

PHL 318: Business Ethics

Fall 2008

Section 8020: M, W 5:00-6:15 p.m., Anspach 259

Section 8021: M, W 6:30-7:45 p.m., Anspach 167

Instructor: Matthew Katz

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Office Hours: T, R 2-3:30

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Course Description:

This course provides a philosophical introduction to major issues in the field of business ethics. After beginning with an overview of ethical theory, we will consider the nature of capitalism and various issues arising in the contemporary workplace. Topics will include the nature and justification of capitalism, the relationship between business and the environment, corporate social responsibility, affirmative action, and loyalty and whistleblowing, among others. Readings will be both contemporary and historical. Requirements include several quizzes, a midterm exam, and a final exam.

Course Goals

This course has two main goals. The first is to familiarize students with a few broad ethical themes related to capitalism and business practice, and with several more specific topics within each of those themes. The second is to provide an opportunity for students to think through these topics for themselves, taking a generally philosophical approach (one based primarily on critical thought and argument). A main area of concern will be whether and how moral theory can be (consistently) applied to ethical questions arising in business practices. It is important to note that understanding philosophical problems and their possible solutions are often best achieved through conversation. Hence, discussion will be a central component of the class.

Required Texts:

1. William H. Shaw. *Business Ethics*, 6th edition. Wadsworth, 2007.
2. Other materials on Blackboard.

Requirements:

1. Quizzes (25%)
2. Midterm exam (35%)
3. Final exam (40%)

Note: Missed quizzes may not be made up. However, there will be several, and your lowest score will be dropped.

Policies

1. Regular attendance and (respectful) participation are mandatory, and can influence your grade.

2. Regular on-time arrival and departure are mandatory, and can similarly influence your grade.
3. No cell phones, no text messaging, no games, no newspapers, magazines, work from other classes, etc.
4. Laptops only for taking notes (and this right may be revoked at any time).
5. Food and drink are permitted (within reason).

Academic Integrity

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with CMU's *Policy on Academic Integrity* (http://academicsenate.cmich.edu/NonCad/ACADEMIC_INTEGRITY_POLICY.pdf).

Accommodations for students with disabilities

CMU provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodation to participate in educational programs, activities, or services. Students with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should first register with the office of Student Disability Services (Park Library 120, telephone 989-774-3018, TDD #2568), and then contact the professor as soon as possible.

Schedule (subject to change):

8/25: Introduction

MORAL THEORY

8/27 – 9/8: The Nature of Morality

Reading: Shaw 2-12, 17-34
 Shaw 15-17
 Shaw 42-49

Note: NO CLASS 9/1 (Labor Day)

9/10 – 9/17: Normative Theories of Ethics

Reading: Shaw 12-15
 Shaw 49-56
 Shaw 56-62

CAPITALISM

9/22 – 9/24: What is Capitalism, and Is It Good?

Reading: Shaw 122-128
 Shaw 128-137

9/29 – 10/1: Two Challenges

Reading: Shaw 137-140; Barry Schwartz "The Demeaning of Work"
 Edmund Pellegrino "The Commodification of Medical and Health Care"

10/6 – 10/8: Is Business like Poker?

Reading: Albert Carr “Is Business Bluffing Ethical?”

10/13: MIDTERM EXAM

10/15 – 10/20: Business and the Environment

Reading: Shaw 398-415
Shaw 415-423

10/22 – 10/27: Corporate Agency and Responsibility

Reading: Shaw 158-174
Shaw 174-186; Friedman “The Social Responsibility of Business”;
Reason Online “Rethinking the Social Responsibility of Business”

THE WORKPLACE

10/29 – 11/10: Employers’ Obligations

Reading: Shaw 315-333; Steven Cahn “Two Concepts of Affirmative
Action”
Shaw 333-335
Shaw 238-252
Shaw 140-145

11/12 – 11/19: Employees’ Obligations

Reading: Shaw 276-295
Shaw 295-304
Andrew Tilin “Vanishing Point”

11/24 – 12/1: Consumers’ Rights

Reading: Shaw 349-365
Shaw 373-387

Note: NO CLASS 11/26 (Thanksgiving)

12/3: Review

FINAL EXAM

Section 8020: 12/8, 5:00-6:50 p.m., Anspach 259

Section 8021: 12/8, 7:00-8:50 p.m., Anspach 167