.** Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC) is a military friendly campus, pledging to do all we can to help military veterans transition into college to complete their educational goals. RCTC is proud to be a Beyond the Yellow Ribbon campus, serving and honoring our veterans, military service members and their families. Through the Veterans Resource Center, RCTC offers student veterans an on-campus point of contact with other veterans, and program information to assist them in making a successful transition into college. For assistance, students are encouraged to contact the Veterans Assistant Coordinator, Mark Larsen, at 507-779-9375 or e-mail at [mark.larsen@state.mn.us](mailto:mark.larsen@state.mn.us), or Glen Saponari, RCTC’s VA certifying official at 507-280- 5511 or email at [VeteranServices@rctc.edu](mailto:VeteranServices@rctc.edu).

**Title IX Statement.** Sexual violence and other forms of sexual misconduct is prohibited at Minnesota State colleges and universities (Minnesota State). Any individual who has been, or is being, subjected to conduct prohibited by the Sexual Violence Policy is encouraged to report the incident. Individuals may choose to file a complaint anonymously using the online reporting tool (<https://www.rctc.edu/services/student-affairs/sexual-violence/>). Individuals who choose to file anonymous reports are advised that it may be difficult for the college to follow up or take specific action, where information is limited. For additional information please see the RCTC Sexual Violence Policy, <http://www.rctc.edu/policies/system/sexualviolence> or contact Rebecca Peine, Title IX Coordinator, at 507-285-7195 or email at [TitleIX@rctc.edu](mailto:TitleIX@rctc.edu) .

## Reading and Writing about Philosophy

Reading and writing about philosophy can highly rewarding (and even fun!), but it also can be difficult, even for people with lots of experience (even professional philosophers still find it difficult sometimes!). With this in mind, here are my expectations/suggestions with regard to the level of reading/writing in this class:

1. Philosophy as a discipline doesn’t require any “special” academic background, and philosophers have come from almost every imaginable profession: stonemasons, mathematicians, teachers, physicians, etc. However, philosophy does require the ability to ask “uncomfortable” questions about one’s own beliefs and actions, and to take seriously arguments and ideas that disagree with our own most deeply held beliefs.
2. Before starting this class, you should be confident in your ability to read and understand a college-level textbook. This does NOT mean I expect you to grasp every concept/idea right away (I know that some of this stuff is pretty tricky, and that’s why I am here to help!). However, I do expect that you will read the textbook BEFORE you come to class (or post to the discussion board, etc.), and come away with a basic understanding of main ideas. If you’re unsure about your ability to do this, get in touch with me *early* in the class so we can discuss this.
3. On average, students should expect to spend about five minutes per standard textbook page of philosophical reading, which includes the following:
   1. “Pre-reading” the chapter or article to get a sense of the structure, headings, key terms, etc.
   2. Reading the chapter carefully, stopping to take notes at least every page or so. At the minimum, your notes should include major topics addressed, definitions of key terms, important arguments or objections to arguments, and notable examples.
   3. Taking time to review the material AFTER you have finished reading a section. Basically: spend 5-10 minutes trying to review what you have learned WITHOUT looking at the text or your notes. This can help you get a better sense of what you’ve grasped well, and what you still need to work on. Research has also found that this is a key step in actually being able to remember/use the information in the future.
   4. As a general rule, techniques like highlighting or rereading are NOT very effective unless they are carefully limited. So, you don’t want to be highlighting every other sentence, or trying to re-read a whole chapter. Try to limit your highlighting to just key points, and keep your rereading constrained to parts that genuinely confuse you.
   5. I would recommend taking a brief “reading break” every 20 to 30 minutes.
4. As part of the class, you will be expected to write extended, argumentative essays. While you will be learning a bit more about how to write these, you should already be aware of basic principles of composition such as the use of **thesis statements,** how to organize your essays into **paragraphs,** and the importance of **citing** your sources using standard forms such as MLA, APA, Chicago, etc. If it has been a while since you have done this, don’t worry! There are a number of excellent resources that you can review online. I particularly recommend the Purdue Online Writing Lab (<https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html>). I’d also encourage you to look at the “Guide to Writing Philosophy Papers”, prepared by RCTC Philosophy Faculty (<https://philpapers.org/go.pl?id=SHEHTW&u=https%3A%2F%2Fphilpapers.org%2Farchive%2FSHEHTW.pdf>)
5. All told, you should be prepared to spend around 100 to 150 hours total on this three-credit class (or 6 to 9 hours per week for a 16-week semester). Very roughly (and this will vary by student), this might break down as something like the following: (a) 40-50 hours on reading, note-taking, and completing quizzes, (b) 25-30 hours working on the exams, and (c) 40-50 hours attending class (or, for online students, reading lecture notes and writing discuss board posts).

