2013

321-01 Business Ethics

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PHIL321 - 01 – BUSINESS ETHICS

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Office Phone: 513 745 3697  
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 2:30-4PM, or by appointment  
Class Meeting Time: TR 11:30AM-12:45PM, Conaton Learning Commons 412  
Section Number: 01

Note: Please include the course and section number in the subject line of any email correspondence.

COURSE AIMS

A host of laws and regulations controls and limits financial and commercial activities. However, defenders of free market principles argue that many legal controls imposed on business are unjust. In this course, our central aim is to investigate and understand the extent to which issues of justice are relevant to the conduct of business.

We will focus on two major questions:

1. *Ethics in business*: What, if any, ethical concerns face those engaged directly in commerce and finance? We will devote specific attention to the role that normative ethics can help us to address questions of conduct within business practice.

2. *Ethics of business*: To what extent can philosophy help us to understand the central principles and purposes which commerce and finance themselves promote? Are these aims just?

In endeavoring to answer these questions, we will focus, on the one hand, on historical conceptions of the meaning and value of economic practice and, on the other hand, on specific issues and problems which contemporary economic practices raise. We will devote special attention to questions concerning the value and importance of labor to individual development and flourishing, the centrality of corporate and financial institutions to the contemporary social and political world, the relation between commerce and the environment, and issues concerning justice between nations which international trade and commerce raise.

XAVIER UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

This course satisfies the Core Curriculum Philosophy Elective. This class aims to contribute to the achievement of the following Core Curriculum goals:

1. First and foremost, students will continue to participate in a grand tradition of reflection on philosophical questions which animates the intellectual life of the western world from the middle of the first millennium BC up until the present day. Students will come to consider the connections between great texts from the history of philosophy and other significant scientific, moral, cultural, political, and spiritual contributions drawn from our shared history. (Goal 4, Objective 2 especially)

2. Students will develop the ability to engage in thoughtful reflection on questions of moral significance, and to articulate a coherent ethical perspective on the world and their place in it. Students will learn to relate their understanding and thinking in a relevant and constructive way to their own experiences and to the contemporary world. They will be responsible in articulating the views of others in their writing and speech. (Goal 5, Objectives 2 and 3)

3. Students will be intelligent questioners. They will be able to reflect thoughtfully on fundamental questions arising from the human condition, such as questions about the grounds of morality, the essence of justice, the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, the nature of beauty, or the reasonableness of religious faith. Students will be able to analyze and interpret great texts, and to evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence. (Goal 2, Objectives 1, 3, and 4)

4. Students will be effective communicators both orally and in writing. They will be able to organize and express their ideas, formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources, and utilize an effective writing process guided by audience, purpose, cultural context, and disciplinary standards. (Goal 1, Objectives 1, 2, and 3)
5. Students will be thoughtful, creative, and critical agents of inquiry, discovery, and expression in new
domains of knowledge. Students will utilize their imagination and creativity, individually and collectively, to
innovate and generate new perspectives to problems. (Goal 3, Objective 1)

**REQUIRED WORKS**


Smith, Adam. *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund,
1982.

**GRADE BREAKDOWN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper &amp; case study presentation</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
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**SHORT PAPER**

Students will be required to write one short paper 4-6 pages in length. The aim of this paper is to provide an
indication of the extent to which you understand the works which we study in the course. For this reason, they
will be primarily exegetical (or interpretive). You will be asked to restate, in your own words, the position of
the author under question on a specific issue, and the argument that that author puts forth to defend that view.
The instructor will be happy to discuss the criteria on the basis of which these papers will be assessed during
office hours.

Papers should be typed and printed, and submitted at the start of class on the due date provided on the
assignment sheet. Papers submitted after class begins will be deemed late. Late papers are subject to a
deduction of 0.3 grade points per day for up to three days. Papers not yet submitted after three days will not be
accepted, and the student will be awarded a grade of “F” for that assignment.

Students are required to maintain a digital backup of all submitted work until the end of the semester.
The instructor reserves the right to request a digital copy of any work submitted by the student.

**EXAMINATIONS**

Students are required to write a mid-term and final examination. The examinations will concern substantive
ethical ideas and questions raised in class. Students should be prepared to apply ethical principles to specific
cases.

**RESEARCH PAPER AND CASE STUDY PRESENTATION**

Each student will be required to write a longer research paper (8-10 pages) concerning an issue of
contemporary ethical significance. For this paper, you will be responsible for considering the articles in the
Beauchamp text in light of one of the cases presented in the text. You will be asked to restate and analyze the
relevant arguments from the articles and then draw on those arguments in offering an analysis of the case.

In addition, each student will be required to give a short presentation on the specific case about which you
write. Students will analyze the those cases, drawing out points of ethical significance that they raise, and
present an argument concerning the appropriate course of action in each case which makes appeal to a specific
ethical position. Presentations will be short (10-15 minutes). Students will sign up for their presentation topic
and date early in the semester. Students who fail to sign up for a presentation date or who miss their
presentation date cannot be guaranteed a make-up. In the event that no make-up can be scheduled, the student
will receive a 0 (zero) for the presentation portion of their grade.

