Dr. Kristen Hine

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LA 4128

Office Hours: by appointment

**PHIL 371/563**

**Online Business Ethics**

**Summer 2018**

# Catalog Description

Philosophical examination of ethical issues in business. Topics include normative ethics of behavior, employment, distributive justice, and honesty in business.

*Prerequisite*

One lower-level course in philosophy or consent of instructor.

# Course Description

This course provides an examination of some of the most philosophically interesting ethical issues in business, broadly construed. We begin by examining theories in normative ethics of behavior: cultural relativism, ethical egoism, Kantianism, and utilitarianism. In unit two we focus on the ethics of employment, specifically the hiring and firing of employees, whistle-blowing, affirmative action, and sexual harassment. In unit three we discuss ethical issues surrounding overseas workers, as well as the ethics of exporting Western approaches to business. We also consider the ethics of distribution, specifically whether the way in which goods are allocated (especially economic goods) is just. We close the semester by considering the role of honesty in business: Is it ever morally permissible to lie in business, if so, when? Is advertising morally acceptable, even if it involves some deceit? To what extent (if at all) does advertising violate our autonomy? Does the fact that we are easily manipulated in systematic ways imply that there should be more extensive constraints on marketing and advertising?

# Learning Goals

The outcomes of this class are as follows: (1) students will become familiar with some of the central ethical problems in business and will learn to appreciate the distinction between a descriptive and a normative claim; (2) students will be well-versed in the different philosophical perspectives on these problems; (3) students will appreciate the complexity of the philosophical and ethical problems that emerge in business; (4) students will become familiar with the difference between a moral reason, an economic reason, and a legal reason.

This course is designed to provide students with the tools/capacities to think philosophically about the special moral issues that arise in business. My expectation is that students will leave this class with the ability to read philosophical texts, to extract theories and arguments, and to think critically about these texts. I hope that students will not only appreciate the richness and difficulty of these issues, but will also bring their own views into reflective equilibrium in light of their studies.

*Ethics Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes*

1. Gather and analyze evidence from a variety of sources pertinent to the issue under study, including materials that might support opposing points of view.

2. Evaluate the logic of persuasive rhetoric in arguments for all major positions on a topic and formulate cogent counter-arguments to each one.

3. Articulate an understanding of the ethical dimensions of significant issues or dilemmas under study.  
4. Construct and assess possible solutions to problems or dilemmas within an informed ethical and societal context.

5. Communicate arguments and conclusions effectively and clearly.

# Texts

Tom Beauchamp and Norman E. Bowie, *Ethical Theory and Business,* 9th edition.

*Undergraduate Course Requirements*

1. Midterm exam (20%). Meets outcomes 2-5. **July 2**
2. Final exam (20%). Meets outcomes 2-5. **August 7**
3. Short writing assignments (3-4 pages each)
   1. Assignment 1(10%). Meets outcomes 1-5 **June 18**
   2. Assignment 2(15%). Meets outcomes 1-5 **July 9**
   3. Assignment 3 (20%). Meets outcomes 1-5 **July 27**
4. Discussions (15%)
   1. **June 8**
   2. **June 22**
   3. **July 6**
   4. **July 20**
   5. **Aug 3**

The midterm and final exams are short essay exams. They will be timed; you will have one hour and fifteen minutes to complete the midterm exam and two hours to complete the final exam. The midterm exam will cover the material in the first half of the course, and the final exam will cover material discussed in the second half of the course.

**You must put all answers in your own words. If you use the same language used in the lecture notes, you will get a zero on the exam.**

I will provide you with a list of questions to prepare you for the midterm and the final, and I will create a discussion thread in which you will be permitted to ask me questions about the exams.

You will be required to write 3 short papers throughout the course of the semester. I will provide you with questions to guide your thinking about the papers. You should expect to do some outside research as well. Since this is a course on business ethics, your sources should come from philosophy journals, and should address ethical (not legal or economic) issues in business. Part of this assignment requires that you select appropriate sources; if you do not use the correct sources you will lose a significant number of points. As indicated below, if you do not use appropriate sources, you will receive at most a C on these assignments.

The due dates will be highlighted on the syllabus. The assignments should be 3-4 pages typed, double-spaced. **All work is to be turned in through safeassign on Blackboard.**

You will also be required to participate in a total of 5 Blackboard discussions over the course of the semester. You will be graded both on your familiarity with the reading, as well as your ability to think critically about the material.  **If your answer seems merely to repeat other answers already given, or seems to suggest that your knowledge of the readings is derived entirely from your peers’ posts, you will receive no grade higher than a D on your post.** Your answers can be informed by sources other than the readings and lectures.

