

AJ/BUS/PHIL 186
Professional and Business Ethics
Spring 2004

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10:30 a.m. -- 12:00 p.m. or by appt.

Course Description:

Ethical business conduct has always been a matter of social concern, but there are times when society takes a closer look at business conduct with greater interest, and it is corporate scandal, like Enron, and individual wrongdoing, like Martha, and government action, like the tobacco suits, which pave the way for greater public interest and resulting attempts at rectification. However, good business conduct should be a way of life and not dependant on scandal or public curiosity to maintain ethical standards. What ethical standards should business follow? Seems like an easy question, but when one weighs the needs of the company for profit against general social welfare, the answer is not always so clear. This course is designed to provide the theoretical and reasoning tools necessary for the student to evaluate not only the moral values for business and professional life, but also for the student's own personal moral road map. The course is an advanced G.E. course in Area S: Self, Society and Equality in the United States, and the course is organized according to the Area S objectives to impart to the student the ability to:

- Describe how religious, gender, ethnic, racial class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age identity are shaped by cultural and social influences in contexts of equality and inequality.
- Describe historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the United States.
- Describe social actions by religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age groups leading to greater equality and social justice in the United States.
- Recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups in the United States.

In this course students will employ a number of theoretical approaches to moral reasoning in the careful study of modern business and professional approaches. The course endeavors to improve the student's ability critically and independently to analyze and assess moral issues and arguments. Emphasis will be given to the global effect of U.S. business practices, and on issues of equality and social justice. Since this is the Administration of Justice section of the course, special attention will be given to the role of legislation, and law enforcement, and the concept of justice in formulation of moral standards, as well as applying ethical theories to public agencies and corporations.

Text: Shaw, W. H. & Barry V., *Moral Issues in Business*, Ninth Edition.

Course Requirements:

There will be readings assigned for each class. It is important to attend class and read the assigned material before class. On the tests, you will be responsible for information contained in the readings as well as in the class lectures.

Regular attendance and active participation in class is important. Students are encouraged to ask questions, contribute ideas, and engage in discussion of the course material. Each section will end with a discussion period during which all are expected to participate. Extra points will be given for regular participation.

As an advanced G.E. course, this course requires a minimum of 3000 words of writing, including in-class and out-of-class assignments. In addition to the final examination, which will be an essay test, there will be in-class philosophical writing exercises designed to evaluate the students' ability to think critically and write clearly and effectively. The in-class writing will generally consist of a summary and evaluation of one of the assigned readings. These in-class assignments will be unannounced. In addition there will be one *research* paper, about eight pages in length. Topics and guidelines are covered in a separate handout entitled "Writing Assignment."

Late paper policy: Points will be deducted if a paper is up to a week late. After one week, late papers will not be accepted, without prior approval from instructor.

Plagiarism: Adhere to the SJSU code prohibiting plagiarism. Any plagiarized work will receive no credit and may not be resubmitted. Plagiarism may also result in disciplinary action by the Department or the University. SJSU plagiarism policy located at: www1.cob.sjsu.edu/7_dean_office/f88_10.html.

Communication: Students should not hesitate to telephone at the above provided number or drop by the office at any time. Email communications are encouraged. All documentation and assignments will be posted on the World Wide Web at www.danpeak.com. Students should check there regularly.

Course Grade: All assignments are graded ABCDF. The final grade will be based on a weighted average of the assignment and test grades. *Please note that University and Departmental guidelines require a serious and compelling reason to drop a course. A course cannot be dropped because of grades alone.*

If you need course adaptation or accommodations because of a disability, or if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please see me during office hours.

Course Schedule:

January 29 Introductions, course outline and writing requirements.
Lecture on researching and writing an essay paper on ethics. Pretest.
Introduction to the study of Ethics.

PART I WESTERN MORAL CONCEPTS

Centering on learning objectives #1 & 4: Describing how religious, gender, ethnic, racial class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age identity are shaped by cultural and social influences in contexts of equality and inequality. Recognizing and appreciating constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups in the U.S.

February 5:

Cultural and class differences in relation to moral judgment. The size of our moral universe and our obligations and the relationship between the U.S. and the rest of the world. Introduction to business entities. What is an entity? Why incorporate? For profit vs. not for profit.

Read: Chapter 1 "The Nature of Morality" (pp. 2-27)
Solomon, "It's Good Business" (pp. 35-44)
Case 1.1 "Made in the USA Dumped in Brazil, Africa, Iraq" (pp. 28-30)

February 12, 19, and 26:

Moral Theories. The foundations of moral reasoning and attempts to defend moral rules. The relationship between moral behavior in general and moral behavior in the business world.

Read: Chapter 2 "Normative Theories of Ethics" (pp.55-81)
Case 2.1 "Baby M" (pp.81-82)
Case 2.2 "The Ford Pinto" (pp.83-86)
Case 2.3 "Blood for Sale" (pp. 88-89)
Rachels "What Would a Satisfactory Moral Theory Be Like?" (pp. 90-95)
DesJardins "Virtues and Business Ethics" (pp. 96-100)

***** Essay Topic Due February 19th *****

PART II JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Centering on leaning objective #2. Describing historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S.

March 4 and 11:

Theories of Justice. Economic distribution within the U.S. as well as between the U.S. and the rest of the world. Social equalities and inequalities that are generated by the economic and justice system in the U.S.

