

PHIL 322: Business Ethics Online, Fall 2018

Instructor

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Office hours: By appointment only, in Social Sciences room 130 or via Adobe Connect

Course Description

The activities of businesses affect our lives in myriad ways. We rely on businesses for the goods and services that we need. Businesses impact our communities and the natural environment. And for those of us pursuing careers in the private sector, businesses provide our workplaces and livelihoods. The conduct of businesses and their employees is therefore incredibly important in determining the shapes of our lives. Yet in practice we know that business actors sometimes behave quite badly. In other cases we find great controversy over what would count as upstanding behavior in the first place.

This course will provide an introduction to the ethical issues raised by business activity. We will explore the foundations of moral theorizing as well as a variety of challenging questions arising from businesses' impacts on their customers, the environment, and their own employees. And we will explore a number of issues that can confront individuals in their working lives, ranging from wage rates to whistleblowing and beyond. By the end of this course, you will have engaged with many of the most important topics in the field of business ethics, and you will have developed a firm foundation for pursuing a career that is compatible with maintaining a clear conscience and having a positive impact on those who depend on your choices.

Learning Objectives

A major goal of this course will be to provide you with a general background in ethical theory, as well as a broad familiarity with many of the most serious ethical issues intersecting with business practice. Regardless of whether you ultimately end up pursuing a career in business, a deep understanding of these matters will help you to be a better person, professional, and citizen. This course will also have some more concrete, practical goals as well. By the end of this semester, you will be better equipped to comprehend sophisticated ideas down to the fine details, to articulate and defend your values and beliefs, and to write clear, concise documents that present both careful analyses of difficult issues and your own recommendations for addressing them. The capabilities that you will hone in this course will serve you for the rest of your life.

Textbook

Our course will rely heavily on the textbook, *Business Ethics*, 9th Edition, by William H. Shaw, which is published by Cengage. You can find the book at cengagebrain.com by searching for **Business ethics, 9th edition**, William H. Shaw. The book is also available on Amazon. You needn't purchase a hardcopy of the book – you may use an e-book if that suits your needs best. I encourage you to decide for yourself what option for acquiring the textbook will best serve your needs. However, it is critical that you purchase the 9th Edition of the textbook, since earlier editions have importantly different contents and

will not enable you to complete all of the assignments for this course. Please do not waste your money by accidentally buying the wrong edition of the textbook!

Teaching Format

This course will be delivered completely online through the university's D2L platform. This means that it will be especially important for you to understand what is expected of you in order to succeed. The first important expectation will be that you know how to use the D2L platform and our course's website. To that end, the first week of the course will contain a brief orientation to online education provided by the University of Arizona Office of Digital Learning. If you encounter any problems completing this orientation, please let me know right away.

Our course will be composed of seven "modules," each of which will last for two weeks. Each module will have a common structure. At the beginning of the module, you will be provided with a list of readings, lectures, and other course content. You will need to review these materials by the first Thursday of the module, when you will be asked to complete a brief quiz covering the main points of that module's material. Then, over the course of the second week of the module, you will be asked to participate in a structured discussion of a concrete case that applies the core ideas from the module to a real-world ethical puzzle.

Lecture Content

Most of the video lectures will be by a previous instructor for this course, Danny Shahar (PhD, University of Arizona, 2017), though I will be updating and supplementing these lectures as I deem appropriate.

Office Hours

Sarah Raskoff will be available for office hours by appointment only.

In person: in room 130 of the Social Sciences Building

Online: via Adobe Connect on d2l. To use Adobe Connect, use the "My D2L Tools" tab in the navbar. Once you are in Adobe Connect, you will be able to join the office hours meeting. (If you have not used Adobe Connect before you will be given instructions for downloading the Adobe Connect application to your computer. You will only have to do this once). Once you have joined the office hours meeting, we can converse either by text, audio, or video – in whatever mode you are most comfortable.

Assessments

Your grade in this course will be determined on the basis of several different kinds of assessment. Descriptions of these assessments are provided below.

Syllabus Quiz and Personal Introduction

During the first week of the semester, you will be completing a brief orientation to the course and our D2L website. This orientation will contain a short quiz on the course syllabus and a discussion board assignment inviting you to introduce yourself to your classmates. The quiz and personal introduction assignment will each be worth 2 points and will be due at 11:59pm on Sunday, 8/26.

Module Quizzes

Over the course of this semester, you will complete seven module quizzes. Each module quiz will be worth a total of 4 points, and will consist primarily, if not exclusively, of multiple choice questions. The deadline for each module's quiz will be 11:59pm on the first Thursday of the module. At the end of the semester, your lowest quiz score will be dropped from your final grade.

Structured Discussions

Each module will contain a structured discussion assignment. These assignments will each be worth 8 points. The discussions you will be having through these assignments will not be like ordinary conversations. Instead, in each module you will be assigned a particular role in the module's discussion. "Openers" will be provided with a discussion prompt asking them to develop a particular perspective on a case drawn from the textbook. They will need to post their comments on the module's discussion board by 11:59pm on the Sunday beginning the second week of each module. "Responders" will be provided with a different prompt and asked to present a competing perspective on the same case before 11:59pm on the Tuesday of the same week. "Closers" will be tasked with wrapping up the week's conversations before 11:59pm on the Thursday of the same week by synthesizing others' posts and articulating their own positions on the assigned case. Every module, these roles will rotate among the members of the class so that each of you will have several opportunities to be Openers, Responders, and Closers by the end of the semester. Specific instructions for completing these assignments will be provided in each module.

