

Moral Issues in Business

Professor Jamie Lindsay

Spring 2013

PHIL 3314

Section: EW6

Code: 2207

Wednesdays 6:30-9pm

Room: 4141B

Office Hours: By appointment

email: JLindsay@GC.CUNY.edu

In this course we will explore a several approaches to philosophical ethics, and apply these theoretical approaches to questions that arise in business. You will have ample opportunity to develop your abilities to think and write about philosophical questions, to practice giving reasons for your views, and to consider opposing arguments carefully. The focus of the course will be on classroom discussion, with the aim of encouraging you to develop your own views in dialogue with the texts and with each other.

Final Grade:

Blackboard Discussion (before each class): 25%

Take-Home Exams (2): 50%

Final Exam: 25%

Course Requirements:

1. You are expected to read all assigned texts *before* the meeting for which they are assigned, *and to bring printed copies of the readings to class*.
 - a. No textbook is required.
 - b. All readings will be posted on Blackboard.
2. Before class, you are *required* to post your reflections and/or questions about *all* readings that we will discuss.
 - a. Approximately one-hundred word posts are sufficient, *per week*, and you are encouraged to use the Discussion Board as an opportunity to debate the material.
 - b. Posts are not graded for accuracy, though you will be assessed at the end of the course for the extent to which you engage in *discussion* of the material. Merely posting your thoughts without considering – and sometimes responding to – the posts of others is insufficient. The aim is *discussion*.

- c. You are expected to use your Discussion Board posts to prepare for class, by reviewing and debating the central ideas of the readings with your classmates.
- d. Blackboard discussion counts for 25% of the grade.
- e. *If less than half of the class participates actively prior to a class meeting, Blackboard discussion will be supplemented with a reading quiz.*

3. You are expected to attend *all* classes, having done the reading, and to review your notes from previous sessions before attending class.

- a. According to the Brooklyn College Bulletin: "Students are expected to attend **all** scheduled sessions of every class for which they register. Students late for class may be excluded from the room. An instructor may consider attendance and class participation in determining course grade."
- b. Lateness, absences, and lack of positive participation (or any negative participation) will affect your final grade dramatically.
- c. *Your grade will be dropped by a letter for each unexcused absence after the second unexcused absence.*

4. Two Take-Home Exams will be given in class.

- a. If you fail to receive the Exam due to an *unexcused* absence, this will *not* be an excuse for failing to turn in the Exam.
- b. You may work with your classmates (and on Blackboard) on the Take-Home Exams, but your response must be your own. Identical responses still violate the Academic Integrity policy of Brooklyn College (i.e. it's *cheating*), and *must* be reported.
- c. You may use outside sources, but any outside sources *must* be cited clearly (in any format). Failure to cite sources is a violation of the Academic Integrity policy of Brooklyn College (i.e. it's *plagiarism*), and *must* be reported.
- d. *Cheating or plagiarizing will result in failing the course.*

5. The Final Exam questions will be distributed prior to the end of the semester.

- a. The Exam will consist of short-answer questions requiring at most three sentences each.
- b. The Exam will be open notes, but not open book.

6. By the end of the course you should be able to:

- a. Articulate the basic features of several approaches to contemporary business ethics
- b. State differences between deontological ethics, consequentialist ethics, virtue ethics, and existentialist ethics
- c. Explain similarities and differences between social contract theory, shareholder theory, stakeholder theory, and Marxist critical theory
- d. Evaluate ethical arguments using basic tools of critical thinking
- e. Develop your own arguments concerning moral issues in business
- f. Identify and state serious objections to your own ethical views

Calendar:

- 1/30: *Course Overview (discussion)*
- 2/6: **Introduction to Ethics:**
Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, Morality"
Thomas Hobbes, from *Leviathan*
- 2/13: **Instrumental Reasoning:**
Niccolò Machiavelli, from *The Prince*
Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Profits"
- 2/20: *NO CLASSES* (classes follow a Monday schedule)
- 2/27: **Libertarianism:**
Irving Kristol, "A Capitalist Conception of Justice"
Robert Nozick, from *Anarchy, State, Utopia*
- 3/6: **Virtue Ethics and the "Pursuit of Happiness":**
Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics*
- 3/13: **Personhood & Trust:**
Groom & Nass, "Can Robots Be Teammates?"
Jennifer Moore, "What Is Really Unethical about Insider Trading?"
- 3/20: Peter Singer, "Speciesism"
The Walking Dead, "Pretty Much Dead Already," viewed in class
- 3/27: *NO CLASSES*
- 4/3: **Justice & Charity:**
Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth"
John Rawls, from *A Theory of Justice*
- 4/10: **Capitalism & Justice:**
Robert Reich, from *Supercapitalism*
Thomas Pogge, interview on "Global Poverty"
- 4/17: **Corporations & Democracy:**
Nader, Green & Seligman, "Who Will Watch the Watchers?"
John J. McCall, "Employee Voice in Corporate Governance"
- 4/24: **Responsibility & Labor:**
Iris Young, "The Social Connections Model of Responsibility," on sweatshops
Karl Marx, "Alienated Labor"
- 5/1: Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, Chapters One and Two
- 5/8: **Public Reason (course review):**
Onora O'Neill, "The Public Use of Reason"
- 5/15: *No new readings*
- 5/22, 6-8pm: Final Exam (open notes, closed book)**

Syllabus Change Policy: This syllabus is a guide for the course. *If* there are any changes to the calendar, they will be announced in class, and a revised syllabus will be posted on Blackboard. Other than (possible) calendar changes, there will be no changes, to grading and other course policies.

CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity: 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 that violation, the faculty member **MUST** report the violation. *Copying text from Wikipedia without proper citation counts as plagiarism.*

NY Policy on Religious Observance: Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which they may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. Any student who is aggrieved by the alleged failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith shall be entitled to maintain an action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of their rights.

CUNY Policy on Disability: In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. 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 Center for Student Disability Services, please provide me with the course accommodation form and discuss specific accommodation needed with me immediately.