

UCOR 2910

Ethical Reasoning in Business

Fall 2019

MWF 12:30–1:55

Room: PIGT 106

Instructor: Ben Suriano, PhD

surianob@seattleu.edu

Office hours: By appointment

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to begin cultivating forms of ethical consciousness that will prepare students to think critically within the business world in order to transform it. Some of the questions that will guide this course are: What does it mean to take up ethical reasoning? Is ethics merely a private affair or necessarily social and public? Is the economy an amoral sphere of life, or are there inherent ethical standards within its functioning? What is the nature and purpose of a corporation? How might ethical reasoning be applied not only to issues within the business world but its broader relation to society and the environment? In pursuing these questions this course will be evenly split into 2 sections, the first dealing with three main forms of ethical theory and their historical development (virtue theory, utilitarianism, deontology), and the second dealing with their practical application to contemporary issues within our economic relations. Success in this course will mean that students are conversant within the three theoretical frameworks and can critically frame business and socio-economic matters according to these ethical horizons.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this course (i.e. by passing this course), you will be able to:

1. Broadly understand the three main ethical paradigms of Aristotelian virtue ethics, modern utilitarianism and Kantian deontology, and the historical context of their socio-economic origins.
2. Compare and contrast the forms of reasoning within these paradigms, assessing their various strengths and weaknesses.
3. Understand some of the historical origins of, and basic ethical issues within, modern economic life and its business practices.
4. Critically apply one of the traditions of ethical reasoning to specific business issues in a way that sheds greater light on how to engage the complexities of modern economic reality.

Required Texts:

Sandel, Michael J. *Justice: A Reader*, 1st ed. Oxford U. Press, 2007.

Sandel, Michael J. *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009

Shaw, William H. *Business Ethics: A Textbook with Cases*, 9th ed. EBOOK, Cengage Learning, 2017.

A number of required readings will be posted on Canvas.

Requirements and Grading:

Total Grade Breakdown = 300 possible points

Attendance and Participation-----10%

Reading Assignment Questions-----30% (10 assignments, 3 pts each = 30 pts)

Group Presentations-----30% (1 group presentation = 30 pts)

Final Paper-----30% (1 paper = 30 pts)

Grading scale for Essay, Exams, and Final Grade:	A	93-100%
	A-	90-92
	B+	87-89
	B	83-86
	B-	80-82
	C+	77-79
	C	73-76
	C-	70-72
	D+	67-69
	D	63-66
	D-	60-62
	F	<60

Assignments:

Attendance and Participation

10%

Because ethics entails learning how to live and reason together with regard to shared communal ends, group discussion of the readings and case studies will provide an opportunity for active learning in applying ethics through dialogue. You will be assigned a small group at the beginning of the quarter and will be expected to come to every class ready to contribute to group dialogue throughout the entire quarter. The ultimate goal is for your group to bond together through learning how to ethically reason together. You will display the fruits of your group participation by presenting a group project that analyzes a case study at the end of the quarter.

Reading Assignment Questions:

10 weeks, 3 points for each week = 30 points (30%)

Each week you will be assigned readings and a set of questions to answer about those readings. You must provide substantive answers to these questions, which means rather than just giving yes or no answers you must refer to the substance of the texts themselves and elaborate their logic. In other words, this will require reading the text carefully, taking up a charitable interpretation, and accurately presenting the reasoning of the text itself within your answer while also expanding on it in your own words. Details on the amount of questions to answer will be provided on Canvas for each week. See Canvas for more details about the expectations and rubric.

Group Presentation of Contemporary Issue: Due Last week of Classes

30 pts (30%)

Group presentations will provide an opportunity for your group to show the fruits of community established throughout the quarter. It will also provide an opportunity to show your facility in communally applying the ethical frameworks to a case study. During the last week of class each assigned discussion group will prepare a 20 to 30-minute video or PowerPoint presentation that outlines a contemporary business issue not previously discussed in the preceding case studies. The presentation must clearly present the problem, provide differing points of analysis from all three ethical frameworks, and then conclude with a reasoned argument for the best way forward in resolving the problem. See Canvas for further grading rubrics.

Final Paper (6 pages): Due 12/12, noon

30 points (30%)

This paper is your final assessment, providing an opportunity to practice ethical reasoning by applying it to a business case study of your choosing. You must show an understanding of all three ethical frameworks and provide a reasoned account of which one you prefer. You will then proceed to use the preferred ethical framework for analysis of a *current* case study. In showing the merits of that ethical framework you must apply it to a case study that was not already assigned in the classroom case discussions or group presentations. The case study must be thoroughly researched and presented with all of the relevant facts, and the application of the ethical framework should lead to not only incisive analysis but also well-reasoned judgment and a constructive proposal for moving forward. See Canvas for further grading rubrics.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center employs writing consultants who assist students at all stages of the writing process. Consultants will help students begin writing tasks, organize and develop first

drafts, and revise and edit later drafts. It is strongly recommended that you take advantage of this service. To schedule an appointment, call 206-296-6239.

