

## **PHIL 103.02 Business and Computer Ethics Fall 2017**

### **Instructor**

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### **Office hours**

I will be available for office hours on Monday and Wednesday 10-12pm in Mendocino 3030.

### **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/umanual/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!*

Commercial activity has been and is a source of productivity, innovation, technological advancement *and wealth*. It 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:

Why aren't people more morally virtuous more often? Why do morally decent people do bad things?

Are there ways we could make use of discoveries in moral psychology to improve our ethical performance?

What moral virtues and moral principles ground good business practices that lead to more people leading better lives?

At a macro-level the issues more concern what commercial activity would look like in a just society:

Do corporations have any special moral duties or obligations? What is “corporate social responsibility? To whom are corporate managers (CEOs) primarily responsible? What kind of responsibilities do they have?

What are the moral foundations of commercial activity and a market society? What virtues, if any, are on display in such activity? Why should we have private property and a system that allocates scarce resources with a competitive price system?

What are the moral limits of markets? Are there some things that should not be bought or sold? Why? In what ways would commercial activity be constrained or regulated in a just society?

### **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/acaf/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 in SacCT. The schedule is below.

### **Class procedures and conduct**

You must come to class each scheduled meeting prepared to discuss the assigned readings in an intelligent and informed way. This requires you to have read *and thought about* all materials assigned for that meeting. Also, you must come to class each scheduled meeting prepared to be an active participant in the lectures, discussions, activities and games.

### **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. Be an active and thoughtful participant in class meetings. (10 possible points)

Someone who earns all these points would:

- Demonstrate familiarity with the advanced preparation materials;
- Offer original and thoughtful ideas and perspectives;
- Connect with ideas from other classes or something in the news;
- Share relevant experiences;
- Pose good questions; and
- Take stands and defend them with references to readings and experiences.

To encourage this, please write a short (200 words) response that engages an argument from the reading(s) assigned for each day of class. I will collect response papers **at random**. Each response you pass earns you either .5 or 1 point towards your final course grade.

2. Answer questions on a scheduled midterm exam based primarily on readings and classroom lectures/discussions. (25 possible points)

Exam is **October 16**

3. Answer questions on the scheduled final exam based primarily on readings and classroom lectures/discussions. (25 possible points)

Exam is **December 13, 8-10am**

4. Fulfill the roles you have been assigned or taken on for the group "Ethics Project." (40 possible points: Presentation 20 possible points; Report 20 possible points)

This will take some time to explain....

*Think of something good to do. Do it.* The goal of this project is for you to do something that adds value to the world.

To help you complete the project, the Center for Practical and Professional Ethics here at Sac State will reimburse documented and approved expenses associated with your project up to \$1000.

Be warned: the university regulates how the money can be spent, and so using the money will require you to navigate complicated spending rules. Sometimes it may seem to you that the administrators in charge of approving expenses want nothing more than to prevent you from doing good in the world!

You will write up a report answering the following questions, due on the last day of class. On one of the last three days of class, your group will give a presentation that summarizes your answers to these questions that try to get you to explain what you tried to do and what you did, why you thought it was good to do, what happened along the way, whether you succeeded or failed (and according to what standard of success), and what you learned:

How did you interpret the imperative to do something good? Did you focus on moral or nonmoral goodness? Why? How did you decide about the tradeoff between what's most desirable in itself and what's most feasible to accomplish? What were your opportunity costs? How did you allocate labor in your group? What obstacles did you expect to encounter and how did you pre-emptively plan to overcome them? What obstacles did you in fact encounter, and how did you respond? Were there any moral obstacles or decisions you had to confront? Did you add value to the world, taking into account the costs of your time, effort, and any money spent? Did you succeed or fail, and by what standards should we judge you? What did you learn? What would you have done differently?

Class presentations needn't be formal, but should be informative and worth everyone else's time.

