

Philosophy 14

Business: Moral Issues

Brooklyn College

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3308 Boylan

Course Description:

Ethics demands of us that our actions be grounded in good reasons. But what makes a reason good? One suggestion (deontological) is that it must be rational, i.e. there must be a well reasoned connection between the motive and the action that defines our duty as human agents. Another suggestion (consequentialist) is that our actions must be linked with favorable outcomes. These two suggestions need not be consistent with one another. For instance, poor motives can bring about favorable consequences, and by accident of moral luck, good motives can lead to tragic consequences. In Business Ethics one brings the approach of ethics to issues of business practice. What count as good reasons in support controversial business practices, what can an examination of "hot button" topics teach us about more mundane contexts, and what can the evaluation of good business practice tell us about the idea of social justice?

In this course we will approach Business Ethics through a series of "Issues Debates" involving pro and con views on matters ranging from the idea of capitalism to the business of genetic engineering. The rational consideration of these issues is intended to help you prepare for the types of problems that arise in a complex economic context.

Requirements:

There are 16 topical issues listed on the syllabus below (separate from the readings in philosophical ethics). Students are required to write 3page response papers on four of these issues (30% of your grade). In addition you will choose one other topical issue for a 6-8 page term paper (30% of your grade). This paper should relate the arguments in that set of readings to broader general issues discussed over the course of the semester. Finally there will be a cumulative final exam (40% of your grade).

The term paper is due on the last day of class. Two issue papers are due before the midterm and two prior to the last week of class. This work is for you as much as it is for me to assess your progress in the course. These assignments are designed to ensure that you keep up with the work. Your class participation is essential to the success of this class. If you keep up with the work and participate in class, then these assignments should be easy.

We will spend approximately the first month of class talking about the general philosophical issues in Topics 1 & 2. After that we will adopt a debate format for the remaining classes and do our best to move through a topic a class. We will divide up into two groups for each class session (I will assign new groups using a random list generator every 2 weeks). Each group will be responsible for presenting and defending one of the two papers on the reading list for that class.

Texts:

Lisa Newton and Maureen Ford (eds.) Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Business Ethics and Society, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002). **TS**

William Shaw, Business Ethics, (New York: Wadsworth, 2002). **BE**

James Rachels, The Elements of Moral Philosophy (New York: McGraw Hill, 2004). **EMP**

Schedule of Readings:

Topic #1: Philosophical Ethics & the Nature of Morality

Introduction:	What Is Philosophy? What Is Ethics?
Harman:	"Ethics & Observation (handout)
Shaw:	The Nature of Morality (BE, 2-43)
Rachels:	Utilitarianism (EMP, 96-122)
Shaw:	Normative Theories of Ethics (BE, 49-55)
Rachels:	The Kantian Approach (EMP, 122-143)
Shaw:	Normative Theories of Ethics (BE, 56-61)
Rachels:	Egoism (EMP, 70-95)
Shaw:	Normative Theories of Ethics (BE, 45-48)
Rachels:	Social Contract Theory (EMP, 143-161)
Rousseau:	excerpts from <u>The Social Contract</u> (handout)
Hobbes:	excerpts from <u>Leviathan</u> (handout)

Topic #2: The Idea of Justice

Rawls:	excerpts from <u>A Theory of Justice</u> (handout)
Shaw:	Justice & Economic Distribution (BE, 83-120)

Topic #3: Free Market Capitalism, Property, & Human Happiness

Locke:	"Of Property" (handout)
Smith:	excerpts from <u>The Wealth of Nations</u> (handout)
Marx/Engels:	excerpts from <u>The Communist Manifesto</u> (TS, 12-20)

Topic #4: Are Corporate Codes of Ethics Just for Show?

Hosmer:	excerpts from <u>The Ethics of Management</u> (TS, 22-28)
Newton:	excerpts from "The Many Faces of the Corporate Code" (TS, 29-37)

Topic #5: Can Restructuring a Corporation's Rules Make Moral Difference?

Wieland:	excerpts from "The Ethics of Governance" (TS, 38-52)
Maitland:	excerpts from "Distributive Justice in Firms" (TS, 53-68)

Topic #6: Does Profit Seeking Hurt the Practice of Medicine?

Relman:	excerpts from "What Market Values Are Doing to Medicine" (TS, 70-80)
Wicks:	excerpts from "Albert Schweitzer or Ivan Boesky? Why We Should Reject the Dichotomy Between Medicine and Business" (TS, 73-93)

Topic #7: Are Pharmaceutical Price Controls Justifiable?

Spinello:	excerpts from "Ethics, Pricing, and the Pharmaceutical Industry" (TS, 94-103)
Pharm Manuf Assoc:	excerpts from "Price Controls in the Economy and the Health Sector" (TS, 104-113)

Topic #8: Should Casino Gambling be Prohibited?

Galston/Wasserman:	excerpts from "Gambling Away Our Moral Capital" (TS, 114-121)
Eadington:	excerpts from "The Proliferation of Commercial Gambling in America" (TS, 122-131)

Topic #9: Does Whistle Blowing Violate Company Loyalty?

Bok: excerpts from "Whistle and Professional Responsibility (TS, 148-157)
Larmer: excerpts from "Whistle blowing and Professional Loyalty" (TS, 158-165)

Topic #10: Is Controlling Drug Abuse More Important than Protecting Privacy?

Verespej: excerpts from "Drug Users-Not Testing-Angers Workers" (TS,166-170)
Moore: excerpts from "Drug Testing and Corporate Responsibility: The 'Ought Implies Can' Argument"(TS, 171-183)

Topic #11: Is CEO Compensation Justified by Performance?

Murphy: excerpts from "(March/April 1986)" (TS, 184-194)
Newton: excerpts from "The Care and Feeding of the Truly Greedy" (TS,195-204)

Topic #12: Are Marketing and Advertising Fundamentally Exploitative?

Foley: excerpts from "Ethics in Advertising: A Look at the Report by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications" (TS, 205-212)
Laczniak: excerpts from "Reflections on the 1997 Vatican Statements Regarding Ethics in Advertising"(TS, 213-221)

Topic #13: Was Ford to Blame in the Pinto Case?

Dowie: excerpts from "Pinto Madness" (TS, 222-238)
Ford Motor Co.: excerpts from "Closing Arguments by Mr. James Neal" (TS, 239-249)

Topic #14: Should We require Labeling for Genetically Modified Food?

Bereano: excerpts from "The Right to Know What We Eat" (TS, 250-258)
Levitt: excerpts from ""Statement Before the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, United States Senate (September 26, 2000)" (TS, 259-268)

Topic #15: Are Multinational Corporations Free from Moral Obligations?

Velasquez: excerpts from "International Business, Morality, and the Common Good" (TS, 269-277)
Fleming: excerpts from "Alternative Approaches and Assumptions: Comments on Manuel Velazquez"(TS, 278-281)

Topic #16: Are Sweatshops a Necessary Evil?

Black: excerpts from "Ante-Up" (TS, 282-286)
Meyerson: excerpts from "In Principle a Case for More Sweatshops" (TS, 287-291)

Topic #17: Should Patenting Life be Forbidden

Rifkin: excerpts from "Should We Patent Life?" (TS, 292-299)
Domnarski: excerpts from "Dire ew World" (TS,300-303N)

Topic #18: Do Environmental Restrictions Violate Basic Economic Freedoms?

Shanahan: excerpts from "Environment" (TS, 333-345_
Ehrlich & Ehrlich: excerpts from "Brownlash: The new Environmental Anti-Science"