

Syllabus

Business Ethics

PHIL 1040 | Spring 2017
Department of Philosophy
Auburn University

For ease of navigation, the PDF version of this syllabus has a hyperlinked table of contents, which should be viewable in any PDF reader.

Instructor:	Dr. Nicholas (Nic) Koziolk		
Email:	nkoziolk@auburn.edu		
Office:	Haley 3058		
Office Hours:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30–5:00, and by appointment		
Class Meetings:	PHIL 1030–002	TR 12:30–1:45	Haley 3309
	PHIL 1030–003	TR 11:00–12:15	Haley 3174
	PHIL 1030–004	TR 8:00–9:15	Haley 3218
	PHIL 1030–008	TR 9:30–10:45	Haley 3218

1 Course Description

In this course, we will explore a wide range of issues concerning the place of business in society. Questions we will address include (but are not limited to) the following: What responsibilities do businesses have to society at large? What responsibilities do businesses have to the members of that society, be they employees, consumers, shareholders, or merely (present or future) citizens? What responsibilities does the society at large have to businesses? What responsibilities do individuals (employees, for example) have to businesses? How do laws and public policies affect everyday business behavior? How does everyday business behavior influence legislators and policymakers? What are the ethical ramifications of these relations between business and government?

2 Course Objectives

The overall goal of the course is not to provide definitive answers to any of the questions posed above; it is, rather, to develop a sense of the complexity of those questions, and of the interrelations between the different issues raised by each of them. The goal, in other words, is not to decide what place business should have in society; it is, instead, to become practiced in thinking about the various considerations that are potentially relevant to making particular decisions about the role of

business in the real world. We will address this complexity by thinking about each business-ethical problem we discuss from a variety of perspectives, including those of employees, consumers, business managers, shareholders, politicians, policymakers, and citizens. We will see that different facets of each business-ethical problem come into view from each of these different perspectives. Our working assumption will be that a truly satisfying solution to any business-ethical problem would be one that takes into account every single one of these perspectives. Perhaps no such truly satisfying solution is possible. But in that case the aim should be to take into account as many perspectives as possible, given whatever real-world constraints there may be.

3 Learning Outcomes

In this course—*if* you put in the work, i.e., if you read and reflect on the material, come to class, participate in discussion, and put time and effort into your written work—you will acquire and/or hone some important and widely applicable skills, in particular, how to read and think analytically and critically, and how to construct and critique arguments effectively. But you will learn to apply these skills primarily in relation to views about the interface between ethics and business. You will thus learn, most especially, to think more carefully and critically about a range of issues pertaining to living well (i.e., both happily and ethically) as a participant in the modern economy. You will learn how to think about the obstacles (both personal and systemic, both local and global) to making money without harming others or yourself, and without allowing others to harm you. And you will acquire familiarity with some of the considerations and arguments (on both sides of various debates) that are relevant to (for example):

- acting ethically in your working life,
- integrating your job or career into a satisfying and rewarding *human* life,
- promoting justice and fairness in your society (from the level of individual businesses to that of the global economy),
- assigning responsibility (for the effects of doing business) to businesses and their employees.

4 Course Requirements

4.1 Readings

You are required to complete all assigned readings *prior* to the class meetings for which they are assigned, as indicated in the Schedule of Readings (see section 6 below).

There are two required texts: *Business Ethics: An Interactive Introduction*, by Andrew Kernohan (Broadview Press, 2015) and *Business in Ethical Focus: An Anthology* (Second Edition), edited by Fritz Allhoff, Alexander Sager, and Anand J. Vaidya (Broadview Press, 2017). (If you buy the latter from somewhere other than the AU bookstore, make sure you buy the second edition.) The vast majority of assigned readings will be from these two texts. Occasionally, however, readings will instead be posted to Canvas in PDF format.

You are required to bring the day's assigned reading with you to class, in hard copy. (This means that you will need to print the readings that are posted to Canvas.)

