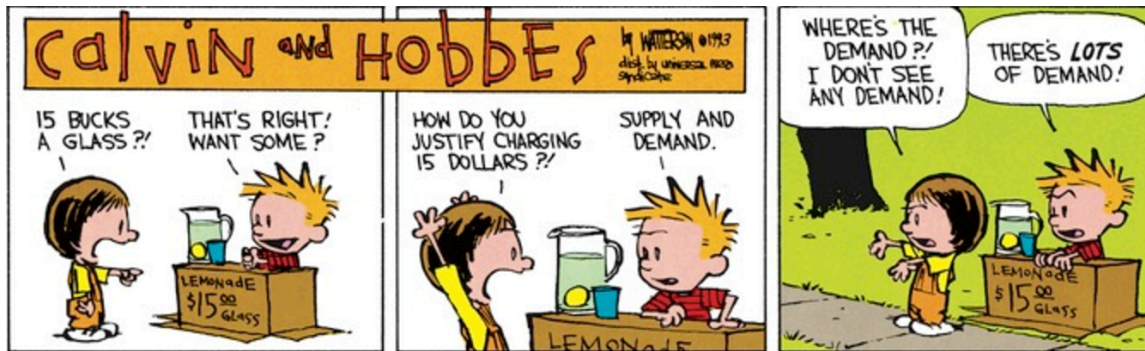


Philosophy 3314 – Business Ethics

Spring – MW 12:50-2:05 – Boylan 4109

Jesse Spafford – jesse.e.spafford@gmail.com

Office Hours: 3316B – after class on Wednesdays or by appointment.



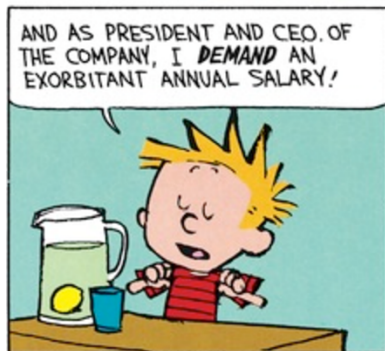
Course Goals

1. To become familiar with central questions and positions within the subfield of business ethics.
2. To enhance critical thinking skills, logical reasoning, and argumentative abilities.
3. To appreciate how ethical theory and reasoning informs our everyday choices.



Readings and Class Attendance

If you haven't taken a philosophy class before, you may find some of the readings to be challenging. When writing, philosophers tend to assume that their audience has a familiarity with certain philosophical concepts and



debates—a familiarity which some of you may not have. **Please do not be discouraged**; the relevant background for any given assigned reading will be discussed in class along with an explanation of the paper's argument. However, this means that it is very important to come to class, as you may find yourself lost without the context/explanation provided in the lectures.

Even though we will go over the readings in class, it is important to attempt to read them on your own for two reasons. First, doing the reading will give you time to think about any questions that

you might want to ask in class. Second, it is good to practice interpreting the arguments on your own so that you develop the ability to independently pursue philosophy. The lecture will then offer you the opportunity to compare your interpretation to the one presented in class.

Also, **please try to be on time for class.** Most lectures will go over key concepts right at the beginning, so arriving late will make it difficult for you to understand much of the rest of the lecture. Arriving late also distracts other people, so please be considerate.



Note Taking

It's highly recommended that you (a.) take notes (b.) by hand instead of using a laptop or some other electronic device. Regarding (a.), it is a common experience to understand an argument in the moment only to forget the details later. To avoid this problem, be sure to take notes on the lecture and other thoughts you have while in class. You will find these notes to be immensely helpful when you want to refresh your memory in the future—for example, when it's your turn to teach an introductory philosophy course.



With respect to (b.), there is evidence that taking notes by hand enhances both retention of the material and one's ability to answer conceptual questions about the subject matter (Mueller & Oppenheimer 2014).

Further, with written notes there is no temptation to do things like send emails. Given how the lectures are structured, even a short lapse of attention might leave you lost for the rest of the discussion. The use of electronic devices—with all the associated distractions—is, thus, strongly discouraged.

If you do elect to use an electronic device, I ask that you sit in the back of the classroom so that the screen will not serve as a distraction to others sitting behind you.

Democracy in the Classroom

This course is taught for the benefit of those taking it. Further, those taking the course are assumed to be the best judges of whether or not they are getting what they want out of the course. Thus, in this class students are

given the final say regarding all matters that pertain to the content and structure of the course (grading excluded, unfortunately).

This means that students are free to propose any changes to the course that they would like (e.g., changing what we read; switching from lectures to moderated small-group discussions, etc.), with a class vote then determining if those changes are to be adopted.

Any proposed changes to the course must be publically announced (at the end of class) one week prior to a vote to allow for adequate time for discussion. Anyone who wants to propose a change should email me before class so that I know to leave some time at the end for their announcement.



To limit tyranny of the majority while still adhering to a democratic and fair voting procedure, the voting process will go as follows:



1. Each person will write down their vote on a piece of paper.
2. All votes will be placed in a container.
3. One person's vote will be drawn at random.
4. That vote will determine the outcome.

(Note: any proposed changes to this voting procedure must be approved by all members of the class—or at least not rejected by any member. Similarly, once an issue has been voted on, the outcome of the vote can only be changed if all members of the class approve of the change.)

Grades

Grades will be deemphasized in this course in favor of detailed written comments. Final grades will reflect the percentage of assignments successfully completed where “successful completion” requires simply that a good-faith effort has been made to complete the assignment (with the instructor being the final arbiter of what counts as a “good-faith effort”).