## Getting in touch with me (and what to include in an Email)

The best way to get ahold of me is by e-mail, which I will aim to respond to within ONE working day (for simple questions) or TWO working days (for more complex ones). I don’t generally check email on the weekends or holidays. If you don’t hear from me by then, please try emailing me again. In order to help me provide you with quick, effective feedback, here’s a general template for what I expect in an email.

*Dear Brendan (or Professor Shea):*

*My name is [full name], and I’m a student in [this section] of [this class]. I had a question regarding [identify quiz, textbook chapter, etc. Be specific, and include a copy of anything I might need to answer your question, including the full problem text, if applicable]. Here’s everything I’ve tried so far to figure out the answer for myself [looked at the syllabus, notes, textbook, etc.], and here’s my best guess as to the answer. Could you help me by doing the following? [Be specific in what you are asking me to do.] [Feel free to include anything else you’d like here. I’m always happy when students send along ideas/links/whatever vaguely relating to ethics and philosophy 😊]/*

As I rule, I will not respond to requests that you be exempted from class policies without very good reason (e.g., for late-work extensions outside the conditions outlined above), or to emails that lack basic identifying information (your full name, class, etc.). For long or complex questions, I highly encourage you to schedule an appointment so that we can talk (either in person or by phone). Oh, and please don’t call me Mr. Shea (That’s my dad!).

## Resources for Student success

Some helpful resources at RCTC (all of which are included with your course tuition) include the following:

* **Student Support Services/TRIO (SS 159)** provides academic support for first-generation and low-income college students, as well as those with documented disabilities.
* **Drop-in Tutoring (AT 306)** is available free of charge to *all* RCTC students. Please take advantage of it!
* **Online Tutoring** is available at [www.tutor.com](http://www.tutor.com), accessible via D2L (so, don’t go directly to the website—instead, log on to the main RCTC D2L page, and look for the link). This online tutoring option also includes a form where you can submit a paper for review (there is something like a 12-hour turn around).

## Course Calendar

Unless otherwise noted, the readings are from *Honest Work 4e.* I will let you know ahead of time if there are any changes. Most of the readings can be found in your textbook; I will make the others available to you online. The discussion board posts will generally be due on Wed (with a comment due by Friday), while the quizzes will be due Sunday (of the “next” week). Remember that you only need to do EIGHT total discussion board posts.

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| Wk | Starting (Sun) | Readings/Videos | Other Assignments |
| 1 | 1/12 | Syllabus, Intro to Ethics (Online) | Five-Fingered Intro (due Fri), Business Ethics Readiness Quiz (due Sun) |
| 2 | 1/19 | Ch 1: Everyday Ethics at Work | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 1 Quiz |
| 3 | 1/26 | Ch 2: Honesty | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 2 Quiz |
| 4 | 2/2 | Ch. 4: Justice | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 4 Quiz |
| 5 | 2/9 | **EXAM 1 (due 2/16)** |  |
| 6 | 2/16 | Ch 5: Stakeholders and Shareholders | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 5 Quiz |
| 7 | 2/23 | Ch 3. Accounting/Finance Ethics | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 3 Quiz |
| 8 | 3/1 | Ch. 6: Ethics and Technology | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 6 Quiz |
| 9 | 3/8 | **NO CLASS-SPRING BREAK** | **NO CLASS-SPRING BREAK** |
| 10 | 3/15 | Ch. 7: Ethics of Advertising | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 7 Quiz |
| 11 | 3/22 | **EXAM 2 (due 3/22)** |  |
| 12 | 3/29 | Ch. 8 Product Liability | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 8 Quiz |
| 13 | 4/5 | Ch. 9 Whistle Blowing | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 9 Quiz |
| 14 | 4/12 | Business Ethics Movie Review | DB Post (due FRI) |
| 15 | 4/19 | Ch 12: Leadership | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 12 Quiz |
| 16 | 4/26 | Ch. 15: The Good Life | DB Post (due Wed), Ch. 15 Quiz |
| 17 | 5/3 | **EXAM 3 (due 5/10)** |  |
| 18 | 5/10 | To be announced | **SEMESTER ENDS** |