

Business Ethics
Spring 2007
Phil 220

Contact information

Professor: Jeffrey Moriarty

Office: 323 Shatzel Hall

Phone: 372-6392

Email: jmoriar@bgsu.edu

Office hours: Wednesday, 2:30 p.m. – 3:50 p.m., and by appointment.

I may have reason to email you during the semester. Because I have access only to your BGSU email address, you must either occasionally check that address, or set it up so that it forwards messages to the account you normally use. You are responsible for making sure you receive any information I send via email.

Meeting times and places

4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, 103 Eppler North.

Required texts

Contemporary Issues in Business Ethics, 5th edition, eds. Joseph Desjardins and John McCall (Wadsworth, 2005).

The text is available at the BGSU bookstore. In addition, there will be a few readings posted on Blackboard (i.e., the place you got the syllabus). These readings are marked on the syllabus with a ‘B’.

Objective

We will begin with a consideration of some general issues, such as the standard justifications of the free market and the main theories of the firm. Then we will consider several more specific ethical issues that arise in the context of business, such as economic democracy, privacy and safety in the workplace, the ethics of advertising, product liability, business and the environment, and international business ethics. The larger goals of this course are (1) to help you to recognize and think critically about the ethical dimensions of business and (2) to give you the tools necessary to make informed and responsible decisions in the workplace.

Course learning outcomes

At the end of this course, you will be able to (i) understand the main ideas in business ethics, (ii) recognize the moral aspects of the management of firms, (iii) identify, analyze, and think critically about the reasons – explicit or implicit – people (including you) have for their views about these issues, and (iv) construct both written and oral arguments in defense of these views.

Assignments and grading

1. Attendance: 5%.
2. Reading response papers (5 at 5% each): 25%.
3. Midterm exam: 25%.
4. Final exam: 25%.
5. Final paper (5 – 6 pages): 20%.

Overall the grading scheme for the course is: 90% and above = A; 80% – 89% = B; 70% – 79% = C; 60% – 69% = D; 59% and below = F.

Here is a bit more explanation:

Attendance. You will get the whole 5% of the attendance grade simply by showing up every day and being respectful (e.g., no snoring) in class. Starting with your *second* unexcused absence (you get 1 for free), your final grade will be docked 1% (e.g., from 100% to 99%), up to a maximum of 5%. See below for the definition of “unexcused absence.” Each day in class, I will pass around a sign-up sheet. It is your responsibility, not mine, to make sure your name is on it. If you come for the first part of the class, but leave at the break, it will count as an absence for that entire day.

Reading response papers. These are due to me – either by email or in my departmental mailbox – *by 3:00 p.m.* on the day of class. In 1 – 2 double-spaced pages, you should briefly state the main point of one of the assigned readings (or a part of it), sketch its argument (i.e., tell me the reasons the author gives for his/her point of view), and make one critical point or ask one probing question about it.

You are required to turn in a reading response paper on *five* separate occasions during the course. At least two must be turned in before the midterm, and at least two must be turned in after it. If you turn in only one in the first half of the course, this cannot be “made up” by turning in four in the second half. You will receive a 0 for the response you failed to turn in. You may turn in six responses overall and I will record your grade for your best five.

The reading responses will be graded on a scale of 0 to 5, with 5 being the highest grade. I am looking for clear, accurate, and well-written (i.e., grammatically correct) explanations of the reading(s), but not the kind of polish or argumentation I expect to see on your final paper. I believe that everyone should be able to get a very high grade (i.e., an A or a B) for this part of the course.

Final exam. The final exam will not be cumulative. It will cover material from the second half of the course only. (Obviously, the midterm exam will cover material from the first half of the course only.)

Extra credit. Class will be a lot more fun – and useful – if there are vigorous discussions of the readings. (Indeed, given the set-up of the course – viz., one 3 hour meeting – it will be deadly boring if I have to lecture for three hours.) There is no penalty if you do

not participate. However, excellent participants will be given up to 2% extra credit toward their final grades. So, for example, if your other assignments average an 88%, but you spoke up regularly and intelligently, you will get an 'A' for the course. This matters more often than you might think.

Academic integrity policy

If you cheat on a test or plagiarize all or even part of a paper, I will give you an 'F' for the course. I am very serious and completely inflexible about this. If you do not know what cheating or plagiarism is, it is your responsibility to inform yourself. BGSU's official policy can be found here:

http://www.bgsu.edu/catalog/Acad_policies/Acad_policies2.html

Late policy/missed exam policy

I recognize all and only the standard excuses for missing an exam and/or turning in a paper late, e.g., illness, jury duty, or a family emergency. Documentation for your excuse (e.g., a doctor's note) will be required. If you are unsure about whether your absence qualifies as excused, ask me.

