

**Brooklyn College**  
Department of Philosophy  
**Ethical Issues in Business**

**PHIL 3314 TR 9**  
**Fall 2012, Tues. & Thurs, 2:15-3:30pm**  
**Boylan Hall 3113**

**Instructor: Alexei Procyshyn**  
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**Office Hours: B3316 T 12:30-1:30**

**Course Description:** In this course we will explore several basic approaches to philosophical ethics (utilitarianism, deontology, rights-based approaches, and virtue ethics), and apply them to ethical issues that arise in contemporary business. Students will learn how to identify and analyze ethical problems related to corporate responsibility, privacy and drug-testing, affirmative action, etc.; they will learn how to think critically and write cogently about ethical-philosophical questions, i.e. give reasons for their views, consider opposing arguments carefully, argue for an ethical solution using moral principles (rather than business guidelines). The focus of the course will be on classroom discussion, with the aim of encouraging students to develop their own views in dialogue with the texts and with each other.

**Required Texts**

- Fritz Allhoff and Anand J. Vaidya (eds.), *Business In Ethical Focus: An Anthology* (New York: Broadview Press, 2008).

The textbook is available online at Amazon.com, abebooks.com, or Powells.com. It can also be found at Brooklyn College's university bookstore. Supplementary material will be posted on Blackboard.

**Course Work & Requirements**

- **Five Case Studies** (ca. 500 words each; best 5 of a possible 7 will count towards your grade): **conjointly worth 35% of final grade. First Case Study is mandatory.**
- **One Short Paper, "My Ethical Perspective"** (ca. 1000 words): **worth 15% of final grade**
- **Midterm: worth 20% of final grade**
- **Final Exam: worth 20% of final grade**
- **Class attendance, preparation, and participation** in discussion: **10% of final grade.**

**Class participation, preparation, and attendance:** Because philosophy involves discussion and the lively exchange of reasons, students are expected to make every effort to attend class, read and think through the assigned texts, come to an informed position on the topics under consideration, and be prepared to ask – or answer – questions. Generally, students learn more and receive

substantially better grades, when they come to class. As an incentive, attendance, preparation, and participation comprise 10% of every student's final grade.

**Case Studies:** These are short analytical pieces. A good Case Study should identify and explain the major issues involved in a concrete business practice, indicate what philosophical approach will be brought to bear on the case, briefly explain the basic concepts and commitments of this approach, and evaluate the practice accordingly. However, a case study should not simply summarize a stretch of text. A good case study aims to clarify what is at stake in a given case by making the ethical considerations explicit, and explains why and how you have come to your conclusion. **Late Case Studies will not be accepted.**

**Short Paper ("My Ethical Perspective"):** The goal of this assignment is to help you come up with the appropriate evaluative criteria that you can use when considering the case studies. Based on our consideration of the various philosophical approaches to ethics, you will clarify, explain, and defend your own views on the ultimate source of human flourishing, and how we should morally evaluate social actions. **Students are given the option to rewrite the paper.**

**Midterm and Final Exams:** These are traditional exams that will test how well you have understood the basic concepts, arguments, and theoretical commitments of the ethical approaches we have studied. Both the midterm and the final will consist of three parts. The short first section will ask students to place philosophical concepts in the right contexts; it will have the structure of a fill-in-the-blank. Sections II and III will be more substantive: section II will evaluate your understanding of the key concepts we have discussed in class (it will consist of short answer responses, where you will be asked to define a concept or theoretical position), while section III will consist of one long essay, where you have to select a topic from a list of options, and then explain and evaluate the topic using the methods we have been developing in class. **The Final Exam will not be cumulative.**

**Word length of assignments:** The average length for each case study should be about 2 pages double-spaced (ca. 500 words), while the short paper should be about 4 pages (ca. 1,000 words). These limits are meant to help students choose an appropriate topic and develop it in sufficient depth. This said, students can choose to write something longer if they so desire – they may even find it necessary to do so! But be warned: if too short, case studies or papers risk being uninformative and trivial, while much longer ones can run out of hand. Finally, for all their written assignments, students should use a standard page layout and format. If you are unsure what that means, come talk to me.

