

PHIL 1170: BUSINESS ETHICS*Sample Syllabus*

Course Description: We used to sell humans as slaves. We don't anymore. What changed? We came to recognize that this practice is immoral or unethical. Ethical rules apply to business just as they apply to other parts of life. In this course, we will address questions about the ethics of business. In Unit 1, we will study major moral theories, focusing on what they have in common and what they imply about business ethics. In Unit 2, we will get a broad overview of major business ethical issues. In Unit 3, we consider three business ethical issues in depth. Some questions we will discuss include:

1. Why must we ever act against our self-interest?
2. What is the nature of morally permissible action? What is justice?
3. What are the ethical responsibilities of businesses, managers, and employees?
4. What is the scope of the market? What is it moral to sell? What is it moral to buy?
5. What are the moral obligations of businesses in light of massive inequality?

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate major moral theories and their major attractions/objections.
2. Articulate central business ethical problems, major solutions, and arguments.
3. Identify business ethical issues not discussed in this class.
4. Reconstruct and critically evaluate ethical arguments.

Contact

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Office Hours: T: 2-3; Th: 10-11; By appointment.

Texts

Required: Audi, Robert *Business Ethics and Ethical Business*. (ISBN: 9780195369106)

All other works will be available online.

Assignments

Case Study Presentations:	6%
3 Reading Responses:	17%
6 Philosophy in Life Short Papers:	17%
3 Exams:	60%

Case Study Presentations

You will give x case study presentations throughout the semester. (The value of x depends on enrollment.) At the beginning of class on your assigned day, you will give a 5-minute presentation in which you (i) briefly summarize a current business ethical issue found in the media, and then (ii) apply some topic that you've learned in class to the issue. For instance, you might use the case to show why you believe some moral view is incorrect, or you might use it to explain some distinction. It's up to you. (Feel free to discuss your plan with me beforehand.) We will spend another 5-10 minutes discussing the case as a class.

Reading Responses

For each unit, pick three of the assigned readings. For each of these readings, do three things: First, write a comprehension question on the reading—a question to which someone who fully understood the reading should know the answer. Second, write a critical thinking question—a question that asks someone to engage with one of the arguments of the reading. Third, answer each of these questions. These assignments will be due two classes before the exams are due. They provide incentive to keep up with and engage with the readings. Reading Responses can usually be completed in 2 (single-spaced, normal font, normal margins) pages. Reading Responses longer than 4 pages will not be accepted. Further *Guidelines* on this assignment are available on the course website.

Philosophy in Life Short Papers

With an eye to helping you develop a disposition for finding the philosophical in the familiar, you will write 6 Philosophy in Life papers. In each paper, you will describe an experience you have had

during this course or something you've read about, and analyze it in terms of the concepts you have learned in the course. These papers can take many forms (e.g., Compare/Contrast Theories, Use your experience to argue against a theory, etc.). They should be typed and should be no more than 1 page. These can be, but need not be, more personal and/or reflective than the Case Study presentations. These assignments give you a chance to demonstrate what you're learning in this course. The later papers will be worth more than the earlier papers. This gives you a chance to get a sense of what I'm looking for and to improve by taking my comments into account. **You will resubmit all of your papers at the end of the semester, so I can track your improvement.**

Exams

At the end of each unit, you will take an exam. Exams are **cumulative**. Although students tend to dislike cumulative exams, they actually **benefit** students and **promote learning**. Cumulative exams allow students (1) to learn from their mistakes, (2) to demonstrate improvement in understanding, and (3) to be rewarded for this improvement. Memorization is static and discrete; learning is dynamic and continuous. Cumulative exams assess and reward learning rather than mere memorization.

SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: ETHICAL THEORY

Week 1 Why be moral?

Plato, "Ring of Gyges" *Republic, Book 2*

Shafer-Landau, Psychological Egoism

Shafer-Landau, Ethical Egoism

Case Study: Martin Shkreli

Weeks 2-3 Moral Theories

Rachels, The Challenge of Cultural Relativism

Smart, Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism

Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Selections.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Selections.

Ross, What Makes Right Acts Right?

Rawls, Justice as Fairness

UNIT 2: BUSINESS ETHICS OVERVIEW

Weeks 4-5

Audi, *BEEB* Part 1: The Role of Business in a Free Democracy

Weeks 6-7

Audi, *BEEB* Part 2: The Ethics of Internal Management

Weeks 8-9

Audi, *BEEB* Part 3: Ethical Problems of Global Business

UNIT 3: BUSINESS ETHICAL ISSUES IN DEPTH

Weeks 10-11 What ought to be for sale? The Scope of the Market

Anderson, The Ethical Limitations of the Market

Satz, *Why Some Things are Not For Sale*. Selections.

Anderson, Is Women's Labor a Commodity?

Shrage, Feminist Perspectives on Sex Markets

Norcross, Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases

Weeks 12-13 Inequality, Opportunity, and Affirmative Action

Kirschenman & Neckerman, 'We'd Love to Hire them, But...': The meaning of Race for Employers

This American Life Episode: The Problem We All Live With

Ezorsky, Overt and Institutional Racism

Anderson, Segregation and Social Inequality

Anderson, Racial Segregation and Material Inequality

Anderson, Understanding Affirmative Action

Week 14

Student Choice:

(1) Tax Havens (2) Advertising, Branding, and Bias (3) Healthcare, Religion, and Gay Marriage (4) Environmental Responsibilities