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# I will use the following criteria when assigning the grades:

**Grade A:** topic is appropriate for this course;student satisfies all of the basic requirements of the assignment, demonstrates that he/she fully grasps the material, and indicates that he/she has thought very carefully about the issue being discussed. Student’s critical analysis includes a high degree of insight and creativity. The paper is well-organized, coherent, and makes use of reliable and appropriate sources. There are no typographical errors and there are no grammatical errors.

**Grade B**: student satisfies all of the basic requirements of the assignment, demonstrates that he/she has an acceptable understanding of the material, and indicates that he/she has done some critical analysis. Sources and topic are acceptable.

**Grade C:** student attempts to satisfy all of the basic requirements of the assignment, but fails to demonstrate that he/she has an acceptable understanding of the material. Analysis is present, but is weak and lacking any real substance. Topic is appropriate, but sources are not.

**Grade D:** student does not do the assigned task, but indicates that he/she has put some thought into his/her work.

**Grade F:** student does not do assigned task, demonstrates that he/she has no grasp of the material, and fails to carefully consider the work he/she turns in.

Letter grades posted on Blackboard will be worth the following points:

A: 98.5

A-:91.5

B+: 88.5

B: 85

B-: 81.5

C+: 78.5

C: 75

D+: 68.5

D: 64

F: 55

# When calculating final grades, points translate as follows:

94-100 A

90-93 A-

87-89 B+

83-86 B

80-82 B-

77-79 C+

70-76 C

67-69 D+

61-66 D

0-60 F

*Graduate Course Requirements*

In addition to the requirements listed above, all **graduate students** will be required to write a 10-page final term paper due on the last day of class.

1. Midterm exam (20%). Meets outcomes 2-5. **July 2**
2. Final exam (20%). Meets outcomes 2-5. **August 7**
3. Short writing assignments (3-4 pages each)
   1. Assignment 1(10%). Meets outcomes 1-5 **June 18**
   2. Assignment 2(10%). Meets outcomes 1-5 **July 9**
   3. Assignment 3 (15%). Meets outcomes 1-5 **July 27**
4. Discussions (10%)
   1. **June 8**
   2. **June 22**
   3. **July 6**
   4. **July 20**
   5. **Aug 3**
5. Final paper (15%)
   1. **August 7**

You must select a topic-- Is there an issue, view, theory, or case you find interesting? **The topic must be in business ethics.** I also suggest that you compile a list of articles related to this topic (Philosopher’s Index is a good resource). I will expect that you use at least 3 outside sources, and the sources must be from peer-reviewed philosophy journals.

**Organization of Paper**:

First present the view, theory, case, you are discussing.

Next, present objections to the view or theory, or problems with the case, and then reply to the objections.

Finally, give your overall evaluation of the view, theory, or case (in this section you raise your own objection to the view, if you have one).

**Your paper grade will be determined by the following**:

* 1. Is your paper well organized?
     1. Clear thesis
     2. Supporting paragraphs
     3. Concise writing
  2. Is your paper accurate?
     1. Do you correctly represent the views?
  3. Is your evaluation clear?
     1. Do I understand the problem you raised?
     2. Have you indicated to your reader (me) that your thinking on this matter is clear and objective?
     3. Have you used your research to adequately analyze the problem?
  4. Is the style acceptable?
     1. Are there any typographical errors?
     2. Are there grammatical errors?

When calculating final grades, points translate as follows

94-100 A

90-93 A-

87-89 B+

80-86 B

# 70-79 C

00-69 F

# Students who withdraw from this course will receive a grade of ‘W’ on their transcript, and it will not be factored into their cumulative GPA. Students may withdraw from the course only after the add/drop period has concluded.

*Academic Standards*

This course may be repeated only once without the prior permission of the Academic Standards Committee.

# Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is not tolerated. For an explanation of plagiarism, see the Student Academic Integrity Policy. This policy can be found at the following address: https://inside.towson.edu/generalcampus/tupolicies/index.cfm

If I determine that you have plagiarized an assignment, you will receive a grade of zero for the assignment. I will inform you of this in writing. I will send a copy of the letter to the chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religious studies. You have the right to appeal to the chair of Philosophy and Religious Studies, if you so desire.

# Late Work

Short papers should be uploaded by 11:59 PM on the date that the assignment is due.

If you are unable to submit the assignment on the date, you must have an excused absence to earn full credit for the work. I will allow you three days to complete the work. YOU MUST CONTACT ME ABOUT THIS. If you do not complete the work within this time period, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

Papers that are late due to an unexcused absence will be reduced by one full letter grade each day they are late.

You must complete both the midterm and the final exams by 11:59 PM on the date that they are assigned.

If you are unable to take the exam on the assigned date, and have an excused absence, I will allow you three days to makeup the exam. YOU MUST CONTACT ME ABOUT THIS. If you do not take the exam within this time period, you will receive a zero on the exam.

