321-29 Business Ethics

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PROSPECTUS
The purpose of this course is (1) to provide students with a survey of philosophical viewpoints concerning ethics and morality and (2) to apply these viewpoints to specific business cases. The texts for the course will be primary source documents from five individual philosophers and student presentations applying these source documents to current business cases. The combination of these two sources of materials will outline the philosophical foundations and business-case analysis structure for the course. Through this juxtaposition, we will conduct a meaningful examination of real-world business scenarios focused on moral and ethical considerations.

During the readings and class discussions, we will encounter many of the fundamental ethical and moral concerns that drive business ethics professionals today, as they have driven Western culture for two millennia, including: What is justice? Are moral and ethical decisions the same as legal decisions? Why should business professionals act in a moral way? Is it more important to appear to be just or to be just? What is the relationship between knowledge, technology, and virtue? How does ethical behavior affect one’s happiness? One’s career? What is the role of power in ethical or moral behavior? What is the role of reason in virtue or just behavior?

REQUIRED TEXTS
1. Various readings provided weekly

PROCEDURES
A combination of lectures, class discussions, exams, papers, quizzes, and brief written assignments will both instruct and evaluate the student in the essential principles of philosophy in this course. In order to participate in the course, students must read the assigned materials prior to class. In the subject of philosophy, perhaps more than elsewhere, questions from students on the materials are not only encouraged, but expected. As a general rule, if one student has a question about the material,
classmates will have the same, or a similar, question. Please be sure to set phones and pagers to “silent” during the class period.

ATTENDANCE
As class discussion and lecture is a primary component of the course, attendance will be monitored for every class, by the taking of role. One absence is allowed without academic penalty. Any other absence must have approval from the instructor, or will result in academic penalty.

GRADES
Course grades will be determined through the student’s completion of the following items:

1. Five (5) One-Page Summaries (20%): Each student will complete a one-page summary for each of the five philosophers we will study during the term. Details will be included on a subsequent handout.
2. One (1) In-Class Response Presentation (20%): Students will be required to make a small group presentation on one of the philosophers with other classmates. Details will be included on a subsequent handout.
3. One (1) Group Case Analysis (50%): Each student will belong to a team that will deliver a combined case study analysis presentation to the class. This assignment will analyze business case readings researched by the group from the five ethical and moral perspectives from our philosophical readings. Details will be included on a subsequent handout.
4. Class Participation, (10%): Participation in course discussions as well as potential reading quizzes

ACADEMIC HONESTY
This course will adhere strictly to the University’s official statement on academic honesty, provided by the Office of the Registrar:

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation.

All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.
Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an "F" in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.

SCHEDULE

Pre-assignment
Introduction and syllabus review

Week 1
Review of “justice” from Plato’s Republic (Ring of Gyges, Socrates’ definition of justice)

Week 2
Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics
Niccolo Machiavelli: The Prince

Week 3
Immanuel Kant: Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals
John Stewart Mill: The Meaning of Utilitarianism (from Utilitarianism)

Week 4
Friedrich Nietzsche: On the Genealogy of Morality
Summary of ethical/moral systems

Week 5
Group #1 Case Analysis, In-Class Response Essay

Week 6
Group #2 Case Analysis, In-Class Response Essay

Week 7
Group #3 Case Analysis, In-Class Response Essay

Week 8
Group #4 Case Analysis, In-Class Response Essay
Submit Case Portfolio