

Spring '01

Grande Prairie Regional College
Department of Arts, Commerce and Education
Philosophy 3850: Ethical Theory and Business

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Course description:

People acting in a number of different capacities in the economy need to make a variety of ethical decisions that have a significant impact upon other persons and upon society more generally. Consequently, this course will examine arguments concerning right, wrong and morally acceptable courses of action with respect to topics such as: corporate social responsibility, professional roles, whistleblowing, discrimination, privacy, deception, advertising, pollution and the environment, and bribery.

Course objectives:

The objectives of this course include:

- introducing you to philosophical concepts, theories and approaches, and arguments that can be used to try to address issues in business ethics
- encouraging you to consider the nature and extent of moral obligations of people in a variety of economic capacities including: manager, professional, employer, employee, investor, consumer, citizen, and member of the global community
- encouraging you to develop your ability to analyze and evaluate issues, and work towards your own resolution of them.

Course requirements:

First essay	Fri. 1-8 June	15%	(3-4 pages)
First exam	Mon. 4 June	25%	
Second essay	Fri. 15 June	25%	(5-6 pages)
Final exam	Mon. 18 June	35%	

Required texts:

Deborah Poff & Wilfrid Waluchow, editors, Business Ethics in Canada, 3rd edition. Toronto: Pearson Education, 1999.
Course package assembled by the instructor.

Proposed Topic and Reading Schedule:

Note: Readings not from the text are included in the course package.

Background reading:

- John Arthur, "How to Read Philosophy," pp. 13-16 from Studying Philosophy: A Guide for the Perplexed
- #4 Leonard Brooks, "Business Ethics in Canada: Distinctiveness and Directions," pp. 70-84

Topic One: Introduction. Setting the stage.

1. Examples of ethical dilemmas in business.
2. Law and morality.
3. Relativism and morality.

Readings:

- Text, Introduction, pp. 1-4
- DesJardins & McCall, "Is Obedience to the Law Enough?" p. 16
- Jan Narveson, "Obeying the Law," pp. 259-67
- DesJardins & McCall, "Ethical Relativism: Who's to Say What's Right or Wrong?" pp. 6-7

Topic Two: Ethical Theories.

1. Consequentialism
2. Nonconsequentialism: natural law, natural rights, Kant
3. Feminist theory, Ross, virtue ethics
4. Psychological and ethical egoism
5. Social contract

Readings:

- Handout
- DesJardins & McCall, "Moral and Legal Rights," pp. 4-5

Optional:

- Text, pp. 4-23, 28-30

Topic Three: Free Markets - contract, utility and rights.

Readings:

- DesJardins & McCall, "Rights Arguments for the Free Market," pp. 58-65, 68-70

Topic Four: Corporate Social Responsibility.

Readings:

- Text, Part I including:
- #1 Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits," pp. 43-7
- #2 Thomas Mulligan, "A Critique of Milton Friedman's Essay," pp. 48-53
- #3 Alex Michalos, "Moral Responsibility in Business," especially pp. 55-7 & arguments 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12
- #5 Sir Adrian Cadbury, "Ethical Managers Make Their Own Rules," pp. 85-90

Topic Five: Professionals.

Readings:

- Conrad Brunk, "Professionalism and Responsibility in the Technological Society," pp. 60-75
- Deborah Johnson, "Professional Ethics," pp. 559-72

Topic Six: Employee Loyalty and Whistleblowing

Readings:

- Text, Part IV, including
- #16 Frederick Elliston, "Anonymity & Whistleblowing," pp. 205-17
- #17 Mike Martin, "Whistleblowing: Professionalism, Personal Life and Shared Responsibility..." pp. 218-29

Topic Seven: Discrimination and Employment Equity

Readings:

- Wilfrid Waluchow, "The Ethics of Hiring: Should Looks Count?" pp. 199-204
- Text, Part V, including:
- #18 Rosalie Abella, "Defining Equality in Employment," pp. 252-69
- #20 Ronald Burke & Susan Black, "Save the Males," pp. 288-97
- Case 7: Re: Stelwire Ltd & United Steelworkers, pp. 298-302
- Case 8: Central Alberta Dairy Pool, pp. 303-7

Topic Eight: Health and Safety in the Workplace

Readings:

- Text, Part III, including:
- #12 Harry Blasbeek, "The Worker as Victim," pp. 164-70
- Case 4: From Dust to Dust, Lloyd Tataryn, pp. 182-6
- Case 5: Antonia Di Palma & Air Canada, pp. 187-91

Topic Nine: Employee and Consumer Privacy

Readings:

- James Rachels, "Why Privacy is Important," pp. 351-7
- "Should Concern for Drug Abuse Overrule Concerns for Employee Privacy," pp. 174-91 in Taking Sides, especially 174-80, 183-7
- DesJardins and McCall, Decision Scenarios A, F & G, pp. 260, 4-5

Topic Ten: Honesty and Deception in Business

Readings:

- Text, Part IX, including:
- #33 Carson, Wokutch & Murrmann, "Bluffing in Labor Negotiations," pp. 490-9
- #34 James Michelman, "Deception in Commercial Negotiation," pp. 500-9
- #35 Patrician Werhane, "The Ethics of Insider Trading," pp. 510-14
- Case 12: Hollis v. Dow Corning Corp., pp. 515-21
- Case 13: Thompson & Kilner v. Boise Cascade, 522-29

Topic Eleven: Advertising

Readings:

- Text, Part VIII, including:
- #29 Robert Arrington, "Advertising & Behavior Control," pp. 440-50
- #30 Barbara Phillips, "In Defense of Advertising," pp. 451-61
- #31 John Waide, "The Making of Self & World in Advertising," 462-9

#32 Nan Zhou & Mervin Chen, "A Content Analysis of Men & Women..."
pp. 470-81

Case 11: R.J. MacDonald Inc. v. Canada, pp. 481-5

Topic Twelve: Pollution and the Natural Environment

Readings:

- Palmer, Tan & Peacock, "If a Tree Falls," pp. 432-6

- Text, Part VI, including:

#21 Law Reform Commission of Canada, "Crimes Against the Environment," pp. 314-18

#22 Ted Schrecker, "Risks versus Rights," pp. 319-42

#23 Harriet Rosenbery, "The Kitchen & Multinational Corporation,"
pp. 343-61

#24 Singh & Carasco, "Business Ethics, Economic Development & Protection of the Environment in the New World Order,"
pp. 362-73

Case 9: Mercury in the Environment, A. Shkilnyk, pp. 373-85

Case 10: R v. Canadian Pacific Ltd, 385-91

Topic Thirteen: Business in a Global Economy

Readings:

#25 Thomas Donaldson, "Multinational Decision-Making," pp. 395-405

#26 Lane & Simpson, "Bribery in International Business,"
pp. 406-14

#27 Thomas Carson, "Bribery & Extortion in International Business,"
pp. 415-28

#28 Deborah Poff, "Reconciling the Irreconcilable: The Global Economy & the Environment," pp. 429-36

Topic Fourteen: Investors and Consumers

Readings:

- Anders Hayden, "Capitalist Crunch," pp. 488-93