You are not permitted to makeup an exam if your absence is unexcused.

You are not permitted to submit discussion posts late unless you have an excused absence, in which case you have three days to submit the discussion post.

*Towson University Policy on Excused Absences*

It is policy of the university to excuse the absences of students for the following reasons:

* + illness or injury when the student is unable to attend class
  + religious observance where the nature of the observance prevents the student from attending class
  + participation in university activities at the request of university authorities (e.g., Intercollegiate Athletics, Forensics Team, Dance Company, etc.)
  + compelling verifiable circumstances beyond the control of the student

Students requesting an excused absence must provide documentation to the instructor two weeks prior to the scheduled absence when known in advance or as soon as possible when not known in advance. Absences that do not fall into any of the above categories are unexcused.

*Students with Disabilities*

If you need accommodations due to a disability, please contact me through email, and be prepared to provide a statement from Disability Support Services (4-2638) authorizing your accommodation.

*Email Communication*

Almost all of our communications will be through email. While I realize that this form of communication is impersonal, I expect that you will be polite and appropriate when we communicate. If you do not conform your behavior to this expectation, I will not reply to your email.

**The following is the list of readings we will do throughout the course of the semester. In addition to these readings, I will often include articles from the New York Times, or ask you to incorporate an article from the NYT in your discussion posts. I want you aware of the relevancy of this material in the business world. When I find an article of note, I will email the link to your Towson email address.**

Most readings are available in the course book; those that are not can be found on blackboard.

Course Readings

**Week 1:** Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (available on blackboard**);** Rachels,“Ethical Egoism” (blackboard**)**

**Week 2:** Feldman "Utilitarianism" (blackboard**)**; Feldman “Problems for Act Utilitarianism” (blackboard**);** Feldman "Kantianism" (blackboard**). DISCUSSION 1 DUE JUNE 8**

**Week 3:** Werhane and Radin, "Employment at Will and Due Process"; Epstein, "In Defense of the Contract at Will."

**Week 4:** Davis, “Some Paradoxes of Whistle-blowing” (blackboard**)**; Duska, “Whistle-blowing and Employee Loyalty.” **PAPER 1 DUE JUNE 18; DISCUSSION 2 DUE JUNE 22**

**Week 5:** “Lesser and O'Donohue "Normative Issues in Defining Sexual Harassment"; *Anita.*

**Week 6:** Sterba, “A Defense of Diversity Affirmative Action”; Beckwith: “The ‘No One Deserves His/Her Talents Argument for Affirmative Action’ A Critical Assessment” (blackboard**).** **DISCUSSION 3 DUE JULY 6**

**MIDTERM EXAM: JULY 2**

**Week 7:** Werhane, "Exporting Mental Models: Global Capitalism in the Twenty-First Century”; Arnold, "The Human Rights Obligations of Multinational Corporations." **PAPER 2 DUE JULY 9**

**Week 8:** Maitland, "The Great Non-Debate over International Sweatshops"; Arnold and Bowie "Sweatshops and Respect for Persons" read ONLY section VII. **DISCUSSION 4 DUE JULY 20**

**Week 9**: Introduction to Chapter 10, pp.665-673; Rawls, “An Egalitarian Theory of Justice”; Nozick, “The Entitlement Theory”;Singer, "Rich and Poor" (blackboard**). PAPER 3 DUE JULY 27**

**Week 10**: Carr, “Is Business Bluffing Ethical?” (blackboard**)**;Arrington, “Advertising and Behavior Control”;Crisp, “Persuasive Advertising, Autonomy, and the Creation of Desire” (blackboard**). DISCUSSION 5 DUE AUGUST 3**

**FINAL EXAM: AUGUST 7**

#### Bibliography and Other Resources

Business Ethics blog: http://www.businessethics.ca/blog/

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/vii.html

Wharton Business Ethics Website: <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/category.cfm?cid=11>

Philosopher’s Index (research index available through the library)

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Barry, Vincent and William Shaw. *Moral Issues in Business, 10th edition.* Thomson and

Wadsworth, 2007.

Daly, Herman and John Cobb. *For the Common Good*. Beacon Press,

1994.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Nickel and Dimed: On (not) Getting by in America.* Holt

Paperbacks, 2002.

Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Basic Books, 1974.

Rachels, James. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy, 5th edition*. McGraw Hill, 2007.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*. Belknap Harvard,

1999.

Sachs, Jeffrey. *The End of Poverty:Economic Possibilities for Our Time.* Penguin, 2005.

Sen, Amartya. *On Ethics and Economic*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1991.

Tucker, Robert (ed). *The Marx-Engles Reader, 2nd edition*. Norton & Company, 1978.

Yunus, Muhammad. *Banker to the Poor*. Public Affairs, 1999.