

PHIL 3314: Moral Issues in Business

Spring 2013

Instructor: Jeremy Ginsburg

Sections: MW2, MW3, EM6

Office Hour: By appointment on Mondays, 3:30–6:00pm in 3316B

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Basic approaches to moral reasoning and their application to such issues as justice and economic systems; corporate responsibility to society, the environment, and developing nations; and the duties of businesses to their employees, their customers, and their competitors. The course will begin with an introduction to major positions in political economy. Particular ethical problems arising in business will then be discussed, and responses to them considered, in light of debates within political economy.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1) Students will improve critical thinking by developing skills of explaining, critically examining, and responding to theories, issues, and claims in ethics and political economy.
- 2) Students will improve writing skills by explaining, exploring, and critically examining theories, issues, concepts, and arguments in ethics and political economy.
- 3) Students will improve communication skills by orally explaining theories, issues, claims, concepts, and arguments in ethics and political economy.
- 4) Students will improve skills of interpreting and evaluating philosophical writings.
- 5) Students will acquire a familiarity with, and an understanding of, central philosophical positions in political economy, and will be able to explain the relevance of those positions to moral issues in business.
- 6) Students will acquire a familiarity with, and an understanding of, prominent moral issues arising in business, and will be able to explain major philosophical approaches to those issues.
- 7) Students will develop an openness to having their beliefs challenged, will learn to hear and comprehend the views of others, and to entertain objections to their own views.
- 8) Students will be able to show that issues may be regarded from multiple viewpoints, and will be able to present reasons in support of each viewpoint.

REQUIRED TEXT [also available on reserve]

Clark, Barry. *Political Economy: A Comparative Approach*, 2nd ed. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998.

REQUIREMENTS

Midterm Exam	15%
Article Summary (Draft 5%, Peer Reviews 5%, Final 25%)	35%
Final Paper (Draft 5%, Peer Reviews 5%, Final 25%)	35%
Final Exam	15%

Blackboard

- Using Blackboard is a course requirement. Students are responsible for making sure they have working access to Blackboard at the beginning of the semester and for checking Blackboard on (at least) a weekly basis.
- Update your e-mail address in Blackboard immediately—this is especially important for transfer students! Check that e-mail account on a regular basis.
- If technical difficulties prevent you from submitting work on time, e-mail your work to me with an explanation of the problem and I will waive late penalties. Once technical difficulties have been resolved, work must be submitted via Blackboard in order to receive credit.
- For Blackboard technical support see: <http://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/blackboard/#problems>

Attendance & Participation

- Attendance is mandatory. If you do not attend regularly, do not expect to do well.
- Attendance spot checks will be taken throughout the term. Anyone unable to attend a particular session should e-mail me in advance with a reason for being absent in order to be excused.
- Students with strong records of attendance *and* participation will get a 10% boost to their final grades.
- Please see p.53 of the *Bulletin* for details on non-attendance because of religious beliefs.
- Use of electronic devices, other than for class purposes, is strictly prohibited.

Exams

- Exams are closed book.
- Each student is permitted one 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of paper of prepared notes. Notes must be handwritten (in the student's own handwriting) on one side of the paper only, and must be submitted with the exam. (Notes will not be returned.)
- A choice of questions will be offered. Students answering more than the required number of questions will be graded based on their best answers.
- Partial credit will be assessed on all answers.

Article Summary

Each student will summarize a substantial article in a topic area covered in the latter half of the course. Summaries are shared with the class and become part of the required reading on that topic. *In your summary, strive to be accurate, comprehensive, and illuminating; include and explain the topic, thesis, central arguments and critical evidence of your article. Summaries should be of sufficient length to meet these goals.* Explaining your article to others helps you to understand it better for yourself, encouraging careful and active reading.

Steps for completing the article summary:

- 1) ARTICLE ASSIGNMENTS & TOPIC SIGN UP: Article assignments for each topic week will be posted to your section wiki on Blackboard. In class, students will sign up in random order for any topic not already filled by other students. Each topic will be covered by a group of between three and five students. *You cannot be guaranteed your choice of topic.*
- 2) SELECT ARTICLE: Claim your article on your section wiki (see instructions there). *Articles are claimed on a first-come-first-served basis.* Read the assigned article at least twice before beginning to summarize.
- 3) DRAFT SUMMARY: Post a draft summary of your article to your section wiki. *Drafts are graded as full credit, half credit, or no credit. No credit for late submissions!* Better your draft be too long than too short.
- 4) PEER REVIEW: Review summaries by your fellow group members posted to your section wiki, posting your completed reviews to the wiki as comments. (See full instructions on the wiki.) *Reviews are graded as full credit, half credit, or no credit. No credit for late submissions!* After peer reviews are completed, I will make additional comments as necessary.
- 5) FINAL SUMMARY: Submit your revised summary two ways: (1) via the Assignments section of Blackboard, and (2) by posting your revised summary to your section wiki (replace your draft with your final version). *Summaries must be submitted both ways to receive credit. Summaries are graded on a whole-letter-grade scale, i.e. no '+' or '-' grades. Late submissions penalized 1/2 letter grade per day (not class!) late.*