Synthesis Paper

Your final assignment of the semester will be a short paper of roughly 2,000 words (not including notes and citations), due at 11:59pm on Monday, 12/10. The paper will be worth 16 points. Your paper will engage with one of the cases covered in our discussion assignments during the semester: you will present what you take to be the most important issue raised by the case, consider multiple positions that one might take in answering that question, and defend the particular answer that you find most compelling. You may draw on your group's discussion posts in composing your analysis, though a successful paper will not simply regurgitate other students' ideas. Detailed instructions for completing this assignment will be provided on D2L.

Grades

This course will be graded on a standard 100-point scale ($\geq 90\%$ =A; $\geq 80\%$ =B; $\geq 70\%$ =C; $\geq 60\%$ =D; $< 60\%$ =E).

A breakdown of graded assessments can be found below:

Syllabus Quiz: 2 points

Personal Introduction: 2 points

Module Quizzes (7 quizzes x 4 points each, lowest score dropped): 24 points

Structured Discussions (7 assignments x 8 points each): 56 points

Synthesis Paper: 16 points

Total: 100 points

Grade Appeals

If you feel that you have received a grade that does not accurately reflect the quality of the work you submitted, you may appeal for a re-grade. All such appeals must be submitted no sooner than 48 hours and no later than two weeks after your grade is returned. In your appeal, you must provide a compelling

explanation *in writing* for why you think your grade should be changed. Please be aware that there is no guarantee that a re-graded assessment will merit a higher score than was initially assigned, and it may even end up with a lower score.

If, as the semester proceeds, you are not satisfied with your overall performance in the course, please be proactive and contact me for guidance on how to improve. The final grade you will earn at the end of the semester will be based solely on the scores you earn on assessments throughout the course, and will not be alterable at the end of the semester through extra credit work or my favor.

Late Work

I hope and expect that you will be able to complete all of the assessments for this course on time. However, some assessments will be eligible to be submitted for partial credit after their deadlines have passed. Personal introductions submitted after the deadline will be penalized 0.25 points and an additional 0.25 points every 24 hours until submission. For discussion assignments, these penalties will each be 1 point. For the synthesis paper, they will each be 2 points.

Since our module quizzes will be set up to release questions and answers immediately following their deadlines, I will not be able to allow students to take these quizzes late. Please make sure to complete each module's quiz early so that you do not end up with a zero in the event of an unexpected last-minute obstacle.

Student Conduct

Our course will rely heavily on the contributions of students to make it run. Accordingly, you will be expected to conduct yourself with the utmost civility and open-mindedness, and to treat your fellow classmates with respect, at all times. Students who fail to hold themselves to an acceptable standard of conduct may be asked to stop participating in non- required discussion activities and may be dropped from the course. In keeping with the Arizona Board of Regents' Student Code of Conduct, ABOR Policy 5-308, threats of physical harm to any member of the university community—including to one's self—will be seen as particularly serious offenses. For more information about the university's policy regarding threatening behavior, see <http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>.

It should be stressed that my insistence on respectful classroom conduct is not a demand for conformity. Students in this course are free to express their reasoned disagreement with any claim made by me, by the course materials, or by their fellow classmates, within the bounds of respectfulness. The purpose of imposing constraints on behavior is to protect and foster an environment in which views of all kinds can be discussed and analyzed in a safe and constructive manner.

The UA's policy concerning Class Attendance, Participation, and Administrative Drops is available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/class-attendance-participation-and-administrative-drop>

The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice will be accommodated where reasonable: <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy>.

Absences preapproved by the UA Dean of Students (or dean's designee) will be honored. See <http://policy.arizona.edu/employmenthuman-resources/attendance>

The University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination; see <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy>

Threatening Behavior

The UA Threatening Behavior by Students Policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to oneself. See <http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>.

Academic Integrity

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. See <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academic-integrity/students/academic-integrity>.

I will enforce the Code strictly. If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing, then at a minimum (for mistakes consistent with the possibility of good faith) you will receive a zero on the assessment in question. If I judge that the transgression was likely intentional, then you will fail the course. If the offense is egregious, I will request that the incident be noted on your transcript and I will recommend expulsion. The point is not that I am a harsh disciplinarian who wants to see people punished. The point is: do not plagiarize, and do not cheat.

Students with Disabilities

It is my goal, along with the University's, that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss our options. You are also welcome to contact Disability Resources at (520) 621-3268 or drc-info@email.arizona.edu to establish reasonable accommodations.

Syllabus, Schedule, and Assignment Changes

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Schedule of Topics and Assessments

Introduction and Orientation (8/20-8/26)

Module 1: Morality and Business (8/27-9/6)

Reading: Shaw textbook, ch. 1

Module 2: Major Ethical Theories (9/10-9/20)

Reading: Shaw textbook, ch. 2

Module 3: Corporate Responsibility (9/24-10/4)

Reading: Shaw textbook, ch. 5

Module 4: Consumers (10/8-10/18)

Reading: Shaw textbook, ch. 6

Module 5: The Environment (10/22-11/2)

Reading: Shaw textbook, ch. 7

Module 6: Workplace Issues (11/5-11/15)

Reading: Shaw textbook, ch. 8

Module 7: Moral Choices Facing Employees (11/19-11/29)

Reading: Shaw textbook, ch. 10

Synthesis Paper (deadline at 11:59pm on Monday, 12/10)