*Warning! This project is difficult. Every project will encounter unforeseen obstacles. Groups that start early will probably overcome the obstacles; groups that start late will almost certainly fail. You can wait until the night before an essay is due and still pass in a decent essay, but no one can do an Ethics Project a week before it's due. Start working on it earlier than you think you need to.*

Submit a list of people in your group **by September 15**. There should be 6 roughly equally sized (6-7 member) groups.

Submit a tentative group "business" plan **by September 29**. (1 page)

Submit a progress report **by October 13**. (1 page)

Schedule your group presentation for **December 4, December 6 or December 8**.

Submit your group report by **December 8**.

Submit your individual assessments of each member of your group, including yourself, **after your group report has been submitted**. Provide a score from 0-10 and whatever

justification for the assigned scores that you think is appropriate. I will keep these assessments confidential.

**Schedule (see SacCT's Schedule and reading list):**

DATE	TOPIC/ACTIVITY	READING/ASSIGNMENT
Aug 28	Course overview	Syllabus
30	This is a class in applied ethics, but applied ethics is a little suspicious...	None
Sept 1	The great fact	Smith, Of the division of labor
4	<b>Labor Day</b>	<b>No class</b>
6	The wealth (and poverty) of nations	Lomasky & Swan, Wealth and poverty in the liberal tradition
8	How do markets work? Prices	Hayek, The use of knowledge in society
11	More markets, Opportunity costs	Bastiat, What is seen and what is not seen
13	More markets, Private property	Schmidtz, On the institution of property  Swan & Vargas, Lockean property rights
15	<b>The trading game</b>	None
18	What are the social responsibilities of business?	Friedman, "The social responsibility of business is to increase profits"  <b>Submit ethics project group members</b>
20	The market failures approach	Heath, A market failures approach to business ethics  Brennan, Review of Joseph Heath, <i>Morality, Competition and the Firm</i>
22	Market and government failures	Jaworski, An absurd tax on our fellow citizens
25	More failures	Munger, Market failure and sensible regulation  Swan, Government failure
27	Moral psychology  <b>The lying game</b>	None
29	Why be moral?	Frankena, Why be moral?  <b>Submit ethics project "business" plan</b>

Oct 2	More moral psychology	Play Evolution of trust game
4	Why aren't we saints?	Milgram, The perils of obedience
6	More saint-lessness	Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, Ethical breakdowns
9	<b>(Dis)honesty documentary screening</b>	Ariely, (Dis)honesty: the truth about lies
11	<b>More (Dis)honesty</b>	Ariely, (Dis)honesty: the truth about lies
13	How we could do (a bit) better...	None
		<b>Submit ethics project progress report</b>
16	<b>Midterm exam</b>	
18	Worries about commercialization	Beauchamp, Manipulative advertising
20	More advertizing	None
23	Worries about consumerism	Galbraith, The dependence effect  Hayek, The non-sequitor of the dependence effect
25	Other market limits: what can money buy?	Sandel, How markets crowd out morals
27	More commodification	Sandel, What money can't buy
30	Markets in everything	Brennan and Jaworski, Markets without symbolic limits
Nov 1	More commodification	None
3	Globalization	Gould, Moral issues in globalization
6	Sweatshop labor	Zwolinski, Sweatshops, choice and exploitation
8	More sweatshops	None
10	<b>Vetran's Day</b>	<b>No class</b>
13	Net privacy	Mayes, Privacy in a transparent age
15	Net neutrality	None
17	More net neutrality	None
20	<b>Out of class activity</b>	Mill, On liberty (ch. 2)
22	Internet expression and crime	None
24	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday</b>	<b>No class</b>
27	Back to private property – should we have it in ideas?	Posner, The law and economics of intellectual property  NPR's <i>This American Life</i> , Patent trolls
29	Product safety	Hasnas, The mirage of product safety
Dec 1	More product safety	None
4	<b>Group presentations</b>	None
6	<b>Group presentations</b>	None
8	<b>Group presentations</b>	<b>Submit group report</b>
13	<b>Final exam 8am-10am</b>	