## Course Goals & Objectives

1. Students will learn how to identify ethical issues in business, how to analyze them using moral principles, and how to make recommendations for their resolution.
2. Students will improve critical thinking by developing skills of explaining, examining and responding to philosophical theories, issues and claims in the area of business ethics, and be open to challenging prior beliefs through the use of reasoning

3. Students will be able to explain why ethics is important in business and why ethical responsibilities go beyond compliance with laws and regulations.
4. Describe moral principles and apply an ethical decision making model.
5. Learn how to resolve ethical issues by applying a variety of standard ethical frameworks (e.g. utilitarianism, deontology, rights, and virtue ethics).
6. Explain how corporate culture influences ethical decision-making.
7. Explain corporate social responsibility.
8. **Improve oral communication skills by listening objectively to opposing views and being able to verbally respond through the use of argument.**

### **Evaluation, Late Policy, & Stance on Plagiarism**

All written work will be graded in accordance with the following three criteria:

- 1) Cogency
- 2) Accuracy
- 3) Insightfulness

1. **‘Cogency’** is the overall quality of a clear, well-structured, well-written, and compelling presentation and analysis of an explicit argument. Typos, ungrammatical sentences, unclear or vague statements, or a fuzzy presentation an argument will detract from your overall point. Summarizing an argument instead of analyzing it will also result in a less cogent paper
2. An accurate analysis makes claims that are factually correct or consistent with its object of investigation. As an evaluative criterion, then, **‘accuracy’** pertains to how a paper makes use of textual evidence, and how its arguments, claims, and reconstructions are anchored in the texts under consideration. It also requires that students correctly identify their object of analysis, and apply the appropriate analytical techniques. A claim not factually grounded in, or supported by the text is inaccurate. If, for example, a presentation distorts what a philosopher actually says, or misrepresents his thought, it is not accurate. And if a set of analytical techniques for a particular kind of argument is applied to an incommensurable context, then the results will be neither cogent nor accurate.
3. Finally, **‘insightfulness’** refers to the specifics of the paper’s content: those papers are insightful that develop a unique account through a careful consideration and analysis of a topic from a novel perspective, while remaining at all times grounded in the text. In other words, insightful papers do not merely repeat the material of a class lecture, or rehearse someone else’s argument; they focus on something that is important to the author and that may not be evident to others.

**Late policy:** All due dates for coursework are listed below. I **will not** accept late Case Studies or short papers, unless you make suitable arrangements with me before the due date. **I will not accept work submitted via email.**

**Academic Integrity & Plagiarism:** CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity, adopted by the Board of Trustees 6/28/2004, states that “Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in the City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion, as provided herein.” Please go to <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies/> for further information about: CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity; BC Procedures for Implementing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity; Flow Chart of the BC Procedures for Implementing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity. **Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty.** It is the unacknowledged use of another person’s words or ideas in any academic work (this could be using books, journals, internet postings, or other students’ work). For further information on avoiding plagiarism through proper acknowledgements, including expectations for paraphrasing source material and forms of citation in research and writing, students should consult the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Chapter 6, on documentation. Or ask me! **Cases of plagiarism will be handled according to the university policies on academic integrity.**

**Center for Student Disability Services:** 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 that they may have a disability are incited 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 your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him or her.

## Course Outline

**Week 1:** 8/28 & 30 Overview: Source of Evaluation, Ethics, and Reasons for Action

**Handout:** Some Basic Concepts in Business Ethics (Blackboard)

**Week 2:** 9/4 & 6 Systems of Moral Evaluation I

**Week's Readings:** Richard M. Glatz, "Aristotelian Virtue Ethics and the Recommendations of Morality" (pp. 46-53)  
Selections from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Blackboard)

**Week 3:** 9/11 & 13 Systems of Moral Evaluation II

**Week's Readings:** Heather Salazar, "Kantian Business Ethics" (pp. 29-34)  
Selections from Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Blackboard)

