

## **PHIL 103.03 Business and Computer Ethics Spring 2017**

### **Instructor**

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### **Office hours**

I will be available for office hours on Tuesday and Thursday 12-2pm in Mendocino 3030. While I'm happy to meet face-to-face, you can also send me a SacCT message during those times and expect an immediate response (unless I am with another student). You can also send a SacCT message to request a real-time virtual meeting using SacCT's online chat tool (Collaborate).

### **WARNING: Administrative Drops**

This fully online course has strict participation and activity requirements, including engagement with the course material on a weekly basis. Login to SacCT right away and begin with the Orientation module. Students who do NOT:

1. login to the course at least once each week
2. be actively engaged with assigned coursework

will be considered to have abandoned the course and may be administratively dropped by the instructor *within the first two weeks of the semester*. Re-enrolment will not be permitted.

However, if you actually decide to abandon the course, it is still your responsibility to drop yourself from it.

### **Reasonable Accommodation**

If your circumstances require accommodation or assistance in meeting the expectations of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. You may need to provide documentation to the University office of SSWD (in accordance with the University policy outlined here:

<http://www.csus.edu/umannual/acad/UMA00215.htm>).

### **Course Description**

*From the catalogue:* Analytical treatment of controversial moral issues which emerge in the business world, e.g., affirmative action, corporate responsibility, the global economy, industry and environmental damage, social effects of advertising, the computer threat to personal privacy, ownership of computer programs. Discussion will focus on basic moral principles and concepts relevant to these issues.

*More!*

The corporate model of business organization has been and is a source of productivity, wealth and technological advancement and so contributes to the well-being of society. But corporations and business leaders also act immorally and irresponsibly. Ideally, we'd have more of the former and less of the latter. This course supposes that the tools of ethical analysis can be of some help in explaining some of these problems and proposing ways to avoid them. It can, first, at a micro-level. What should we think about our individual involvement with these organizations – as customers of them, as employees of them, as executives of them, as investors in them? At a macro-level the issues more concern what this mode of organization would look like in a just society. In what ways would the operations of corporations be constrained or regulated with respect to its treatment of the environment, their employees, the local and global communities, their consumers and our privacy?

### **Objectives and outcomes**

By the conclusion of this course, it should be true that students (a) understand the moral and political issues that affect questions of the appropriate role of corporations in a just society and are able to (b) apply this understanding to make sense of existing social practices and institutions (c) analyze current problems and controversies and (d) evaluate proposed solutions to them. You will need to give evidence of your ability to understand, apply, analyze and evaluate in your writing and contributions to class discussions.

Phil 103 is a GE course in area D

(<http://www.csus.edu/acad/ge/Area%20D%20Learning%20Outcomes.pdf>). Area D learning outcomes are that you:

1. Describe and evaluate ethical and social values in their historical and cultural contexts.
2. Explain and apply the principles and methods of academic disciplines to the study of social and individual behavior.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of human diversity in human society, for example, race, ethnicity, class, age, ability/disability, sexual identity, gender and gender expression.
4. Explain and critically examine social dynamics and issues in their historical and cultural contexts.

### **Text**

All required readings are pieces available as links or .pdf documents from the "Schedule and learning modules" folders in SacCT. The schedule is duplicated below.

### **Class procedures and conduct**

This is a fully online course. You must have regular and reliable access to the internet. I will be providing a variety of resources the "Schedule and learning modules" folders in SacCT. The

folders, or modules, will be numbered to coincide with the schedule below and the weeks of the semester.

Each folder/module/week will have any of the following:

- Required readings
- A video lecture to complement or support the reading assignment
- One or more assessment activities (see the section on Assessment below).

## Assessment

Please do not plagiarize or cheat. If you do then at a minimum you will be marked with a zero on the assignment. Multiple and/or flagrant violations will lead to me assigning a failing grade for the course and initiating disciplinary action through the Office of Student Affairs. Familiarize yourselves with the University's Academic Honesty Policies and Procedures document (here: <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/STU-0100.htm>).

Your final grade is determined by how many total points you earn, with these grade thresholds: 93 points=A, 90 points=A-, 87 points=B+, 83 points=B, 80 points=B-, 77 points=C+, 73 points=C, 70 points=C-, 67 points=D+, 63 points=D, 60 points=D-, and F = all scores less than 60 points.

There are these ways of earning points:

1. Answering questions correctly on 13 SacCT quizzes based on reading assignments and video lectures. 65-78 possible points (depending on the number of quiz questions each week).
2. Being an active and thoughtful participant in SacCT forum discussions. 2 possible points each for 12 possible points (see discussion forum expectations below).
3. Keeping a weekly reading summaries journal in SacCT. These are short (about 200 words), summaries of the assigned readings. Pick **one** reading assignment from each module (beginning with module 2) to summarize. Your summary:
  - should be thoughtful and grammatical
  - should **not** be simply a point-by-point, blow-by-blow, surface-level summary of the reading assignment. Rather it should be a focused presentation of what you take to be the (or a) key argument the author makes in advancing his or her thesis. Your emphasis should be on clarifying it and explaining how it is supposed to work
  - **should use the method of successive elaboration described in the document in SacCT Assignments folder.**
  - are assigned 2 points, 1 point or zero for each entry/summary based on my judgment of the care you took in preparing it. I may make finer distinctions, too, perhaps awarding .5 or 1.5 points.
  - amounts to 1 entry (of one reading assignment) per week (starting with module 2) for a total 13 summaries and 26 possible points.

