

Business Ethics

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Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to examine central issues in business ethics. We will do that by exploring the most influential ethical schools and then by looking at some of the prevalent debates in the business world. This theoretical background provides the philosophical tools necessary for our investigation and reflection on those challenging moral issues.

The syllabus below provides an outline of the course and a list of corresponding readings. *Note that the syllabus is subject to change and supplementation, and that it is the responsibility of each participant to follow these changes.*

Texts: *The Elements of Moral Philosophy / Rachels*
Business in Ethical Focus: An Anthology

Course Work: Mid-Term (20%), Final take-home exam (60%) attendance and participation 20%)

Course Requirements and Policies:

Preparation and participation – students are expected to have carefully read the assigned readings prior to the class meeting in which they are to be discussed, and are expected to participate in discussions regarding the materials. An essential part of this course is critical thought and discussion of philosophical issues – that is, doing philosophy, not just reading about it. Note that a crucial part of participation involves respecting other people in the class as persons and for their views.

Exams – we will have a final, take-home exam and an in-class mid-term exam. Specific details will be provided closer to the exam dates.

Plagiarism – plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course. Please see me if you have any questions about proper citation or incorporation of other texts into your work.

Course Outline:

Week 1: Introduction to Ethics and Business Ethics

Amartya Sen “Does Business Ethics makes Economic Sense?”
Utilitarianism: Chapters 6&7 in Rachels

Week 2: Ethical Theories

Kantian Ethics: Chapter 8&9 in Rachels

Week 3: Ethical Theories

Care and Virtue Ethics: Chapters 11&12 in Rachels
Robert C. Solomon “Business Ethics and Virtue”

Week 4: Review and Mid-Term Exam

Week 5: Corporate Social Responsibility

Milton Friedman “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profit”
Edward Freeman “A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation”
George Brenkert “Private Corporations and Public Welfare”
Joseph Heath “Business Ethics Without Stakeholders”

Case Study1: IDB

Week 6: Environmental Responsibility

Michael Sagoff “At The Monument to General Meade, or On the Difference Between Beliefs and Benefits”
Kristin Shrader-Frechtt “A Defense of Risk-Cost-Benefit Analysis”
Deborah C. Poff “Reconciling the Irreconsilable: The Global Economy and the Environment”
Tibor R. Machan “Environmentalism Humanized”

Case Study 3: BP and the Oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico/Blackfish

Week 7: Globalization and Its Ethical Significance

Thomas Donaldson “The Ethics of Risk in the Global Economy”
Manuel Velasquez “International Business, Morality and the Common Good”
Thomas Donaldson “Values in Tension: Ethics Away From Home”

Case Study 2: The Global Fashion Industry/High Tech

Week 8: Rights and Obligations of Employers and Employees

Richard T. De George “Whistleblowing”

Robert A. Larmer “Whistleblowing and Employee Loyalty”

Anita M. Superson “The Employer-Employee Relationship and the Right to Know”

Tibor R. Machan, “Human Rights, Workers’ Rights, and the Right to Occupational Safety”

Case Study 4: Remedia

Week 9: Distributive Justice

Classical Theories of Contracts, Property, and Capitalism

Excerpts from Hobbes, Locke, Smith and Marx

Contemporary Theories of Distributive Justice

Excerpts from Rawls and Nozick

Week 10: Justice and Fair Practice

Edwin C. Hettinger “What is Wrong with Reverse Discrimination?”

Louis P. Pojman “The Moral Status of Affirmative Action”

Anita M. Superson “A Feminist Definition of Sexual Harassment”

Stephen Griffith “Sexual Harassment and the Rights of the Accused”

Case Study 5: Google sexual harassment

Week 11: Advertising and Marketing

Tibor R. Machan “Advertising: The Whole Truth or Only Some of the Truth?”

Roger Crisp “Persuasive Advertising, Autonomy, and the Creation of Desire”

Robert L. Arrington “Advertising as Behavior Control”

Lynn Sharp Paine “Children as Consumers: An Ethical Evaluation of Children’s Television Advertising”

Case Study 6: Photoshop