

Work and Justice
Summer 2006
Phil 780

Objective

This course will examine some ethical issues involving work. We will ask some of the “big picture” questions that are traditionally discussed by political philosophers, such as: is there a right to work? We will also ask some the narrower questions that are traditionally discussed by business ethicists, such as: what is the moral status of so-called sweatshops in third-world countries? Contemporary liberal political philosophers, perhaps following John Rawls, tend to say little about work. This course may persuade you that this is unwise. It will also serve as an advanced introduction to some exciting issues in business ethics.

Questions to be discussed include: (i) Should firms be managed in the interests of stockholders or all “stakeholders”? (ii) Is there a right to work? (iii) Is there a right to meaningful work? (iv) Should firms be managed democratically by employees? (v) What is the moral status of so-called sweatshops in third-world countries? (vi) Does it matter what employees get paid? If so, how?

Contact information

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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 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

1:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday. 317 Shatzel Hall.

Optional text

Ethics, Efficiency, and the Market, Allen Buchanan (Rowman & Littlefield).

This title is available for purchase at the university bookstore. Originally, I thought we would have time to read some of it. It turns out that we do not. However, it is excellent background reading for the sorts of issues that we will discuss in this course. If you have the means, I recommend picking up a copy.

Assignments

1. Two reading response papers, 2 pages each: 10%.
2. Class presentation of a reading, about 15 minutes: 10%.
3. Class presentation of your final paper idea, about 15 minutes: 5%.
4. Term paper, 15 – 20 pages: 75%.

You are required to do, and will get credit for doing, (1), (2), and (3). However, except in rare cases, your final course grade will be determined by the grade you get on (4).

Philosophy auditors are required to do *either* (1) *or* (2). That's all.

Reading response

The reading response papers are designed to help you start thinking and writing about the articles. In two double-spaced pages, you should briefly state the main point of the assigned article (or a part of it), sketch its argument, and make one critical point about it. Do not go over 2 pages! Brevity is a virtue.

You are required to turn in a reading response paper on two separate occasions during the course. You are welcome to turn in a reading response paper on the week you give your presentation.

Presentations

The class presentation of an assigned reading should be about 15 minutes. In it, you should sketch the main points of the assigned reading, and you should raise a critical comment or question (or two) about it, to get the discussion going. These readings can be really hard, so don't worry if you don't understand it all. Do the best you can, and bring your questions to class. You are welcome to do your presentation and your paper on the same topic.

Think of the class presentation of your final paper idea not as a burden, but as a golden opportunity. Your classmates and I will help you to see which of your ideas are worth pursuing, and which should be scrapped.

Due dates and late policy

Reading response papers will not be accepted late. If you can't get it done by the time class starts, don't bother. Do it another week. For every reading response you fail to turn in by the final day of the course, your final grade will be docked 5%.

Presentations must be done on time. If an emergency comes up, then you will be allowed to do your presentation on another day, or present on another topic. Otherwise, be prepared to present on the day you are assigned.

Plan to turn in your final paper by August 10th. There will be no penalty for late papers. But it is in your interest to get your work done on time.

Attendance policy

Attendance will not be taken, nor will it count as part of your final grade. However, I expect you to attend class regularly, and to contribute to discussions in class.

Academic integrity policy

I doubt you need to be reminded of this, but don't plagiarize. At this level, what's the point? Just in case, BGSU's official policy can be found here:

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

Withdrawal policy

The university's withdrawal policy 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.

Photocopies of all articles are available in the philosophy department library.

Week 1: The nature of the firm

6/27: No reading.

6/29: Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits."
Evan and Freeman: "A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation."
Marcoux, "A Fiduciary Argument Against Stakeholder Theory."

Week 2: Meaningful work

7/4: No class. Independence Day.

7/6: Bowie, "Treating the Humanity of Stakeholders"
Schwartz, "Meaningful Work."

Week 3: Right to work

7/11: Arneson, "Meaningful Work and Market Socialism."

7/13: Nickel, "Is There a Human Right to Employment?"
Elster, "Is There (or Should There Be) a Right to Work?"

Week 4: Economic democracy

- 7/18: Dahl, from *A Preface to Economic Democracy*.
Narveson, "Democracy and Economic Rights."
7/20: Boatright, "Employee Governance and the Ownership of the Firm."
Hsieh, "Rawlsian Justice and Workplace Republicanism."

Week 5: Sweatshops

- 7/25: Zimmerman, "Coercive Wage Offers."
Peter, "Choice, Consent, and the Legitimacy of Market Transactions."
7/27: Maitland, "The Great Non-Debate Over International Sweatshops."
Arnold and Bowie, "Sweatshops and Respect for Persons."

Week 6: Child Labor

- 8/1: Satz, "Child Labor: A Normative Perspective."
French and Wokutch, "Child Workers, Globalization, and International Business Ethics: A Case Study in Brazil's Export-Oriented Shoe Industry."
8/3: Class presentation of final paper topics.

8/10: **Final paper due.** Extensions are available.