

BETH 5120: *Business ethics & social responsibility*, Fall 2021

Professor Marc A. Cohen, Dept. of Management (and Dept. of Philosophy)

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Course description: content, goals, and methodology

MBA 5120 explores a set of ethical questions in the space of business and economic activity. Our work will include questions about responsibility within the scope of management control (often called organizational ethics), questions about the place of business in society (what used to be called political economy), and also questions about individual responsibility as citizens and as economic agents.

One of my colleagues described business ethics in the following terms, which capture our aims in this class: “We don’t make people ethical. We help ethical people think about what it means to most effectively apply ethics in business.”

The readings, material covered in class, and written assignments are designed to match these course goals: we should,

1. understand a set of frameworks/ theoretical approaches to business ethics and apply these in our professional and personal lives;
2. think—in particular—about the range of stakeholders and obligations to those stakeholders across economic contexts;
3. heighten our sensitivity to ethical claims/ social issues in the space of business and economic activity; refine our sense of argument with respect to these claims;
4. reflect (or reflect more critically) about our own responsibilities as economic agents (as workers, managers, and consumers) and as citizens.

Much of our work in class will be case-based and will take place in discussion. In the space of ethical/ social issues, learning and progress take place in dialogue with others. (In philosophical language, this is the performative aspect of the course.) Separate from the content of the course, learning how to articulate positions and, in particular, how to disagree are important process skills with applications much broader than thinking about ethics.

There might be no right—or at least obviously right—answers in much of what we will discuss. But we will emphasize the place of reasons and argument with respect to ethical issues (often we say that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion; in this course, however, no one is entitled to an opinion without some reason or justification). Carefully distinguishing between claims and arguments, as well as determining the force of arguments, are central analytical reasoning skills that have broad application outside of this course. But don’t expect to come away from this course with neat, tidy answers. The material could complicate your lives, and that complication should be welcome.

Note: Students are very much encouraged to be pro-active about their own learning. If there is material you would like to explore but that material is not included on the syllabus, or that material is not covered in enough depth—*please let me know*.

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Schedule, readings, and assignments

- *Schedule*: This class is scheduled for Wednesday nights, 6:00-8:40. There will be no face-to-face meeting in week three (see the description in the week three module on Canvas). And the University requires all classes in week ten to be synchronous online.
 - *The course Canvas site is designed to be navigated from the MODULES tab*: each week is one Module and that Module lists the readings, work, and assignments required. Please let me know if anything on the Canvas site or something about the course isn't clear.
 - The first half of the course will focus on the manager's and the organization's obligations to different stakeholders. The second half will focus on management practice, organizational ethics, and moral-decision making.
 - *Required readings and materials*: All readings are available on the internet, in the Seattle U. Library, or will be provided.
 - *Office hours*: Informally after class and by appointment over Zoom. I'm also happy to meet on campus in person.
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Assignments/ grading

- There are three assignments during the quarter, each counts for 20% of the final grade. The final exam counts for 40% of the final grade.
 - The notebook assignment requires that students find one news article each week that raises an ethical issue; this is described on Canvas.
 - Assignments are due on Canvas. Late work will be penalized 10% per day. Exceptions require prior approval.
 - Note re. all written work: Careful writing is an important part of every assignment. Poor grammar, confusing writing, and incorrect English usage could significantly reduce grades.
 - Requests for grade changes will only be accepted in writing.
 - Note: I want this to be a discussion-oriented course, and that is only possible if students do the reading and come to class prepared. If it becomes apparent that students aren't doing the reading, I will give in class quizzes and additional weekly homework assignments—and include those in the final grade.
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Class Norms

- *Come to class prepared*. Come to class having completed the reading, taken relevant notes, and highlighted aspects that are intriguing or confusing.
- *Attendance policy*: Attendance is an essential and intrinsic element of the education process. Students are strongly encouraged to collaborate with professors and, if appropriate, cohort members or study teams, to cover any missed material. Please email the instructor or make an appointment to meet with them to discuss concerns. Missing more than two classes can result in a grade reduction.