Read: Chapter 3 "Justice and Economic Distribution" (pp. 101-123)
Isbister, "Income Distribution" (pp. 131-139)
Case 3.1 "Whatever Happened to the Steel Industry?" (pp. 123-125)
Case 3.2 "Poverty in America" (pp.127-129)

PART III NON-TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS OF ETHICS; BUDDHIST, FEMINIST, OBJECTIVIST ETHICS & CAPITALISM:

Centering on learning objective #3. Describing social actions by religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age groups leading to greater equality and social justice in the U.S.

March 18 and 25:

The role of moral thinking and theories of justice in a capitalist, consumer society. The dynamics of capitalism and the relation to social inequalities.

Read: Chapter 4 "The Nature of Capitalism" (pp. 150-168)
Schumacher "Buddhist Economics" (pp.181-185)
Case 4.1 "The Downsizing of America" (pp. 169-171)
Case 4.4 "An Internet Parasite" (pp. 176-177)

April 1: Spring Break. No Class.

April 8:

Corporate responsibility in the U.S. and abroad. The social and moral responsibilities of big business.

Read: Chapter 5 "Corporations" (pp. 204-226)
Orlando "The Ethics of Corporate Downsizing" (pp. 255-263)
Case 5.4 "Levi Strauss at Home and Abroad" (pp.236-239)
Case 5.5 "Charity to Scouts?" (pp. 240 - 241)

PART IV DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE; RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Centering on learning objective #3: Describing social actions by religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age groups leading to greater equality and social justice in the United States, and recognizing and appreciating constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups in the United States.

April 15:

Civil liberties and rights in the workplace. Discrimination issues and issues of pay equity.

Read: Chapter 6 "The Workplace (1): Basic Issues" (pp. 276-297)
Levine "The Libertarian Critique of Labor Unions" (pp. 317-324)
Case 6.1 "Burger Beefs" (pp.298-300)

*******(Essay, Due April 22)*******

April 22:

Safety and privacy issues in the workplace. Personal and family values in the workplace.

Read: Chapter 7 "The Workplace (2): Today's Challenges" (pp.325-344)
Lippke "Work, Privacy, and Autonomy" (pp.347-354)
Case 7.5 "The Mommy Track" (pp.353-355)

April 29:

Loyalty to the Company. Abuse of Power. Whistleblowing.

Read: Chapter 8 "Moral Choices Facing Employees" (pp.387-406)
Moore "What Is Really Unethical About Insider Trading?" (pp. 425 - 432)
Case 8.2 "Profiting on Columns Prior to Publication" (pp. 408-410)

May 6:

Job discrimination issues. Workplace issues related to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Sexual harassment. Affirmative action.

Read: Chapter 9 "Job Discrimination" (pp.453-472)
Gratz v. Bolinger & Grutter v. Bolinger, U.S. Supreme Court (2003) Constitutionality of so called "Reverse Discrimination" by educational institution.

PART V - WORLD OF WORK: CONSUMER ISSUES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS
Centering on learning objectives #1 & 2: Describing social actions by religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age groups leading to greater equality and social justice in the United States, and recognizing and appreciating constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups in the United States.

May 13:

Last Class. Consumer rights and the culture of overproduction . advertising. Autonomy in a consumer culture.
Environmental Issues. The value of environmental stability and the obligations of businesses to preserve it. The effects of 'the depletion of natural resources on different economic and cultural groups.

Read: Chapter 10 "Consumers" (pp.506-532)& Chapter 11 "The Environment" (pp.567-586)
Case 10.1 "Breast Implants" (pp.533-535)
Consider the Oreo controversy. <http://www.bantransfats.com/>

Final Exam - Thursday, May 20th from 5:15 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

There is an eight page written paper due for this class on April 22, 2004. The assignment is an essay discussing a topic suggested by current events, the text or your own personal experiences related to ethical decisions of agencies or business entities. On or before February 19th, you must submit a short, one paragraph statement of your chosen topic.

The easiest way to pick a topic is to watch the business section of the newspaper, or use the topics introduced in the text in the form of cases or readings. This paper must include reference to a minimum of two articles, books or papers. A rich source for these articles and topics may be found through the ethics links page of my website.

Topics include how particular companies, for instance HP, handle some of the ethical concerns set forth in the text, such as diversity, see:

<http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/globalcitizenship/ethics/index.html> ;

or consider the ethical style of particular CEO's, like retired GE kingpin Jack Welch, see:

http://www.wsws.org/articles/2002/sep2002/wlch-s17_prn.shtml ;

or SAS founder Jim Goodnight, see:

<http://www.triangletechjournal.homestead.com/feb2003sasoprah.html> ;

or analyze Oracle's flamboyant Larry Ellison, especially his current attempt to take over and dismantle PeopleSoft, see:

<http://weblog.siliconvalley.com/column/dangillmor/archives/001105.shtml#001105> ;

or examine an issue that interests you, like war profiteering (for example, whether ALL Capitol Partners is as ethical as it advertises on its website at:

<http://www.alicp.com/>);

or if you are an AJ major, you may wish to consider prisoner industries, such as discussed in the article about Dell dropping its contract with Unicor, the Federal Prison Industries corporation, possibly due to pressure from the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition; see the Mercury News article at:

<http://www.bayarea.com/mld/mercurynews/business/6230111.htm> .

Grading will be based upon a number of factors. You will be expected to express yourself in a professional manner, show an understanding of the subject matter, and to reason in an organized, rational manner. Most important, you must compare and contrast the decisions made by the entity or individual with at least two ethical theories covered in this course, such as Utilitarianism or Egoism.