4.2 Open-Book Quizzes

Most of your work this semester will consist in reading the assigned texts and completing open-book Canvas quizzes. These quizzes are to be completed *before* you come to class. Quizzes on readings from Kernohan's book will be multiple-choice, and will be graded. Quizzes on other readings, including those from *Business in Ethical Focus*, will be short-answer, and will—with two random exceptions (see 4.2.2 below) be ungraded. In both cases, part of the idea behind the quiz is to allow you to engage with the material before you come to class. So, if you struggle with a particular quiz, or quiz question, you should definitely ask about it in class.

4.2.1 Multiple-Choice Quizzes

Quizzes on the Kernohan readings will be multiple-choice, and available on Canvas. These quizzes all involve applying concepts from each chapter to the case study that appears at the end of the chapter. The quizzes are set so that you have five attempts, and so that you'll be able to see the correct answers after your final attempt. I encourage you to make multiple attempts, but not to do so mechanically (in other words: don't "cheat"). These quizzes provide important preparation for the final exam.

4.2.2 Short-Answer Quizzes

Quizzes on readings not from the Kernohan book will be short-answer, and also available on Canvas. These quizzes will check your understanding of key concepts and central arguments in each day's reading. You will thus be asked to explain distinctions, identify important claims, and analyze and evaluate crucial arguments. These quizzes will become more difficult as the semester proceeds, but we will discuss each relevant task in class at the appropriate time.

For the most part, you will receive points simply for completing these short-answer quizzes. But I will also read and grade two of them at random (not necessarily the same ones for every student). Your grades on those sets of questions will be

a separate component of your overall grade for the course. You will receive your grade on one set of questions after the first six weeks of the semester, and your grade for the second after the first twelve weeks.

Although you need to complete the quiz before class, you will have a chance to revise and resubmit your answers after class, and before I grade the quiz. So class is an opportunity to ask questions about the quiz that will help you to ensure that your answers are correct. I will also allow you to revise your answers again after I grade the quiz. I will then re-grade the new submission, and your score for that quiz will be the average of your scores for the two submissions. Quizzes will be graded on a 100-point scale at five-point intervals—so you will receive either 100 points, 95, 90, 85, 80, etc. Because you have opportunities to revise your answers in light of class discussion (and visits to my office hours) before they're graded, and again after they're graded, my grading of these quizzes will be quite demanding: you need, of course, to get things right; but you also need to write clearly and concisely. Your grades on the two graded short-answer quizzes will make up half of your final grade. So these quizzes are important, and you should take them seriously and put some work into them.

4.3 Final Exam

Finally, there will be a final exam. The exam will be administered at the assigned time during exam week:

PHIL 1030-002	Tuesday, May 2	12:00pm-2:30pm
PHIL 1030-003	Thursday, May 4	12:00pm-2:30pm
PHIL 1030-004	Wednesday, May 3	8:00am-10:30am
PHIL 1030-008	Tuesday, May 2	8:00am-10:30am

I will give you more information about the final exam later in the semester. For now, the important thing to know is that it will be based primarily (if not exclusively) on the Kernohan text, which includes both a glossary and online study materials that you will likely find useful in preparing for the exam. (In fact, the multiple-choice quiz questions are taken directly from these online study materials.)

5 Grading

Your final grade will be determined according to the following weighting of individual assignments and assignment of letter grades to the resulting percentage scores. Calculated percentage scores will not be rounded, but regularly attendance and active participation in class, as well as regular visits to my office hours, can potentially bump you up to the next letter grade, if you're near the cut-off. So it's very much in your interest to attend class and participate regularly.

Multiple-choice quizzes:	10%
Ungraded short-answer quizzes:	15%
First graded short-answer quiz:	25%
Second graded short-answer quiz:	25%
Final Exam:	25%

90 ≤ Score ≤ 100	A
80 ≤ Score < 90	B
70 ≤ Score < 80	C
60 ≤ Score < 70	D
Score < 60	F

6 Schedule of Readings

This Schedule of Readings is subject to revisions. Changes from the original schedule will be in **blue** (so be careful if you print in black and white). You are responsible for checking Canvas for changes to the schedule.