**Week 4:** 9/18 & 20 Systems of Moral Evaluation III

**NO CLASSES ON 9/18!**

**Week's Readings:** David Meeler, "Utilitarianism" (pp. 53-62)  
Selections from J.S. Mill's *Utilitarianism* (Blackboard)

**Week 5:** 9/25 & 27 Corporate Responsibility: To Whom and For What?

**NO CLASSES ON 9/25!**

**Week's Readings:** Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profit" (pp. 65-69)  
George G. Brenkert, "Private Corporations and Public Welfare" (pp. 99-109)

**SHORT PAPER ("MY ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE") DUE!**

**Week 6:** 10/2 & 4 Corporate Responsibility Cont'd

**Week's Readings:** R. Edward Freeman, "A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation" (pp. 69-78)  
Joseph Heath, "Business Ethics Without Stakeholders" (pp. 110-130)

**CASE STUDY # 1 DUE** (SEE Allhof & Vaidya, pp. 246-249)

**Week 7:**      10/9 & 11      Rights and Obligations of Employees and Employers

**Week's Readings:**      Patrica W. Werhane & Tara J. Radin, "Employment at Will and Due Process" (pp. 255-258)  
Richard A. Epstein, "In Defense of the Contract at Will"  
(pp. 259-266)

**Week 8:**      10/16 & 18      Rights and Obligations Cont'd

**Week's Readings:**      Joseph Desjardins & Ronald Duska, "Drug Testing and Employment" (pp. 279-290)  
Michael Cranford, "Drug Testing and the Right to Privacy: Arguing the Ethics of Workplace Drug Testing" (pp. 291-301)

**CASE STUDY # 2 DUE** (SEE Allhof & Vaidya, pp. 316-322)

**Week 9:**      10/23 & 25      Rights and Obligations Wrap Up

**Week's Readings:**      Richard T. De George, "Whistleblowing" (pp. 267-274)  
Robert A. Larmer, "Whistleblowing and Employee Loyalty"  
(pp. 274-278)

**Midterm on 10/25!**

**Week 10:**      10/30 & 11/1      Business Practices, Justice, and Fairness

**Week's Readings:**      Albert Z. Carr, "Is Business Bluffing Ethical?" (pp. 400-409)  
Thomas Carson, "Second Thoughts on Bluffing" (pp. 409-432)

**CASE STUDY # 3 DUE!** (SEE Allhof & Vaidya, pp. 460-464)

**Week 11:**      11/6 & 8      Business Practices Cont'd

**Week's Readings:**      Edwin C. Hettinger, "What Is Wrong with Reverse Discrimination?"  
(pp. 324-336)  
Louis P. Pojman, "The Moral Status of Affirmative Action"  
(pp. 337-355)

**CASE STUDY # 4 DUE** (SEE Allhof & Vaidya, pp. 458-459)

**Week 12:**      11/13 & 15      Advertising, Marketing and the Consumer

**Week's Readings:**      Tibor R. Machan, "Advertising, Marketing, and the Consumer"  
(pp. 584-592)  
John Waide, "The Making of Self and World in Advertising"  
(pp. 593-598)

**Week 13:**     11/20   Advertising Cont'd

**THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY: NOVEMBER 22-25!**

**Week's Reading**     Roger Crisp, "Persuasive Advertising, Autonomy, and the Creation of Desire" (pp. 599-604)  
Robert L. Arrington, "Advertising and Behaviour Control" (pp. 605-614)

**CASE STUDY # 5 DUE** (SEE Allhof & Vaidya, pp. 641-643)

**Week 14:**     11/27 & 29   Advertising Wrapped Up

**Week's Readings:**     George G Brenkert, "Marketing to Inner-City Blacks: PowerMaster and Moral Responsibility" (pp. 626-640)

**CASE STUDY # 6 DUE!** (SEE Allhof & Vaidya, pp. 640-644)

**Week 15:**     12/4 & 6     Intellectual Property

**Week's Readings:**     Edwin C. Hettinger, "Justifying Intellectual Property" (pp. 550-564)

**CASE STUDY # 7 DUE** (SEE Allhof & Vaidya, pp. 577-580)

**Final Class:**   12/11     **FINAL EXAM!**