Office Hours:

For any matters about the course, or if you just want to grab a coffee, talk to me through email and we will determine a time that works best for both of us.

Course Schedule:

Date		Topic	Reading Assignment
Week 1	9/25	Introduction	Sandel, <i>Justice: What's the Right Thing</i> , Ch. 1
	9/27	Historical Origins of Ethics	Canvas: McCarthy, "Aristotle on the Constitution of Social Justice" pp. 19–58
Week 2	9/30	Historical Context of Aristotle and Virtue Ethics	Canvas: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book I, book V.1; Aristotle in <i>Justice Reader</i> , <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , pp. 295–299 (books II & X)
	10/2	Virtue Ethics and Political Economy	Aristotle in <i>Justice Reader</i> , <i>Politics</i> , pp. 264–266 (chapters 1 & 2), 270–275 (chapters 8–10)
	10/4	Virtue Ethics	Canvas: Martha Nussbaum, "Nature, Function, and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution"
Week 3	10/7	Summary of Virtue Ethics	Canvas: Martha Nussbaum, "Capabilities and Social Justice"
	10/9	Historical Transition to Modern Ethics	Canvas: Carolyn Merchant, "Science and Worldviews"
	10/11	Historical Transition to Modern Ethics	Canvas: Wendy Brown, "Homo Politicus and Homo Economicus"
Week 4	10/14	Introduction to Utilitarianism – Bentham	Sandel, <i>What's the Right Thing</i> , Ch. 2; Bentham in <i>Justice Reader</i> , pp. 9–14;
	10/16	Utilitarianism - Mill	Mill in <i>Justice Reader</i> , pp. 14–47
	10/18	Summary of Utilitarianism	Canvas: Mill, "Principles of Political Economy"

Week 5	10/21	Introduction to Deontology	Sandel, <i>What's the Right Thing</i> , Ch. 5
	10/23	Deontology – Kant	Kant in <i>Justice Reader</i> , pp. 161-167 (sections 7–14), p. 176 (section 25), pp. 178-185 (sections 29–37)
	10/25	Summary of Ethical Theories	
Week 6	10/28	What is Capitalism?	William H. Shaw, “The Nature of Capitalism”
	10/30	The History of Capitalism	Canvas: Julia Ott, “Slaves: The Capital that made Capitalism”
	11/1	Historical Problems of Capitalism	Canvas: Angela Hanks, Danyelle Solomon “The Black-White Inequality Gap”; “Minority Set-Asides”
Week 7	11/4	What is the <i>Capitalist</i> Corporation?	Canvas: Shaw, Chapter 5
	11/6	Rethinking Corporate Structure	Canvas: David Herrera, “How can Work be Organized so that it is More Humane? The Democratic Mondragon Model”
	11/8	Rethinking Corporate Structure	Canvas: Nathan Schneider, “Economic Democracy and the Billion-Dollar Co-op”
Week 8	11/11	Veteran’s Day – NO CLASS	
	11/13	Corporate Social Responsibility	Canvas: Shaw, Chapter 4 case studies
	11/15	Social Responsibility and Technology/A.I.	Canvas: Kate Conger and Cade Metz, “What are we building this for?”; Cade Metz, “Is Ethical A.I. even Possible?”
Week 9	11/18	Environmental Issues	Canvas: Shaw, Chapter 7
	11/20	Environmental Issues	Canvas: Lukács, “Neoliberalism and Climate Change”
	11/22	Environmental Issues	Canvas: Julie Gorecki, “Capitalism’s Subordination of Women and Nature”
Week10	11/25	Environmental Issues	Canvas: Naomi Klein, “Climate Change is a People’s Shock”
	11/27	Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASSES	
	11/29	Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASSES	

Week 11	12/2	Group Presentations
	12/4	Group Presentations
	12/6	Group Presentations
Finals Week	Final Paper due Thursday 12/12, NOON	

University Policies:

Students with Disabilities: In case of a disability requiring accommodation, it is your responsibility to request such accommodation from the Disability Services Office (Learning Center, Loyola Hall, Room 100). Make an appointment with the Disability Specialist who will evaluate, determine, and grant the needed accommodation. An official request is required for every quarter that an accommodation is needed. To ensure granting of the needed accommodation, make the request early in the quarter.

Counseling Center: Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is committed to helping students meet the challenges of life during college, graduate and professional school by encouraging healthy personal choices and balanced perspectives. Students seek counseling and psychological services for a wide variety of reasons, including depression and anxiety; life crises; identity issues; relationship concerns; difficulty with loss or other life transitions; sexual choices and concerns; problems related to alcohol or drug use, as well as many other issues of concern. Our professional team of licensed social workers, psychologists, and graduate trainees, provide time-limited group, couples and individual psychotherapy for students and referral services for those requiring specialized or longer term care. These services are provided free of charge to students enrolled in classes. All clinical services are confidential: no information is released without the student's consent, unless required by law.

Course Withdrawal: Failure to officially withdraw from a course without completing it will result in an F grade on the student's academic record.