

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

SPRING 2015

PHIL 206 BUSINESS ETHICS

TUES. & THURS. 3:30 – 4:45 NICELY 321

Instructor: Dr. Chris Johns E-Mail: cj08@aub.edu.lb Phone: Ext. 4259	Office: 139 Fisk Hall Office Hours: T & Th 2:00 – 3:00 PM, and by appointment.
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Course Description:

The course provides an examination of main topics in the ethics of business practice. As a historical backdrop, we will begin (and end) with some classical political philosophy focusing on property acquisition, labor, human rights, capitalism, and socio-economic development (Locke, Rousseau, and Marx). We will then cover several main ethical frameworks, as they pertain to business practices (utilitarianism, Kantianism, virtue ethics, and Rossian intuitionism). Some of the business-specific topics we will cover are the stakeholders versus shareholders debate, environmental sustainability and communal responsibility, marketing and advertising, financial representation, hiring policies, religion in the workplace, and international / cross-cultural business ethics. Along the way we will examine a number of real case studies.

Basically, approximately 30 pages of reading material are due each week. You are expected to have read the material ahead of time, so that we can discuss it in class. Most of the readings are quite complicated. You will need to keep track of complex arguments, opinions (including your own), details of business practices and figures. There will be occasional quizzes throughout. You will also write one short paper, one long paper, in which you will either take a position on an argument, develop your own views, or assess a case study. There will be a final essay-exam. Occasionally, we will do “group work,” where you will answer several questions in a small group and discuss them with the class. In addition, each student will make a 10-minute presentation on one of the readings. This is not an easy class. If you are not willing to work hard, I advise you to take something else—or, stay and learn!

This course mainly emphasizes philosophical thinking, which I take to mean the slow, careful, reflective reading and analysis of texts and concepts. Classes will be discussion-driven and centered on the assigned readings. My goal is not only to introduce the student to various problems in business ethics, but to develop the habit of reading and thinking philosophically.

This course fulfills the GE Humanities II requirement

Program Learning Outcomes

- The ability to precisely identify the conclusion for which a writer is arguing.
- The ability to accurately represent the argument(s) which someone is using to support his/her conclusion.
- The ability to identify and assess objections to arguments in our readings.
- The ability to develop, explain, and defend your own views.
- To learn the basic problems of business ethics.

Essential: By taking this class, you agree to understand and to comply with this syllabus. By ‘syllabus’ I mean all of the documents found in the **Syllabus Section** on Moodle. Read all syllabus documents carefully. If I make any changes, I will inform you. If you have a question about any policy, I am happy to talk about it. But if it is in the syllabus, you can never say that you did not know it.

Required Texts: Course materials are available at the AUB Bookstore.

See course schedule below for assigned readings.

- Audi, Robert. *Business Ethics and Ethical Business* (AUB Bookstore)
- Course Packet (CP), AUB Bookstore

Graded Requirements:

- Quizzes (dispersed throughout the semester): 15% of course grade

- 2 short papers: 15% each
- Presentation: 10%
- Long paper: 25%
- Final exam: 20%

Quizzes: These are multiple choice or short answer quizzes given occasionally (according to Course Schedule) designed to keep you up with the readings and to sharpen comprehension. The Quiz for that day will be over the readings assigned for that day (or the previous day) only. Quizzes may *not* be made up. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped from your total Quizzes score. Here is how they are scored:

-1 = 90; -2 = 80; -3 = 70; -4 = 60; -5 = 0 Note that if you cheat on the quiz by looking at someone else's quiz or by giving or obtaining answers from some other source, you will receive a zero for the quiz.

Short papers and Long paper: Short papers are around 700 words in length and will be based on a question about the assigned readings. The final paper will be around 1,700 words, based on topics I will give you, but you can modify the topic to suit your interests. All papers are of the “critical” type, meaning that you will take a position (a thesis) and defend it. The grading criteria for these papers are as follows: You must be able to identify and discuss the main idea (thesis) of the readings. You must be able to identify the reasons that are given in support of that thesis. You must be able to critically evaluate that thesis. You must be able to write in clear, grammatically correct, English. Your thoughts must be well-organized. Essays that fulfill all of the above in an excellent manner will receive at least 90 points. Those that do so in a “good” manner, or fulfill the criteria partially, will receive at least 80 points. Those essays that need work in at least two of the above criteria will receive at least 70 points. Those that do not fulfill several of the criteria, or do so in a weak manner, will receive at least 60 points. Those essays that fail to display much knowledge of the readings, *or* are incomprehensible or thoughtless in expression, will receive a 59 or less. The best way to prepare for these essays is to read the assigned readings *carefully* and pay attention to how we discuss them in class. Also, for most of the readings, I will provide “reading questions” on Moodle that will help you focus on what is important. More information on how to write philosophy papers can be found on Moodle. Plagiarism is severely punished. See below.

Presentations: During week 3, you will sign up to present either (a) the reading due on the day you sign up; or (b) A case study from the back of Audi. [Please pick a case student that has something to do with the topic in the readings that week.]