Final Paper

This is your opportunity to take an ethical stand on a business case of your choice, justifying your position using the political-economy framework developed in the first half of the course. Each student will write a paper analyzing the ethics of a selected example according to each of the four perspectives in political economy we have studied, and arguing for which perspective's analysis is ethically correct. Final papers should focus on a specific case, relevant to the topic area you signed up for at the beginning of the course, such as an example business practice, company, litigation, legislation, etc. 1500–3000 words.

Steps for completing the final paper:

- 1) MEET: Make an appointment to discuss topics for your final paper. I can assist you in finding a suitable topic and resources to pursue it.
- 2) PAPER TOPIC: Submit your finalized paper topic via the Assignments section on Blackboard. Paper topics are not graded.
- 3) DRAFT PAPER: Submit your draft paper to your section wiki (see instructions there). *Drafts are graded as full credit, half credit, or no credit. No credit for late submissions!*
- 4) PEER REVIEW: Review summaries by your fellow group members posted to your section wiki, posting your completed reviews to the wiki as comments. (See full instructions on the wiki.) *Reviews are graded as full credit, half credit, or no credit. No credit for late submissions!* After peer reviews are completed, I will make additional comments as necessary.
- 5) FINAL PAPER: Submit your paper via the Assignments section of Blackboard. *Papers are graded on a whole-letter-grade scale, i.e. no '+' or '-' grades. Late submissions penalized 1/2 letter grade per day (not class!) late.*

Extra Credit

- You may give oral presentation of your article summary during your topic week for credit worth 10% of final grade. *See me in advance to gain my approval for an oral presentation.*
- All students may contribute to the wiki by, e.g., adding links between summaries, enhancing formatting and organization, creating additional pages devoted to particular topics, etc. Contributions due by the last day of class. *See me in advance to arrange credit for wiki contributions.*

Academic Honesty: The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site:

<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>

If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation. All sources consulted — *including online sources!* — must be cited appropriately and included in a bibliography. Violation of this policy will result in failure of the assignment in question; subsequent violation may result in failure of the course as well as additional penalties.

Students with Disabilities: In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services (CSDS). Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the CSDS please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her as soon as possible and at an appropriate time.

SCHEDULE & IMPORTANT DATES

Textbook readings through week 7 are posted below. Additional readings for the first 7 weeks, and all readings thereafter, will be posted to Blackboard. Please check Blackboard regularly for updated reading assignments.

Week 1 — Introduction to Business Ethics & Political Economy

- Clark, Chapters 1 & 2 [available at <http://db.tt/69ZdrWpM>]

Week 2 — Economics, Ethics, & Ideology

- Hausman & McPherson, "The Philosophical Foundations of Mainstream Normative Economics" [available at <http://db.tt/oYGtoB1s>]
- Clark, Chapter 16
- **Wednesday, 6 February — TOPIC SIGN UP**

Week 3 — Classical Liberalism

- **Monday, 11 February — Due: ARTICLE SELECTION**
- Clark, Chapter 3

Week 4 — Classical Liberalism (cont.) / Radicalism

- Clark, Chapters 3 & 4

Week 5 — Radicalism (cont.) / Conservatism

- **Monday, 25 February — Due: DRAFT SUMMARY**
- Clark, Chapters 4 & 5

Week 6 — Modern Liberalism

- **Monday, 4 March — Due: SUMMARY PEER REVIEWS**
- Clark, Chapter 6

Week 7 — Review: Government & The Market

- **Monday, 11 March — Due: PAPER TOPIC**
- Clark, Chapter 7

Week 8 — Catch-up & Midterm

- **Monday, 18 March — MIDTERM for section EM6**
- **Wednesday, 20 March — MIDTERM for sections MW₁₂, MW₂**

***** SPRING BREAK *****

Wednesday, 3 April — Due: FINAL SUMMARY [Sections MW₁₂ & MW₂ meet.]

Week 9 — Corporations, Stakeholders, & Shareholders

Week 10 — Finance

Week 11 — Employment

- **Monday, 22 April — Due: PAPER DRAFT**

Week 12 — Intellectual Property

- **Monday, 29 April — Due: PAPER PEER REVIEWS**

Week 13 — Globalization

Week 14 — Arbitration

- **Monday, 13 May — Due: FINAL PAPER**

FINAL EXAM

EM6.....	Monday, 20 May, 6–8pm
MW ₂	Monday, 20 May, 1–3pm
MW ₁₂	Wednesday, 22 May, 1–3pm