

PHIL 331 - 903: BUSINESS ETHICS

2024 Fall Term:

Tuesdays and Thursdays 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Zoom

Although this course is online, UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site. This acknowledgment represents an active dedication to more just, more accountable relations.

Instructor

Dr. Celia Edell

celia.edell@ubc.ca

Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 4-5pm
available by appointment

Course Description:

This course explores some of the major questions of applied ethics as they relate to the world of work and business: What is the social responsibility of a business? What counts as exploitation in the job market? When and why is transparency important for ethical business? Does advertising create demand rather than serve consumer needs? Do our traditional moral standards continue to apply in a world of changing technology? What duties do businesses owe to the environment? How much loyalty do we owe our employers? The course concludes on a personal level: What is success? What role should work play in your life?

Students will be assessed via quizzes and (2 short, 1 longer) case study analyses.

Required text: *Honest Work: A Business Ethics Reader*, Fifth Edition, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla, Clancy Martin, and Robert C. Solomon. Oxford University Press, 2024.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Sept 3, 5 Introduction Chapter 1	"The Changing Nature of Work," Jobs with Justice Education Fund
Week 2: Sept 10, 12 Ethics at Work Chapter 1	"Respecting the Humanity in a Person," Norman E. Bowie "Facial Discrimination," <i>Harvard Law Review</i>
Week 3: Sept 17, 19 Honesty and Morality Chapter 2	"The Ring of Gyges", Plato "Trust, Honesty and Ethics in Business", Tamar Frankel Quiz 1
Week 4: Sept 24, 26 Leadership Chapter 12	"Is it Better to Be Loved than Feared?", Niccolo Machiavelli "The Moral Pitfalls of Being a Leader", Joanne B. Ciulla

Week 5: Oct 1, 3 Fairness and Justice Chapter 4	“On Human Exchange and Human Differences,” Adam Smith “Exploitation of Need,” Joanne B. Ciulla Case Study 1 due October 4
Week 6: Oct 8, 10 Fairness and Justice Chapter 4	“Justice as Fairness,” John Rawls [Oct 10 class cancelled] Quiz 2
Week 7: Oct 15, 17 Corporate Social Responsibility Chapter 5	“The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits,” Milton Friedman “Why Shouldn’t Corporations Be Socially Responsible?,” Christopher D. Stone [guest lecture by Sarah Clairmont]
Week 8: Oct 22, 24 Working with Nature Chapter 11	“At the Shrine of Our Lady Fatima <i>or</i> Why Political Questions Are Not All Economic,” Mark Sagoff “People or Penguins,” William F. Baxter Quiz 3
Week 9: Oct 29, 31 Ethics and Technology Chapter 6	“Information Ethics in a Worldwide Context,” Elizabeth A. Buchanan “Can Robots Be Teammates?,” Victoria Groom and Clifford Nass Case Study 2 due November 1
Week 10: Nov 5, 7 Ethics and Technology Chapter 6	“The Next Civil Rights Battle Will Be Over the Mind,” Clive Thompson “Why the Future Doesn’t Need Us,” Bill Joy
Week 11: Nov 14 Ethics of Advertising Chapter 7	“The Dependence Effect,” John Kenneth Galbraith “The Non Sequitur of the ‘Dependence Effect,’” Friedrich von Hayek Quiz 4
Week 12: Nov 19, 21 Whistleblowing Chapter 9	“Moral Muteness and Moral Blindness,” Frederick Bruce Bird; “Some Paradoxes of Whistleblowing,” Michael Davis “Four Concepts of Loyalty,” David E. Soles
Week 13: Nov 26, 28 Free Market Chapter 14	“Buddhist Economics”, E.F. Schumacher “The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism”, Daniel Bell Quiz 5
Week 14: Dec 3, 5 The Good Life Chapter 15	“On the Good Life,” Aristotle “Meaningful Work and Meaningful Lives,” Joanne B. Ciulla Final Case Study Analysis due December 6

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

- Articulate the economic and social benefits of ethical business practices;
- Reason systematically and explicitly about ethical problems that arise in a business environment; and
- Anticipate some of the more common ethical problems that arise in a business environment

Assessments of Learning

(1) Quizzes (5 x 8% = 40% total)

There will be five quizzes, covering material from the readings and class discussion. The quizzes will be posted on Canvas, each worth 8%. You must complete them within a couple of days. Once started, the quiz will be available for 2 hours. The questions will be multiple choice and true-false.

(2) Brief Case Study Analyses (2 x 15%)

Twice throughout the term, you will submit a brief (2 page) analysis of a given case study.

(3) Final Case Study Analysis Paper (30%)

For this paper you need to choose and analyse a real-world business case by identifying and explaining (1) the interests of all relevant stakeholders, (2) the ethical problem(s) that arise(s), and (3) suggest a solution that is ethically informed, makes business sense, and ideally, creative. This paper should be roughly 6-7 pages. You must make use of concepts and frameworks introduced in the course.

Course Policies

Attendance & Participation

Discussion and interactivity are crucial elements to learn philosophy. You are learning a skill, not just a list of facts. Philosophy cannot be ‘crammed’. I consider regular attendance to be indicative of dedication to the course, so I am much more inclined to make arrangements for things like extensions, excused assignments, etc. for students who are regular course participants. If you ask for a concession that is a matter of discretion, you will have a much higher chance of a positive response if you have a track record of coming and participating in lectures and tutorials.

Reading

You are required to access the textbook for this course. It is up to you if you want to buy it new, as an e-book, find it online, or borrow it from a friend.

Lecture Policy

Students are expected to respect other participants during the lecture. Please refrain from using computers and other electronic devices for purposes not related to the lectures, e.g. messaging, watching videos, playing games, online shopping, etc. Such behaviours are both disruptive and disrespectful. Students are also expected to take part in in-class learning activities and discussions. Improper use of electronic devices, disruptive and disrespectful behaviour, lack of due participation, and other inappropriate behaviour, if repeated, will result in disciplinary actions.

Grading Standards

Specific grading guidelines for essays will be provided later in the course and will be available on the course website.

- 80% to 100% (A- to A+) Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
- 68% to 79% (B- to B+) Competent performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
- 50% to 67% (D to C+) Adequate performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.
- 00% to 49% (F) Inadequate performance: little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

Marks in this course may be scaled (see Calendar, under Grading Practices).

University Policies

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

Academic Integrity

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or

exam and more serious consequences may apply when the matter is referred to the Office of the Dean. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the UBC Calendar: Student Conduct and Discipline.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments.

Academic Accommodation

Academic accommodations help students with a disability or ongoing medical condition overcome challenges that may affect their academic success. Students requiring academic accommodations must register with the Centre for Accessibility (previously known as Access & Diversity). The Centre will determine that student's eligibility for accommodations in accordance with Policy LR7: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities. Academic accommodations are not determined by your instructors, and instructors should not ask you about the nature of your disability or ongoing medical condition, or request copies of your disability documentation. However, your instructor may consult with the Centre for Accessibility should the accommodations affect the essential learning outcomes of a course.

Equity and special arrangements

I will do my best to ensure that all students have a fair and equitable opportunity for participation and success in the course. If you need accommodations to complete your coursework please speak with the Access and Diversity office, if you haven't already: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity> If you have religious obligations that conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations, these can be accommodated as well. See the university policy on religious holidays at: <http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy65.pdf>. Please let me know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation due to religious obligations. If you need to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, please discuss those with Celia before the drop date, as these do not fall under official accommodations by the university.