- Your presentation must be no longer than 10 minutes in length and no less than 8. It should present the reading or case study as an “argument.” which means you will present the issue and defend your position on it. You should note either a problem or positive aspect of the reading/study. At the end, ask the audience to answer two questions. You must submit to me all presentation materials (notes, outlines, in pdf, Word, or Power Point form).
- At least three days before your presentation, you must post your topic (Case # in Audi, or reading for the day) on the “Discussion Forum” on Moodle. This will allow all of us to do the reading ahead of time, so that we may be better able to engage your presentation.
- You do not have to use Power Point. Sometimes it is better to distribute a copy of an outline. It’s up to you how to present the matter best. Try to be clear, enthusiastic, creative, and have some fun with it.
- Audience members must be attentive during the presentation. You will need to be attentive so you can answer and ask questions. I will issue point penalties to anyone I have to tell more than once to pay attention.
- You will be graded on clarity, presentation skills (smooth and professional), and strength of argument.
- After your presentation, submit all presentation materials to me (notes, PP file, doc, etc.).

Attendance: Attendance will be taken, but there is no attendance grade. However, your performance on the papers and exams will depend heavily on your ability to understand the assigned readings and to think critically about these issues. Also, quizzes cannot be made up. So, it is in your best interest to attend every class, be attentive, and participate. However, if you miss more than seven classes for whatever reason, you will either be dropped from the course and receive a “W”, or you will receive a failing grade of 50. Persistent lateness will count as an absence.

Participation and class conduct: Participation is strongly encouraged. To participate well, you must do the readings *before* class so we can go over them in class. Ask questions, make comments, and respond (respectfully) to other students. No question or comment is too silly or off-base. Everyone has questions, and surely others have the same questions as you. However, please do not monopolize the discussion. Give others a chance to speak. *Be respectful of me and others by listening to what is going on, rather than talking among yourselves.*

NOTE: Repeat offenders of the following behaviors will be ejected from class and will have **points removed from their final grade**. (1) Talking while someone else is talking. (2) Using cell phones in class. All electronic devices must be turned off and put away completely out of sight. If you must take notes with a computer, the internet connection must be turned off. (3) Leaving the room to make or answer phone calls; playing games or reading non-class material during class. (4) Repeated lateness; leaving early. Also, as a courtesy to me, *please do not make preparations to leave class until I say class is over*. If I seem unaware that class time has expired, kindly alert me, thank you.

Grade Calculation: I want you to understand how your grades are assigned and calculated, so that you can know better what I expect and so that you can exercise more control over your own progress. See “Calculating and Estimating Your Grades” on Moodle.” This will show you completely explicitly how all calculations are made, so that you can do them yourself. Here is a brief explanation: All grades are recorded on Moodle’s “Grades” (as well as on the assignments themselves), so you can view them as soon as I have put them up (Moodle→Administration→Grades).
To estimate your grade at any point in the semester, simply figure your average and multiply it by the “weighted” amount; then sum the weighted amounts (see “Calculating and Estimating. . .”).

NOTE: Never tell me that you “need” a certain course or paper grade, nor ask me to “go easy” on grades or anything else. The request is completely inappropriate and unethical. If made, I will *reduce* your course grade by at least 2 points. The best way to get the grade you need is to do the required work as best you can. I am a hard grader but I try to be fair. But there are no guarantees that you will get the grade you need. Keep in mind I am here to work with you. So, feel free to come to office hours or make an appointment.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the intentional or careless use of someone else’s writing or ideas as if they were your own. I consider it equivalent to stealing, lying, and cheating, and no amount of it will be tolerated in my class. Plagiarism is wrong for another reason: The general objective of college is to become a better writer, thinker, learner, and person. Plagiarizing severely undermines that objective and harms, not only you, but all students, professors, the university, and society in general. If you plagiarize, you fail to learn how to write and think. You represent yourself as having skills and knowledge that you in fact do not have. Also, *I despise plagiarism and plagiarists.* I take your work and my work seriously. If you plagiarize, then my work becomes a pointless waste of time. I hate wasting time, because I wish to fill my life with meaning and accomplishments. When I read and respond to your work, I consider myself as engaged in a mutual relationship of trust, respect, truth, care, and progress. If I am reading your plagiarized work, then I am having a false relationship with you. I despise false relationships because they destroy the substance of life. **If you plagiarize anything in this class, you will receive a grade of zero for the assignment and be reported to the Dean. It will go on your record and you could be dismissed from the university. No exceptions. In some cases, if I so much as suspect that your work is plagiarized, I will give it a zero and submit it to the Academic Affairs Committee for judgment.** This applies to any submitted work whatsoever (including essay drafts, single sentences and ideas, using dictionary definitions, encyclopedia entries, or any part thereof, paraphrasing, whether from books, internet, magazines,

friends, wherever). You must also discourage plagiarism by not giving your paper to someone else to copy. Unfortunately, I catch plagiarizers *every semester*. I am an experienced reader and can usually tell, simply by reading, when a student has plagiarized. (This also applies to papers written by ghost writers.) I can tell because the writing does not match the assignment, because the text has an “internet feel,” or because it uses awkward wording in an attempt to disguise the source. I also use Google, Turnitin, and other resources.