- **We will add our voices to the discussion.** Sometimes that will be in small groups and sometimes when the class talks together. Either way, we should all engage and add value to this community of learners.
- **We will be careful to listen carefully to everyone’s comments and give others a chance to share their perspectives.** This is an important part of professional formation.
- **We will view the classroom as a laboratory.** It is a safe place to make mistakes, to engage in disagreements, and challenge each other to learn and be our best selves.
- **Email:** You are responsible for any and all messages and assignments that we send via Canvas. If you have a different, preferred email address, then make sure you set up Canvas to forward your email. **To help us keep track of your emails, all emails must be sent through Canvas.** If you send an email about the class through regular Seattle University email, we will ask you to resend it through Canvas.

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Academic Resources and Policies

Please pay close attention to University’s health and safety protocols for COVID. These may change during the quarter. Available here: <https://www.seattleu.edu/coronavirus/>.

Seattle U. Orientation to Distance Learning: Resources can be found at <https://seattleu.instructure.com/courses/1563070/pages/study-habits>.

Re. Academic Honesty:

- Seattle University is committed to the principle that academic honesty and integrity are important values in the educational process. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense against the academic community. Acts of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to the Seattle University Academic Honesty Policy.

The University’s policies and procedures with respect to academic honesty are available on the registrar’s web site, here: <https://www2.seattleu.edu/registrar/academic-policies/>

- All quoted or paraphrased material, or borrowed ideas, must be cited or noted as such in written papers. This includes online material. “Unintentional” plagiarism is still plagiarism. Consequences of ignoring this standard rule of scholarship are very serious. Also, presenting work from other students as your own is a serious breach of academic honesty. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact the instructors, talk to your academic advisor, or see the University’s policy—which can be found at the address above.
- Also, requests for grade changes will only be accepted in writing.

Academic Resources

- Library and Learning Commons: <http://www.seattleu.edu/learningcommons/>) This includes: Learning Assistance Programs, Research [Library] Services, Writing Center, Math Lab, and others.
- **English-Language Learning Center (ELLC):** This Center offers free tutoring for all SU students who are non-native speakers of English. ELLC can help with any type of assignment: written essays, online discussions, oral presentations, interview practice, etc. For the schedule or to book a session please visit <https://www.seattleu.edu/ellc/ellc-tutoring/>.

- **Writing Center:** See <https://www.seattleu.edu/writingcenter/online-consultations/> for more about the online consultations or schedule an appointment.

Support for students with disabilities

- Seattle University values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded an equal opportunity to participate in learning experiences. For disability and other learning-related needs and accommodations that you have already arranged via Disability Services, please communicate with the teaching team during the first week of class through email or Zoom. Should concerns arise at any point in the quarter, please let us know as soon as possible.
- If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an “invisible disability” such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, but have not yet arranged support services and/or accommodations, we encourage you to do so through Disability Services staff at DS@seattleu.edu or (206) 296-5740. Disability-based adjustments to course expectations can be arranged only through this process.
- We are committed to working with you, so please do not hesitate to contact the teaching team.

Notice on Religious Accommodations

- It is the policy of Seattle University to reasonably accommodate students who, due to the observance of religious holidays, expect to be absent or endure a significant hardship during certain days of their academic course or program. Please see, Policy on Religious Accommodations for Students. See: <https://www.seattleu.edu/media/policies/Policy-on-Religious-Accommodations-for-Students---FINAL.PDF>

Office of Institutional Equity

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination based on sex in educational programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. This prohibition includes sexual misconduct, which encompasses sexual harassment and sexual violence. Seattle U remains committed to providing a safe and equitable learning, living, and working environment. Seattle U offers emergency, medical, and other support resources, as well as assistance with safety and support measures, to community members who have experienced or been impacted by sexual misconduct.
- Seattle U requires all faculty and staff to notify the University’s Title IX Coordinator if they become aware of any incident of sexual misconduct experienced by a student.
- For more information, please visit <https://www.seattleu.edu/equity/>. If you have any questions or concerns, you may also directly contact the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Institutional Equity (email: oiie@seattleu.edu; phone: 206.296.2824).

GRADING SCALE

A 94-100, superior	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79
A- 90-93	B 84-86, good	C 74-76, adequate
	B- 80-83	C- 70-73