

PHIL 103.02 Business and Computer Ethics Fall 2018

Douglas 110, MWF 10-10:50am

Instructor

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Office hours

I will be available for office hours on MWF 11am-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/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!

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 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. (20 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 broader community;
 - Share relevant experiences;
 - Pose good questions; and
 - Take stands and defend them with references to readings and experiences.

I will assess this in a variety of ways **in class** throughout the semester. I may ask for a summary and/or response related to the assigned reading or some other activity or "thought question" that requires you to engage with the course material. These aren't announced ahead of time. You're either in class to earn the point, or you aren't.

2. Answer questions on a scheduled midterm exam based primarily on readings and classroom lectures/discussions. (40 possible points)

Exam is **Wednesday, October 10**

3. Answer questions on the scheduled final exam based primarily on readings and classroom lectures/discussions since the midterm exam. (40 possible points)

Exam is **Friday, December 14 8-10am**

Schedule (see the reading list in SacCT):

| DATE | TOPIC/ACTIVITY | READING/ASSIGNMENT |
|--------|---|--|
| Aug 27 | Course overview | Syllabus |
| 29 | This is a class in applied ethics, but applied ethics is a little suspicious... | None |
| 31 | The great fact | Smith, Of the division of labor |
| Sept 3 | LABOR DAY – No class meeting | |
| 5 | The wealth (and poverty) of nations | Lomasky & Swan, Wealth and poverty in the liberal tradition |
| 7 | How do markets work? Prices | Hayek, The use of knowledge in society |
| 10 | More markets, Opportunity costs | Bastiat, What is seen and what is not seen |
| 12 | More markets, Private property | Schmidtz, On the institution of property Swan & Vargas, Lockean property rights |
| 14 | The trading game (in-class activity) | None |
| 17 | Private property in ideas? | Posner, The law and economics of intellectual property NPR's <i>This American Life</i> , Patent trolls |
| 19 | More IP: Intellectual property and tech | None |
| 21 | Internet expression and crime | The state of nature |
| 24 | More cyber-crime | None |
| 26 | Internet privacy | Mayes, Privacy in a transparent age |
| 28 | More net privacy | None |
| Oct 1 | Property protection and blockchain technology | Berensten and Schar, A short introduction to the world of cryptocurrencies |
| 3 | More blockchain | None |
| 5 | Net neutrality | Swan, Upgrade to dance of reason prime! |
| 8 | More net neutrality. Metering? | None |
| 10 | MIDTERM EXAM | |
| 12 | What are the social responsibilities of business? | Friedman, "The social responsibility of business is to increase profits" |
| 15 | More corporate governance | None |
| 17 | The market failures pproach | Heath, A market failures approach to business ethics Brennan, Review of Joseph Heath, <i>Morality, Competition and the Firm</i> |

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| 19 | Market and government failures | Jaworski, An absurd tax on our fellow citizens |
| 22 | More failures | Munger, Market failure and sensible regulation Swan, Government failure |
| 24 | From market failures to moral failures The lying game (in-class activity) | None |
| 26 | Why be moral? | Frankena, Why be moral? |
| 29 | Why aren't we saints? | Milgram, The perils of obedience |
| 31 | More saint-lessness | Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, Ethical breakdowns |
| Nov 2 | (Dis)honesty documentary screening | Ariely, (Dis)honesty: the truth about lies |
| 5 | The Ethics of Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Special Program in University Union Redwood Room | None |
| 7 | Barriers to innovation and entrepreneurship | None |
| 9 | Moral limits to markets | Sandel, How markets crowd out morals |
| 12 | VETRANS DAY – No class meeting | |
| 14 | More commodification | Sandel, What money can't buy |
| 16 | Markets in everything? | Brennan and Jaworski, Markets without symbolic limits |
| 19 | Globalization | Gould, Moral issues in globalization |
| 21 | Sweatshop labor | Zwolinski, Sweatshops, choice and exploitation |
| 23 | THANKSGIVING – No class meeting | |
| 26 | Product safety | Hasnas, The mirage of product safety |
| 28 | More product safety | None |
| 30 | Moral limits to markets | Beauchamp, Manipulative advertising |
| Dec 3 | More advertizing | None |
| 5 | Worries about consumerism | Galbraith, The dependence effect Hayek, The non-sequitor of the dependence effect |
| 7 | Final exam review | None |
| 14 | FINAL EXAM, 8-10AM | |