



School of Arts & Science

## Ethics and Business

PHL 360

Fulfills department major/minor/elective

### Course Description

In this upper-level philosophy course, students will engage with complex moral questions about how business, and capitalism as a whole, affects society—for better or worse. They will learn major theories of justice and society (Rawls, Nozick, Marx) and of business ethics (Stockholder Theory, Stakeholder Theory), and draw on these to creatively apply their own philosophical reasoning to questions like: How does the business world support or interfere with democracy? How do businesses fit into a just society? How do we assign responsibility in the context of group-organizations like businesses? A class in ethics or philosophy would be helpful, although is not required, before taking this course.

### Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

*Upon successful completion of this course, students are expected to...*

Course SLO Narrative	Department SLO	Method(s) of Course SLO Assessment
Explain the differing views about business ethics and just economic arrangements that are covered in class reading and lecture	Critical Reading, Listening	Discussion, Exams
Develop and articulate your own reasoning about the ethical implications of various economic practices/models and how these shape society	Ethical Reasoning, Critical Analysis	Discussions, Exams, Papers
Explain the reasoning of others and present your own reasoning in writing and in oral presentation.	Written or Oral Communication	Exams, Papers

### Required Texts/Source Materials

All of the readings for this course will be on the course Blackboard page [BB]. I recommend bringing assigned readings with you, in hard copy, to class.

## Grading Criteria & Assessment Information

### Attendance and Participation:

Philosophy relies on critical and creative thinking, and that is not only easier, but also a lot more fun, to do with more than one mind. For that reason, it is essential to the success of this class that you are actively engaged in discussion. **That being said, you may (and should!) attend remotely on any days when you are feeling ill or if you have tested positive for COVID-19: please just send me an email so that I know! If, due to COVID-19, you would prefer to attend class remotely instead of in person for the whole semester, please let me know as soon as possible.**

### Assignments:

Assignments include readings, papers, and exams, which are all detailed below.

**Readings:** All readings must be completed before the day they are discussed in class. If you have not completed the reading when class discussion begins, you should go back to it and complete the reading after class discussion.

**Exams:** There will be two exams, which will test you on knowledge of class readings and give you the chance to practice developing the argumentative skills you will need in order to write your critical papers.

**Paper:** Aside from in-class discussion, your paper (written in two drafts, the first one shared with the class for discussion) will be the main way for you to demonstrate your critical thinking skills for the course. In the paper, you will present an argument of your own for a moral conclusion related to the class.

### Grading Components:

Information about how final grades and paper grades are calculated as well as grading scales and points can be found in this section. Please note that generally speaking, **I do not use Blackboard Grades to calculate or share grades.** I will tell you how to find your paper grades and your exams grades. If you want to know how you are doing at class at each step of the way, I recommend storing these grades yourself as you receive them and using the percentages below to make your own estimates about how you need to perform on upcoming assignments. (If you're unsure how to do this, just ask! It's a good thing to learn!) Of course, you are also welcome to come to office hours or schedule a meeting with me to discuss your grade in more detail at any point.

### What Matters for Your Final Grade:

Participation and Attendance (15%)

Exam 1 (20%)

Paper Draft (20%)

Paper Final (20%)

Exam 2 (25%)

**Credit for improvement:** There is no extra credit offered in this class. However, you will receive more credit for later assignments if you improve over the course of the semester. If you receive a

higher grade on Exam 2 than on Exam 1, Exam 2 will be worth 30% and Exam 1 will drop to only 15%.

**Attendance/Participation grading:** If you attend all classes (remotely or in person), pay attention in class (not being distracted by your phone/laptop, etc.), engage actively in group activities, and share a question or a comment about weekly or every other week, you will receive an A on Attendance and Participation. If any of these factors is lacking (attendance is low, you are often distracted during class, you do not engage in group activities, or you rarely or never ask a question/make a comment), your Participation and Attendance grade will be lower. If you attend all but three classes and consistently pay attention and work cooperatively during class, you will receive at least a C on Participation and Attendance--but in order to earn above a passing grade, you will need to actively participate in our class discussions by sharing your confusions/ideas with the group.