Thus, a student who successfully completes only two of the five assignments will receive a 40% or an F. Any student who successfully completes three assignments will receive a 60% or a D minus. Four completed assignments

will result in an 80% or a B minus. And those who successfully complete all five assignments will receive an A.

Assignments

Students will be asked to take **two in-class exams**—a midterm and a final—and complete **two writing assignments** and **one paper**. The first writing assignment will state the thesis of one of the readings. The second writing assignment will both state a thesis from one of the readings **and** explain the argument for that thesis. The final paper will do both of these things **and** raise an objection to that argument.

The first assignment will be a few sentences long; the second will be 600-800 words, and the final paper will be between 800-1200 words. The exams **will not be graded on a curve** (see the previous section for the grading policy.)

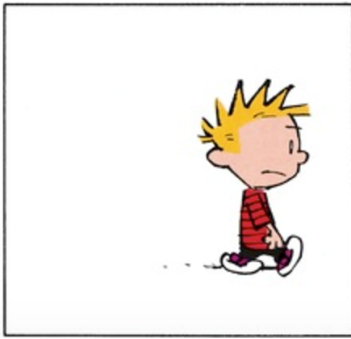


Late papers will not be accepted without an adequate explanation of why the assignment was not submitted prior to the due date. Make-up exams will only be offered under special circumstances (e.g., illness, death in the family, etc.). Paper rewrites are encouraged.

Brooklyn College Disability Policy

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services (CSDS). Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell by calling 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with CSDS, please provide the instructor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with them as soon as possible.

Brooklyn College Policy on Plagiarism/Cheating



The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>.

If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits that violation, the faculty member **must** report the violation.

Brooklyn College Nondiscrimination Policy

To read Brooklyn College's complete set of policies regarding nonattendance on the basis of religious belief—as well as nondiscrimination toward those with disabilities—please see:



<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/about/initiatives/policies/nondiscrimination.php>

Schedule of Readings

This schedule is tentative and subject to revision based upon what we cover in class as well as democratic procedure.

Introduction

1/29 – What is Business Ethics?

1/31 – Arguments and Logic

Readings: Stephen F. Barker, “Improving Your Thinking,” and Steven M. Cahn, “Necessary and Sufficient Conditions.”

Ethics in Business

2/5 – Consequentialism

Reading: Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality.”

2/7 – Consequentialism in Business

Reading: Benajmin Todd and William McAskill, “Is It Ever Okay to Take a Harmful Job in Order to Do More Good?”

2/12 – **NO CLASS** (Lincoln’s Birthday)

2/14 – Kantianism in Business

Reading: Norman Bowie, “A Kantian Approach to Business Ethics.”

2/19 – **NO CLASS** (Presidents’ Day)

2/20 – The Grounds of Kantianism

Reading: Christine Korsgaard, “On the Sources of Normativity”

2/21 – Aristotelian Ethics

Reading: Philippa Foot, “Virtues and Vices.”

2/26 – Aristotelian Ethics in Business

Reading: Robert Solomon, “Corporate Roles and Personal Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach to Business Ethics.”

The Market

2/28 – The Promise of Markets | First Writing Assignment Due

Readings: Erik Olin Wright, “How Markets Work” (ch. 3)

Friedrich Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society”

3/5 – The Perils of Markets

Reading: Erik Olin Wright, “Market Dilemmas” (ch. 4)

Distributive Justice

3/7 – Liberalism

Reading: John Rawls, excerpt from *A Theory of Justice*.

3/12 – Libertarianism

Reading: Robert Nozick, excerpt from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.

3/14 – Midterm Exam

3/19 – Socialism

Reading: G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* (excerpt)

3/21 – Left-Libertarianism

Reading: Michael Otsuka, “Self-Ownership and Equality: A Lockean Reconciliation.”

Markets and Freedom

3/26 – Markets as Freedom Promoting I

Reading: Elizabeth Anderson, *Private Government* ch. 1

3/28 – Markets as Freedom Promoting II

Reading: Robert S. Taylor, “Market Freedom as Antipower.”

4/2 – NO CLASS (Spring Break)

4/4 – NO CLASS (Spring Break)

4/9 – Markets as Freedom Diminishing I | Second Writing Assignment Due

Reading: Elizabeth Anderson, *Private Government* ch. 2

4/11 – NO CLASS (conversion day)

4/16 – Markets as Freedom Diminishing II

Reading: G. A. Cohen, “The Structure of Proletarian Unfreedom”

The Meaning and Value of Work

4/18 – Alienation

Reading: Karl Marx, *The Paris Manuscripts* (excerpt)

4/23 – Exploitation

Reading: G. A. Cohen, “The Labor Theory of Value and the Concept of Exploitation.”

Intermediate Theories

4/25 – Stockholder Theory

Reading: Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Profits.”

4/30 – Stakeholder Theory

Reading: R. Edward Freeman, “A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation”

5/2 – Market Failure Theory

Reading: Joseph Heath, “Business Ethics Without Stakeholders”

5/7 – Social Contract Theory

Reading: Thomas Donaldson, “Constructing a Social Contract for Business”

Corporate Wrongdoing

5/9 – Inside Job (part I) | **Final Paper Due**

5/14 – Inside Job (part II)

Wrap-up

5/16 – Final Exam Review and Closing Remarks

Final Exam Date: Wednesday, May 23 from 1:00-3:00 pm.