

PHIL331 Business Ethics

Time:

Mondays: No lecture

Wednesday: 1400 - 1435

Friday: 1400 - 1450

Venue:

Lecturer: Irwin Chan

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Overview

Contrary to popular belief, “profit maximization” is not the only thing that matters in business. Ethics also matter, and people are beginning to recognize this. Businesses involve other parties whose interests are at stake, e.g. employees, business collaborators, competitors, suppliers, local communities, and so on. Businesses nowadays cannot and should not ignore the interests of relevant stakeholders but should take them into consideration when making business decisions. This course encourages you to take a broader view of business. It aims to develop your ability to recognize and think about the interests of all relevant stakeholders, to solve business problems in light of their interests, and to make business decisions in ethically informed ways.

We will begin with a discussion of a few ethical theories and two theories of the nature of the firm. Knowledge of these theories will enable us to identify ethically relevant factors and make ethical evaluations/decisions when dealing with problems in business. We will then apply these theories to various topics such as deception in business, women in business, and treatment of employees.

We will also discuss plenty of case studies throughout the term and apply the theories that we have learnt to analyze and evaluate these cases. Most importantly, we will practice using these theories to take the interests of all relevant stakeholders into consideration when analyzing and making ethically informed decisions to solve the problems in these cases.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- (1) explain the relevance of ethics to business in terms of the topics covered in this course;
- (2) apply ethical theories to identify ethically relevant factors;
- (3) make ethically informed business decisions by taking into account the interests of all relevant stakeholders.

Reading

You do not need to buy any textbooks for this course. Most of the reading materials can be found on the library website in electronic form. Other reading materials can be downloaded from Moodle or will be distributed in class under the fair use provisions.

Please read the assigned reading. Doing the assigned reading and familiarizing yourself with the topic can facilitate the learning process and are essential to your learning.

Reading List:

Arnold, Denis and Norman E. Bowie, "Sweatshops and Respect for Persons."

Carr, Albert. "Is Business Bluffing Ethical?"

Frank, Robert. "Can Socially Responsible Firms Survive in Competitive Environments?"

Freeman, R. Edward. "Stakeholder Theory" [Link: <https://youtu.be/Ih5IBelcnOw>]

Friedman, Milton. "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits."

Sen, Amartya. "Does Business Ethics Make Economic Sense?"

Slaughter, Anne-Marie. "Why Women Still Can't Have It All?"

Schedule

Week #	Topic	Reading	Note
1	Introduction		
2	Business & Ethics 1	(i) Friedman, (ii) Carr; Case Study: Puffing Your Resume	
3	Business & Ethics 2	Freeman (Video); Case Study: Outsourcing	
4	Moral Theories 2	(Manuscript)	
5	Moral Theories 2	(Manuscript)	Assignment 1 Due
6	Case Studies	Case Studies: Costco & Volkswagen	
7	Game Theory & the Econ of Business Ethics	(i) Frank, (ii) Sen; Case Study: Dayton-Hudson & Target	
8	Sweatshop and Living Wages	Arnold and Bowie; Case Study: Global	

		Profits	
9	Women in Business	Slaughter; Case Study: Sapora	Assignment 2 Due
10	Environment Ethics		
11	<i>TBD (Case Studies?)</i>		
12	Summary		

Assessment

- (1) Case Study Analyses (5+25% x2)
- (2) Final Group Project (40%)

(1) Case Study Analyses (5+25% x2)

There are two case study analysis assignments. On each assignment, there is a business-related problem where some ethical issue(s) arise(s). You need to analyse by identifying and explaining (i) the interests of all relevant stakeholders, (ii) the ethical problem(s) that arise(s), and (iii) suggest a solution that is ethically informed, makes business sense, and, ideally, creative.

For each of the two assignments, you need to first submit a rough outline (5%) and then a final draft (25%).

(2) Final Group Project (30%)

The content of this assignment is very similar to the case study analyses except (i) it is longer and more in-depth and (ii) it is a group project. More details will be released later in the term,

Late Submission Policy

If you cannot submit your assignments on time and require academic accommodations, you are welcome to come and talk to me about your situations, but please do so as early as possible. Extensions may be given depending on your circumstances. However, late assignments without legitimate excuse will be subject to penalties (10% per day).

Course Website

Our course website is Moodle. You can find the syllabus, lecture slides, and other reading materials there.

Interim Course Evaluation

A short and informal survey will be posted on **Canvas** in **Week 5**. This is to let me

know your thoughts and comments on the course materials, the lectures, the assignments, etc., and help me to improve the course. I encourage you to do the survey.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic misconduct. It will not and should not be treated lightly. Please cite properly if you take any text from someone else. For details on UBC's plagiarism policy and tips on avoiding plagiarism, please see <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959> and <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/resource-guides/avoiding-plagiarism/>

Diversity and Inclusivity

No one is born to be good/bad at philosophy (or anything). You are here to learn new things and improve your thinking and argument skills over the course of 13 weeks. I encourage you to take this opportunity to learn as much as you can and make improvements, and I will do my best to design the course and arrange the lectures in ways that give everyone a fair chance to do so. If you have any thoughts or comments on the course arrangements, you are always welcome to come talk to me in person or send me an email.

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities. You can find more details on academic accommodations by contacting Accessibility Services or go to <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>.

I understand that institutions may sometimes seem unapproachable. **You are always very welcome to come and talk to me** if you have any concerns, e.g. assignment deadlines, missing classes, etc.