**Paper grading:** Papers are graded on quality and clarity of the student's original argument and presence of consistent citations (not on grammar, spelling, or formatting). **An argument must include a conclusion and the student's own original reasoning in support of that conclusion.** Generally speaking: A papers contain compelling and clear original arguments. B papers contain clear arguments that require more support to be compelling. C papers contain original ideas/reflection but have not been organized into a clear argument. A summary, in which the student accurately explains the reasoning another author provides for a conclusion, is not an argument, and even extremely well-written summaries will be awarded at highest a D. Paper letter grades correspond to points as follows:

A = 95
A/B = 90
B = 85
B/C = 80
C = 75
D = 65
F = 50

### Late Work

Late work will be accepted, with a penalty of 3 point off of the grade per day it is late. I encourage you to ask for an extension ahead of time if you suspect you will not have work finished on time!

### Cheating and Plagiarism (Class Policy)

Cheating and plagiarism are subject to school-wide policy (see College Policies section for more information) in addition to in-class penalties. Plagiarism in this course will result in a zero on the assignment, although students will have the chance to resubmit in order to receive 55% instead of 0%. This is the policy cheating and plagiarism especially interfere with your own learning in a philosophy class. By far the most important goal of this class is for you to develop, articulate, and critically assess your own thinking. Deriving your ideas from other people's ideas makes this impossible, and when you do it you are dismissing the greater potential of your own ideas. Do not do that to yourself. I know this material is new to many of you, so if you are worried about your ability to complete any assignment, you can contact me at any point for help. I have talked many students through arguments, and I

am happy to do it for you, too! You are capable of completing these assignments with your own thinking, especially if you can master the skill of asking for help when you need it!

## Course Calendar

### Week 1

#### (Major Approaches to Business Ethics)

Tu 2/2

Reading due: None

Th 2/4

Reading due: Friedman, The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits

### Week 2

#### **LAST CHANCE TO ADD/DROP/SWAP IS MONDAY 2/8**

Tu 2/9

Reading due: Freeman, A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation

#### (Theories of Justice)

Th 2/11

Reading due: Rawls, A Theory of Justice

### Week 3

Tu 2/16

Reading due: Nozick, Entitlement Theory

Th 2/18

Reading due: Marx, Excerpts from various works

### Week 4

Tu 2/23

Reading due: Mills, 'Ideal Theory' as Ideology

Th 2/25

Reading due: None

### Week 5

Tu 3/2

Reading due: None

Th 3/4

Reading due: None

## Exam 1

### Week 6

("Selling It")

Tu 3/9

Reading due: Anker, Kappel, and Sandoe; The Liberating Power of Commercial Marketing

Th 3/11

Reading due: Lippke, Advertising and the Social Conditions of Autonomy

**PROGRESS GRADES POSTED FRIDAY 3/12**

### Week 7

Tu 3/16

Reading due: None

Th 3/18

Reading due: Hochschild, Exploring the Managed Heart

### Week 8

(Responsibility in Business)

Tu 3/23

Reading due: Belkin, How Can We Save the Next Victim?

Th 3/25

Reading due: None, attending online lecture by Michael Dawson on Race and Capitalism

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### Week 9

Tu 3/30

Reading due: Boisjoly et al, Roger Boisjoly and the Challenger Disaster

**Paper Drafts on Topics A and B due**

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Th 4/1

**No class: Holy Thursday**

### Week 10

Tu 4/6

**Presentations about topics A and B!**

Th 4/8

Reading due: Green, When Is "Everyone's Doing It" A Moral Justification?, and  
Versi, On Corruption and Corrupters

**Paper Drafts on Topics C and D due**

### Week 11

(Profits and Society)

Tu 4/13

**Presentations about topics C and D!**

Th 4/15

Reading due: Schaefer, Shareholders and Social Responsibility

Week 12

Tu 4/20

Reading due: (Listen or Read) Interview with Elizabeth Anderson about *Private Government*

Th 4/22

Reading due: DuBois, Black Reconstruction, "The Black Worker" and "The White Worker"

Week 13

Tu 4/27

Reading due: Desmond, Americans Want to Believe that Jobs are the Solution to Poverty

**LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH A "W" IS WEDNESDAY 4/28**

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Th 4/29

Reading due: Reich, Supercapitalism

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Week 14

Tu 5/4

Reading due: Moog, Spicer, and Bohm; The Politics of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

Th 5/6

Reading due: None

**Paper Final due**

Week 15

Tu 5/11

Reading due: Barron, How Big Business is Hedging Against the Apocalypse  
Davis, The Prison-Industrial Complex

Th 5/13

Reading due: None

**Final Exam: Th 5/20 10:30am-12:40pm** (but exam will be available all day, as with the last one!)