**PARTICIPATION**
This portion of your grade will be assigned based on the extent of your participation in class. It will be based on the frequency with which you provide valuable contributions to class discussion, which includes asking relevant or cogent questions, as well as your general attentiveness and engagement with the course material. Since much of the class will proceed by discussion of specific passages in the course texts it is imperative that you bring the week’s readings to class with you.

**TOPICS COVERED**

Students are required to consult the course website for breakdowns of the week’s readings. These breakdowns will be updated weekly and some will include suggested study questions. Others will include an account of issues of significance that either frame or expand on what is given on the page.

Materials listed in the online schedule that do not appear on the required texts list will be available by electronic reserve through the web site.

1. INTRODUCTION – Week 1: Republic review
2. COMMERCE AND WEALTH – Weeks 1-3: Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations (selections)
3. LABOR AND CAPITAL – Weeks 3-5: Karl Marx, Capital (selections) (First paper questions distributed Thursday, September 26)
4. ECONOMIC JUSTICE – Weeks 5-6: Rawls, Nozick, and Singer
5. THEORIES OF MANAGEMENT – Week 7: ETB 2 (Class does not meet Tuesday, October 8; First paper due Thursday, October 10)
6. EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR – Weeks 8-9: ETB 3, 4
7. MARKETING AND ADVERTISING – Week 10: ETB 5 (Midterm exam Thursday, October 31)
8. FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING – Weeks 11-12: ETB 6
9. TECHNOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT – Weeks 13-14: ETB 7-8 (Class does not meet Thursday, November 28)
10. INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS – Week 15: ETB 9
11. ECONOMIC JUSTICE REVISITED – Week 16: ETB 10 (Research Papers due at the start of the final class, Thursday, December 12; Final examination Tuesday, December 17, 10:30AM-12:20PM)

**COURSE POLICIES**

**ATTENDANCE**

Attendance in class is mandatory. Students are expected to arrive promptly at the start of class, prepared actively to engage with the course material.

Students are permitted up to four (4) absences per semester. *Every two times a student is late to class, they will have one absence counted against this total.* After the fourth absence, each successive class missed will result in a final grade reduction of 0.3 grade points. For example, a student who has earned the grade of B but missed 5 classes would receive a B−, one who has missed 6 classes would receive a C+, and so on.

Any classes missed due to otherwise-sanctioned university activity, minor illness, or any other reason will count against this total of four absences. Students who anticipate missing a number of classes for any of these reasons should take special care to attend otherwise. Exceptions will be issued only in order to observe a religious holiday.

In the event of extreme illness, it is imperative that students make arrangements to meet with the professor to discuss their ability to complete the minimum requirements of the course. While I am willing to make arrangements to enable students to complete the course successfully, in the event that the student has missed a significant portion of the class, it may be impossible for them to complete the course. Concerned students should contact the professor as soon as possible.

*A special note for student athletes:* Each class missed by a student athlete to participate in a sanctioned athletic event will count as an absence. Student athletes will have the number of permitted absences raised above four if it is necessary to accommodate their scheduled events. However, this entails that they need to be especially careful not to miss additional, unnecessary classes. Frequent attendance is absolutely essential for student athletes to keep up with the remainder of the class.

Equally importantly, student athletes should, in no way, go out of their way to inform the instructor of their performance issues in other classes, or indicate what grade they “need” from this course in order to continue playing the sport in which they choose to participate. The instructor is aware of the university
policies regulating student athlete academic performance, and regards any efforts to influence his assessment of student performance in the course as highly inappropriate.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE
Students are expected to arrive for class on time and prepared to contribute actively to the class discussion. Timely arrival and preparedness include addressing bodily needs (such as snacking and restroom use) prior to the start of class.

Use of electronic devices of any kind in class is prohibited, except in cases of documented need. Obviously unacceptable in-class behaviors include: internet viewing, text-messaging, napping, and conversation of issues not related to the class discussion.

ACADEMIC HONESTY
The Xavier University Catalog states (http://www.xavier.edu/registrar/ugrd_policies.html#Academic_honesty):
“The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based on integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of 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 materials submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic records 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 the full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course.”

Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. The instructor requires that students submit their written work both in hard copy to the instructor on the due date and to TURNITIN (http://www.turnitin.com).

All students must complete the plagiarism tutorial on the library web site in advance of the due date for their first paper. Links to this tutorial can be found on the course web site in the first week of class.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF WRITTEN WORK
The Philosophy Department has adopted the following standards for the evaluation of all forms of written work:

A = Work that not merely fully and accurately reproduces class discussion, the main thread in the argument or the major philosophical significance under discussion, but which goes beyond these and indicates a contribution of the student, giving evidence of a deeper understanding of the material in question.

B = Work that shows a more or less complete and exact understanding of the issues, texts and/or arguments as explained in class, clearly and logically formulated, but without advancing beyond these explanations.

C = Work that shows a basic understanding of the material but with errors, omissions and confusions of either a formal or contextual nature.

D = Work that shows a minimal acquaintance with the material, or serious logical or conceptual flaws in formulating responses to the question raised, the argument at issue, or the philosophical text under discussion.

F = Work that indicates inadequate acquaintance with texts, issues, or ideas with little or no valid argumentation; or the work is handed in beyond the point of acceptance or else plagiarized. Cases of plagiarism, which involves the use of published work or other written material without proper citation, must be given a ‘0’.