

Professional & Business Ethics (LI 211)

Phil 3510 CRN: 10851

Fall 2009 Course Outline and Syllabus

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Course Outline: The Study of Business Ethics

In this business ethics course, moral issues will be examined in business institutions, policies, and behavior. Sometimes this examination focuses largely on the application of ethical norms of individuals to business activity (e.g., one should be honest in business dealings just as one should be honest in personal relationships). At other times, the discussion is directed more toward business as a corporate member of society - a "guest," as it were- whose purposes, actions, and obligations should be measured, in part at least, by moral standards. This view of business ethics may be seen as a study of corporate responsibility or the social responsibility of business. In this course, we will address some of the many regulated and unregulated social responsibilities of business, whether to employees, consumers, stockholders, the public or to the environment.

At the turn of the 19th Century, hard work and high profits were the recognized standards for business activity. Indeed, the early philosophy of "economic self-interest" provided the ideological formula for business growth and profit maximization. Moreover, most business owners came to believe that hard work, accumulated profits, and wealth were morally connected. Little thought, on the other hand, was given to fair labor practices, worker safety or affirmative action. Businesses were known to pollute drinking water, spoil natural resources, damage the air, or manufacture unsafe products. Accumulating capital for the corporation, its shareholders, and themselves was the primary responsibility of business owners. Today, many businesses take the trust of social responsibilities seriously. Legislation at all levels has contributed to this development.

Objectives

1. To understand the impact of business solutions in a global and social context
2. To recognize and analyze the role that science and business play in contemporary issues
3. To acquire a knowledge of social and historical context to put contemporary issues in perspective
4. To appreciate differing perspectives and integrate your views with those of others
5. To sharpen your reading, writing, speaking, and discussion skills.
6. To critically read and respond to issues in business and organizational ethics.
7. To understand differences between personal and business ethics.
8. To develop personal and professional codes of integrity and responsibility.
9. To apply key features of capitalism and profit motive to the concepts of ethics.
10. To understand today's economic challenges including changing attitudes toward work.
11. To apply principles of social and moral responsibility to business concerns.
12. To understand obligations to the firm as well as problems in conflicts of interest.
13. To adopt standards in keeping with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

The Text

Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Business Ethics and Society, Tenth Edition. By Lisa Newton and Maureen M. Ford. NY:McGraw Hill, 2008.

Grading

<u>Component of Course Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>% of Course Grade</u>
Attendance & Participation in class	100	10%
Responses to readings (15 @ 10 points each)	150	15
Research Assignment	100	40
Service Learning Project	100	10
Attendance at Ethics Center& other events	50	5
Presentation on one of the issues	100	10
Midterm Examination	100	10
Final Examination	100	10
Totals	800	100%

Grades will be based on the following percentages:

A	' 94 - 100%	C	' 72 -75%
A-	' 90 - 94%	C-	' 68 -72%
B+	' 86 - 90%	D+	' 65 -68%
B	' 82 - 86%	D	' 60 -65%
B-	' 79 - 82%	D-	' 57 -60%
C+	' 75 - 79%	E	' 57%

Response to readings

A response is needed to fifteen of the readings in the text book. In this one page paper, explain the major ethical issues involved and why you think the resolution is acceptable or not acceptable. A response is due every Monday. The response reflects your engagement in the ethics readings, cases and activities. **(100 pts.)**

Attendance & Participation

Your attendance and participation will be noted. **(100 pts.)**

Research Assignment

The research assignment is worth a total of 100 points. In order to benefit from this course, one must listen to, read about, reflect on and develop different ideas. That is why in this class there are lectures, discussions, readings and case development. This Research Assignment is another form of activity that is meant to give you the opportunity to explore in greater depth your reaction to a modern ethical issue and to share your findings with others. With this assignment, you will therefore have the opportunity to do research and analysis on your own and report back to your group on what you have done. Finally, you will turn in your analysis two weeks before class ends on Dec. 1.

The Written Result

Your analysis should be between eight and ten pages in length, double spaced. This is a senior year course, and the paper should reflect a deep understanding of your analysis. You will be utilizing the presentation and drafts that you have prepared to this point. The paper must include a clear approach to how you have analyzed the topic. Thus, there should be a statement of the facts of the situation, the ethical issues, who the primary stakeholders are, what are possible alternative actions, and the ethics of each of these alternatives (bringing to bear various perspectives such as "a "utilitarian" perspective, a "rights" perspective, a "justice" perspective, etc.) And, you should identify any practical constraints that might be present (you need to be realistic!). Finally, you should say what action you think should be

taken, with emphasis on which ethical theories make the most sense to you as they relate to this situation. A traditional bibliography will be at the end of the paper. Guidelines will be given in class for a well written paper.

The written research paper will be worth 100 points. It will be due on December 1.

Total for Research Assignment Process -----100 points

Service Learning Project

Ethics is often defined as avoiding harm. Another definition is doing good or beneficence. You are required to pick an area of service in the community and spend ten hours in free service. This service can not be your church calling, working for your political party, or doing family favors. You should do these things anyway. The project is cleared with Elaine through a one page proposal on October 3 (20 pts.) **Presentations to the class and discussions will take place on December 5 and 8.** (40 points for 2 page description of the project and its ethical implications. 40 pts for presentation). The discussion must focus on the ethical dimensions of the particular project.

Special Presentations in Professional and Business Ethics:

UVSC sponsors numerous speakers and panel discussions which have the focus of ethics in business and the professions. You may attend five of these. Submit a one page analysis of the event you attended. Detail the connections to professional, business or social ethics. You will receive 10 points for attending these out of class activities. A schedule is attached of the some of the events that will be held this semester.

Class Presentation: Each student will make a twenty minute power point presentation on one of the topics in this class. The presentation should cover the main points of the reading. A signup sheet will be passed around the room on September 3. Please know your topic by this date.