**You will notice that there are 103-116 possible points in this course but your final course grading scale is based on a 100-point scale. This is on purpose. The quizzes are kind of hard, but there are enough points available for you to earn that you should be able to secure a grade you're reasonably happy with.**

### *Discussion forum expectations*

I will award up to 2 points for your interaction with each of six discussion forum prompts: 2 points for thoughtful, active participation, 1 point for limited, half-hearted participation, or 0 for no participation or inappropriate participation. I may make finer distinctions, too, perhaps awarding .5 or 1.5 points. The forum will conclude 1 week after I release the discussion prompt.

"Thoughtful, active participation" is a little vague. I evaluate your participation for each of the six discussion forum assignments based on the following:

- Did the initial post employ the method of successive elaboration?
- To what extent did the student's posts reflect an understanding and application of the concepts, issues, and philosophical challenges focused on in the course?
- To what extent did the student's posts reflect his or her familiarity with the assigned readings for the course?
- How frequently did the student post?
- How constructive and engaging were the student's contributions?
- Did the student respond thoughtfully and constructively to the prompt, the posts of others or to the responses others made to her post?
- Are the student's posts grammatical and well-constructed, satisfying the standards of college level written English?
- Other considerations:
  - Be polite and respectful of your classmates.
  - Don't be, or feed, a troll.
  - Take some time to consider what's correct, helpful, or interesting in other people's posts.
  - Give reasons and arguments for conclusions you reach. Don't preach.
  - Be prepared to change your mind if there are good grounds for it.

### **Schedule (see SacCT's Schedule and learning modules):**

#### **Introduction**

1. Applying ethics is harder than you think (Learning outcomes a, 1, 3)
  - No reading assignment

**Part I: Setting up the problem at a general level: 'capitalism' is a system of social organization based on private ownership and voluntary exchange. Is it compatible with a just society?**

2. What is capitalism?

- FA Hayek, The use of knowledge in society  
<http://www.econlib.org/library/Essays/hykKnw1.html>
  - Ronald Coase, The nature of the firm
3. The indictment of big business
    - The corporation
    - Frederic Bastiat, What is seen and what is not seen  
<http://www.econlib.org/library/Bastiat/basEss1.html>
  4. Corporations vs. 'capitalism'
    - Roderick Long, Corporations versus the market; or, whip conflation now  
<http://www.cato-unbound.org/2008/11/10/roderick-long/corporations-versus-the-market-or-whip-conflation-now/>
    - Kevin Carson, Economic calculation in the corporate commonwealth

**Part II: Capitalism is based on private ownership. In this part of the course we approach some problems related to property rules: property rights can be more or less extensive, both with respect to the sorts of things that can be legitimately owned (e.g., ideas?) and with respect to the bundle of rights the owner enjoys over these things (e.g., the right to exclude *all* externalities?). What sorts of property schemes can be justified?**

5. Markets and the environment
  - Garrett Hardin, The tragedy of the commons
  - Elinor Ostrom, Governing the commons (selections)
6. Markets and intellectual property
  - Richard Posner, The law and economics of intellectual property
  - Stephen Kinsella, Against intellectual property
7. Market failure and government failure
  - Randy Simmons and William Mitchell, Pathological politics
  - Kyle Swan, Government failure

**Part III: Capitalism is based on voluntary exchange. In this part of the course we approach some problems related to the normative significance of agreement. We usually think that a person's consent is normatively transformative. For example, the moral status of an action performed without someone's consent, like giving someone a kiss, can be changed from 'wrong' to 'permissible' by securing consent. But is consent always morally transformative? What has to be true about an agreement in order for it to count as genuinely voluntary?**

8. Managerial compensation
  - Jeffrey Moriarty, Do CEOs get paid too much?
9. Globalization

- Carol Gould, Moral issues in globalization
- Matt Zwolinski, Sweatshops, choice, and exploitation

#### 10. Advertising

- Tom Beauchamp, Manipulative advertising IVLE
- John Kenneth Galbraith, The dependence effect
- FA Hayek, The non sequitur of the dependence effect

#### 11. Product safety

- John Hasnas, The mirage of product safety

**Part IV: Capitalism has generated unprecedented levels of technological innovation. In this part of the course we approach some problems related to the use of technology. Many have concerns about privacy and equity. What should we think about them?**

#### 12. Net Privacy

- G. Randolph Mayes, Privacy in a transparent age
- J. Moor, Towards a Theory of Privacy in the Information Age

#### 13. Net neutrality

- Tim Berners-Lee, A magna carta for the web  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/tim\\_berniers\\_lee\\_a\\_magna\\_carta\\_for\\_the\\_web](https://www.ted.com/talks/tim_berniers_lee_a_magna_carta_for_the_web)
- Eli Dourado, Cable companies are experimenting with metered data. Good!  
[http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future\\_tense/2015/10/cable\\_companies\\_are\\_experimenting\\_with\\_metered\\_data.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2015/10/cable_companies_are_experimenting_with_metered_data.html)
- Michael Lopato, Net neutrality advocates' concerns are outdated  
<http://www.economics21.org/commentary/net-neutrality-concerns-outdated-isps-02-11-2015>

#### 14. Cyber crime and internet expression

- Computer crime laws  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/hackers/blame/crimelaws.html>
- The state of nature

#### 15. Recap, review, work week