

Syllabus

Business Ethics

PHIL 1040 | Summer 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.

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Office:	Haley 3058		
Office Hours:	M: 12:45–2:15, MWF: 11:00–11:30, and by appointment		
Class Meetings:	PHIL 1040–009	MWF 9:45–11:00	Haley 3324
	PHIL 1040–010	MWF 11:30–12:45	Haley 3318

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 individual 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.

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.

Both books will be available in the AU Bookstore. The Kernohan book will also be made available via Open Access, and so will be available to you through Canvas at the start of the semester. If you don't want the electronic Open Access version, you'll need to opt out of the OA program; instructions about opting out will be sent to you early in the semester.

You are required to bring the day's assigned reading with you to class. You may access the reading on an electronic device, but that device cannot be your cell phone; please use either a computer or a tablet. If you'd prefer to print the electronic readings, the AU bookstore has reasonably-priced printing services.

4.2 Participation

Our classroom time will be divided between interactive lecture and small group discussion. Thus, anytime I'm lecturing, I invite and encourage you to raise your hand and, when called upon, ask questions or request clarification about, or offer an alternative (perhaps even conflicting) perspective on, anything I've said. These "interruptions" to lectures are crucial to the success of the course. The more I know about what you're thinking, what sense you're making of the course material, and what you think about it, the more I can tailor my lectures and our discussions to what interests and concerns *you*.

Because there are quite a few of you, and because productive discussion amongst so many people can be difficult to maintain, we'll also frequently break up into small groups, where you can discuss material from the readings, and questions raised in class, with your peers. When we're working in small groups, I'll move from group to group, participating occasionally, but frequently simply listening and taking in your points of view.

I also encourage you to use my office hours, especially if you don't like speaking in front of large groups. This too counts as a form of participation; it's a way of showing me that you're engaged with the material and putting effort into the course.

4.3 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 consist of two to five short-essay questions, and will—with two random exceptions (see 4.3.2 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. But we’ll be discussing the questions at length in class (both in small groups and as a class), so you’ll have ample opportunity to digest the material from the reading.

4.3.1 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”).

4.3.2 Short-Essay Quizzes

Quizzes on readings not from the Kernohan book will be short-essay quizzes, 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-essay quizzes on time (you will receive only half credit for quizzes submitted after the deadline, unless you have an official university-recognized excuse). 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 approximately the first four weeks of the semester, and your grade for the second after approximately the first eight 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 persuasively. Your grades on the two graded short-essay quizzes will make up 40% of your final grade. So these quizzes are important, and you should take them seriously and put serious work into them.

4.4 Final Exam

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

PHIL 1030–009	Friday, August 4	8:00–10:30am
PHIL 1030–010	Wednesday, August 2	12:00pm–2:30pm

I will give you more information about the final exam later in the semester. For now, the important thing to know is that the exam will be a reading comprehension exam, and so will test the skills in reading and analysis that you'll have been practicing throughout the semester, in particular in working on the short-essay quizzes.

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.

Participation:	15%
Multiple-choice quizzes:	10%
Ungraded short-essay quizzes:	15%
First graded short-essay quiz:	20%
Second graded short-essay quiz:	20%
Final Exam:	20%

$90 \leq \text{Score} \leq 100$	A
$80 \leq \text{Score} < 90$	B
$70 \leq \text{Score} < 80$	C
$60 \leq \text{Score} < 70$	D
$\text{Score} < 60$	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, as well for other announcements pertaining to the course, our schedule, and your assignments.

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.

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-essay) open-book quiz, which will be available on Canvas at least 48 hours before class begins.

Introduction

May 19

- No Reading

May 22

- René Descartes, “First Meditation” (Canvas)
- Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy” (Canvas)

May 24

- Stephen Toulmin, “The Layout of Arguments” (Canvas)

What is Business Ethics?

May 26

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

May 29

- NO CLASS – Memorial Day

Ethical and Non-Ethical Reasoning

May 31

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

June 2

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

June 5

- Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, selections (Canvas)

Ethics and Management

June 7

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

June 9

- Lynn A. Stout, “The Shareholder Value Myth” (BiEF: pp. 79–84)

Utilitarianism

June 12

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

June 14

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

June 16

- Ian Maitland, “The Great Non-Debate Over International Sweatshops” (BiEF: pp. 207–219)
- Kernohan, Chapter 11 (selections): pp. 196–202 (“The Economic Utilitarian Argument for Free Trade,” “Winners and Losers in International Trade,” and “Distributive Justice in International Trade”)

Deontology

June 19

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

June 21

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

June 23

- NO CLASS

June 26

- Joseph DesJardins and Ronald Duska, “Drug Testing in Employment” (BiEF: pp. 369–379)

June 28

- Roger Crisp, “Persuasive Advertising, Autonomy, and the Creation of Desire” (BiEF: pp. 571–577)
- Kernohan, Chapter 10 (selection): pp. 166–170 (“Interferences With Autonomy”)

June 30 through July 7

- NO CLASS

Distributive Justice

July 10

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

July 12

- Adam Smith, “Excerpts from *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*” (BiEF: pp. 635–642)

July 14

- Karl Marx, “Estranged Labor” (BiEF: pp. 643–650)

Virtue Ethics

July 17

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

July 19

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

July 21

- Juan M. Elegido, “Does It Make Sense to Be a Loyal Employee?” (BiEF: pp. 340–351)

Care Ethics

July 24

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

July 26

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

July 28

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