The location of each reading is indicated in parentheses. “K” refers to Kernohan’s *Business Ethics: An Interactive Introduction*. “BiEF” refers to Allhoff, Sager, and Vaidya’s *Business in Ethical Focus*. Readings marked “Canvas” can be found in the “Files → Readings” folder on Canvas, in PDF format, and should be printed out.

Each reading is to be completed *before* the class meeting on the date for which it is assigned, as is the corresponding (multiple-choice or short-answer) open-book quiz, which will be available on Canvas at least 48 hours before class begins.

Introduction

January 12

- No Reading

January 17

- Descartes, “First Meditation” (Canvas)

What is Business Ethics?

January 19

- Vaidya and Allhoff, “Introduction: Why Study Business Ethics” (BiEF: pp. 1-3)
- Vaidya, “Ill-Founded Criticisms of Business Ethics” (BiEF: pp. 4–9)

January 24

- Amartya Sen, “Does Business Ethics Make Economic Sense?” (BiEF: pp. 10–17)

January 26

- Kernohan, Chapter 1: “Ethical Decisions in Business” (K: pp. 1–18)

Ethical and Non-Ethical Reasoning

January 31

- Kernohan, Chapter 2: “The Nature of Ethical Reasoning” (K: pp. 19–35)

February 2

- Kernohan, Chapter 3: “Self-Interest and the Dilemmas of Cooperation” (K: pp. 37–52)

February 7

- Plato, *Republic*, selection (Canvas)
- Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, “Introduction” (Canvas)

Utilitarianism

February 9

- Kernohan, Chapter 4: “Calculating Consequences and Utilitarian Reasoning” (K: pp. 53–71)

February 14

- David Meeler, “Utilitarianism” (BiEF: pp. 35–42)

Deontology

February 16

- Kernohan, Chapter 5: “Motivations, Duties, and Rights”(K: pp. 73–87)

February 21

- Heather Salazar, “Kantian Business Ethics” (BiEF: pp. 43–48)

Justice

February 23

- Kernohan, Chapter 6: “Fairness and Distributive Justice”(K: pp. 89–107)

February 28

- Thomas Hobbes, excerpts from *Leviathan* (BiEF: pp. 619–626)

March 2

- Adam Smith, excerpts from *The Wealth of Nations* (BiEF: pp. 635–642)

March 7

- John Locke, excerpts from *The Second Treatise of Human Government* (BiEF: 627–634)

March 9

- John Rawls, excerpts from *A Theory of Justice* (BiEF: pp. 666–679)

March 14 and 16 – No Class – Spring Break

March 21

- Robert Nozick, excerpts from *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (BiEF: pp. 680–687)

March 23 – No Class – Auburn Philosophy Conference

March 28

- Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits” (BiEF: pp. 74–78)

Virtue Ethics

March 30

- Kernohan, Chapter 7: “Virtue Ethics and Community Membership” (K: pp. 109–127)

April 4

- Richard M. Glatz, “Aristotelian Virtue Ethics and the Recommendations of Morality” (BiEF: pp. 49–55)

Care Ethics

April 6

- Kernohan, Chapter 8: “Feminism, Equality, and Care Ethics” (K: pp. 129–145)

April 11

- Rita C. Manning, “Caring as an Ethical Perspective” (BiEF: pp. 56–61)

April 13

- Anita M. Superson, “A Feminist Definition of Sexual Harassment” (BiEF: pp. 476–487)

Responsibility and Autonomy

April 18

- Kernohan, Chapter 9: “Moral Accountability” (K: pp. 147–161)

April 20

- Kernohan, Chapter 10: “Respecting Autonomy and Privacy” (K: pp. 163–181)

International Issues

April 25

- Kernohan, Chapter 11: “Free Enterprise and Global Justice” (K: pp. 183–205)

Sustainability

April 27

- Kernohan, Chapter 12: “Sustainability and the Environment” (K: pp. 207–227)