You can, of course, easily avoid plagiarism simply by *citing your sources properly*. If you are unsure of how to cite sources properly, see “**Documenting Sources: Rules & Mechanics**” posted on Moodle. But *you are responsible for any plagiarism*. If you are struggling with an assignment, or with your English, please come and talk to me. I am here to help.

Turnitin. Students must submit all assignments to Turnitin.com. Failure to do so results in an automatic 0 for the assignment. Here is how it works: As their website says, “Every paper submitted is returned in the form of a Originality Report. Results are based on searches of billions of pages from current and archived instances of the Internet, millions of student papers submitted to Turnitin, and commercial databases of journal articles and periodicals” (http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_solutions.html). NOTE that Turnitin only submits a “similarity” report, not a plagiarism report. The similarity report shows the percentage of your text that is similar or identical to another text, and therefore helps me determine whether you have plagiarized. Some similarity is fine and to be expected. But identical similarity or paraphrased similarity is plagiarism. NOTE: Writing papers does *not* consist of using a source and changing a few words here and there. Nor does paraphrasing a source consist of changing a few words here and there. It means making a compact summary of the main point of a paragraph, for purposes of clarification for the reader. All paraphrasing must be documented.

To submit your paper to Turnitin, go to Moodle and click on “Turnitin submission” for the current assignment.

More information on Plagiarism is posted on Moodle.

The Writing Center:

If you have writing issues that need extra attention, please take advantage of the Writing Center. Their instructors help all students, from first-year to doctoral. Keep in mind that they will *not* proofread or copy-edit your work. Walk in or make an appointment: 9 am - 5 pm, Monday – Friday. West Hall 336; Ext. 3157; E-mail: writing@aub.edu.lb

Moodle: Here you will find course material such as the syllabus, some course readings, citation mechanics, tips on writing papers, and such. Class notices and announcements will be sent to you by e-mail (via the “News Forum”) so, **check your AUB e-mail** regularly. You may also post your own thoughts on the News Forum for everyone to see.

E-mail: So that we may better communicate, you must use your AUB e-mail and “authenticate” it so that I can see your name and know who you are.

See Course Schedule, next page--

Course Schedule: This schedule is subject to change, although any changes will be announced well in advance. To be prepared for class discussions, read the assigned material *prior* to class time.

Always bring the assigned material to class. Bring whatever is assigned for Tuesday to Thursday's class as well. *If you do not bring the readings to class, I may ask you to leave until you return with them!* Presentations will be scheduled on a separate sign-up sheet.

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
1 Jan	27 Introduction to Course	29 Audi, Ch. 1 Two Democratic Traditions
2 Feb	3 CP: Locke. "Of Property."	5 Discussion
3	10 CP: Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Mankind" (part 2)	12 Discussion Quiz 1
4	17 Audi, Ch 2. CP: "Welfare, Rights, and Justice," case study.	19 Discussion Quiz 2
5	24 CP: "Equality, Liberty, and Virtue," case study"	26 Discussion
6 Mar	3 CP: "Defending Kant's Ethics in Light of the Modern Business Organization"	5 Discussion
7	10 CP: Megone, "Two Aristotelian Approaches to Business Ethics" Short paper 1 Due March 9	12 Discussion Online quiz
8	17 Audi, Ch 3, The Constituencies of Ethical Business CP: Stakeholders & Shareholders (40 pp.)	19 Discussion
9	24 Audi, 4 Framework for Ethical Decisions Quiz 4	26 Audi, 5 Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability CP: O'Neill, "Sustainability and Human Well-Being."
10 Apr	31 Audi 6 Marketing: Product, Target, and Image CP: "Marketing, Advertising, and Product Safety," case study	2 Discussion
11	7 Audi, 7 The Ethics of Financial Representation Audi, 8 Hiring Policies and Compensation Standards Audi, 9 Conditions of Employment and Codes of Ethics Quiz 5	9 Audi, 10 Religion in the Workplace Audi, 11 Managerial Leadership and Corporate Culture Short paper 2 due
12	14 Audi, 12 International Trade and Cross-Cultural Standards Audi, 13 Nationality, International Business Ethics and Cosmopolitanism	16 CP: "International Business Ethics," case study
13	21 CP: Marx: "The Estrangement of Labor"	23 Quiz 6
14 May	28 Marx: <i>Communist Manifesto</i> Available on Moodle	30 Marx continued Quiz 7
15	5 Marx continued	7 Last class Audi, Conclusion (Reading period May 8 – 10) Long paper due: May 10 3PM
16	12 Final Exam: Mon May 11 at 8AM or Wed. May 13 10:30 AM Bliss 205	14
17	19 End of Semester	