If you know you will be absent on the day of an exam, arrange to take it before that day. If you do not, and your absence is unexcused, you will not be given a make-up exam.

For each day your paper is late, it will be marked off 4%. Note, days that class doesn't meet and weekend days are still days. So, if a paper is due on a Thursday, and you turn it in the following Tuesday, it will be marked off 20%.

Papers are due at the beginning of class. If you turn it in after class is over, it will be marked off 4% (but not another 4% until the following day).

Withdrawal policy

The university's withdrawal policy will be followed strictly. It can be found here: http://www.bgsu.edu/catalog/Acad_policies/Acad_policies15.html#withdraw

Readings

Below is a *tentative* list of readings. These are subject to change, depending on time and class interest. You are expected to have completed the relevant readings *before* class meets.

Week 1: Introduction

1/10: No reading.

The market and the firm

Week 2: Utilitarianism and the market

1/17: DM, ch. 1, pp. 1 – 6; ch. 2, all.

Week 3: Rights and the market

1/24: DM, ch. 3, all.

Don't forget: at least 2 reading responses are due by week 7.

Week 4: In whose interest should the firm be managed?

1/31: DM, ch. 1, pp. 7 – 22; ch. 4, pp. 64 – 76.

Evan & Freeman, "A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation."

Optional: The Clarkson principles:

<http://www.mgmt.utoronto.ca/~stake/Principles.htm>

Week 5: In whose interest should the firm be managed?

2/7: Stout, "Bad and Not-so-Bad Arguments for Shareholder Primacy."

Orts & Strudler, "Ethical and Environmental Limits of Stakeholder Theory"

(B).

Business and employees

Week 6: Participation

2/14: DM, ch. 5, pp. 124 – 128.

McCall, "An Ethical Basis for Employee Participation."

Boatright, "Employee Governance and the Ownership of the Firm" (B).

Optional: Rogers & Streeck, "Workplace Representation Overseas: The Works Council Story."

Case: The German Model of Employee Participation.

Week 7: Security

2/21: DM, ch. 5, pp. 113 – 123.

Werhane, "The Right to Due Process."

Maitland, "Rights in the Workplace: A Nozickian Approach."

Pfeffer, "Practices of Successful Organizations: Employment Security."

Case: Levi's Shrinks.

Week 8: **Midterm exam**

2/28: No reading

Spring break, March 5th – 11th

Week 9: Employee responsibilities: loyalty and trust

3/14: DM, ch. 7, pp. 235 – 243.
Duska, “Whistleblowing and Employee Loyalty.”
Bogle, “Public Accounting: Profession or Business?”
Duska & Duska, “Auditing Ethics.”

Business and consumers

Week 10: Product liability

3/21: DM, ch. 8, pp. 284 – 296.
WH Council of Economic Advisors, “Who Pays for Tort Liability Claims?”
McCall, “Fairness, Strict Liability, and Public Policy.”

Case: Tobacco Companies under Fire.

Week 11: Truth-telling in marketing and elsewhere

3/28: DM, ch. 9, pp. 323 – 332.
Carr, “Is Business Bluffing Ethical?”
Carson, “Deception and Withholding Information in Sales.”

Cases: Advertising Headaches; New, Improved, . . . and Smaller.

Don’t forget: at least 2 (more) reading responses are due by week 15.

Business and society

Week 12: Environmental issues

4/4: DM, ch. 10, pp. 386 – 394.
Baxter, “People or Penguins: The Case for Optimal Pollution.”
Sagoff, “Why Political Questions are not all Economic.”
Bowie, “Morality, Money, and Motor Cars.”

Cases: The Detroit Project; Walt Disney v. the Sierra Club.

Week 13: Affirmative action and diversity

4:11: DM, ch. 11, pp. 440 – 447.
Fullinwider, “Preferential Hiring and Compensation.”
General Motors, “Brief in Support of the University of Michigan.”

Case: Preferential Treatment for Men?

Week 14: International business ethics

4/18: DM, ch. 12, pp. 471 – 478.

Donaldson, “Rights and the Global Market.”

Brenkert, “Marketing, the Ethics of Consumption, and Less-Developed Countries.”

Case: Drug Safety and the Third World.

Drafts of final papers due (optional).

Week 15: International business ethics

4/25: DM, ch. 12.

Maitland, “The Great Non-Debate Over International Sweatshops.”

Arnold & Bowie, “Sweatshops and Respect for Persons.”

Case: Child and Bonded Labor: Business Responsibility for Supplier Practices.

Final paper due.

Final exam: Thursday, May 3rd, 1:15 p.m – 3:15 p.m.