

Business Ethics Syllabus

Professor Troy FELVER
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Subject Summary

The news media have been much stronger in investigating bad behaviors done by companies. Additionally, with smartphones and social media, people record unethical corporate behavior and immediately share it with the world. Companies often do not have the systems to prevent, manage, and respond to this negative publicity. Additionally, as an employee, workers want to do the right thing. However, there are often competing pressures that push people, accidentally or purposely, toward bad behavior, which can damage both their companies and personal careers. Additionally, what is the ethical choice is not always clear, unless the employee has been taught to be ethically aware. This course will explore how individuals can approach and understand the process that leads to ethical behavior, how managers can encourage their staff to act in appropriate ways, and what organizations can do to prevent bad actions and news which can seriously damage their businesses.

NOTE: Due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 situation, this class will be conducted as a LIVE LECTURE using ZOOM. To join this class, an electronic device with strong broadband internet, a webcam, and microphone are *required*.

Course Objectives

- a) Gain an understanding of the basic principles of ethics, including utilitarianism, rights, equality, and fairness
- b) Be able to apply these methods and principles in hypothetical cases
- c) Understand the unique aspects of ethics as they apply to a global business environment
- d) Encourage students to share, communicate, and debate their thoughts and opinions regarding these contentious ethical quandaries

Textbooks

Sandel, Michael J. *Justice: What's The Right Thing To Do*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010. Print.

Treviño, Linda K., and Katherine A. Nelson. *Managing Business Ethics: Straight Talk About How To Do It Right*. Hoboken. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc, 2014. Print.

Evaluation

There will be a midterm report and final exam, a paper, and a presentation on a business ethics case. Additionally, since a primary goal of this course is to encourage class debates, attendance and class participation are very important to your grade.

Final Exam: 40%
Final Paper: 20%
Class Participation: 20%
Midterm Report: 10%
Presentation: 10%

Exams will be case-based, where students will demonstrate what they know by evaluating the fictitious ethical cases presented. The focus will be on application, not memorization, and answers will be short. The **midterm report** will be a less extensive version of the **final exam**, so students can become accustomed to the professor's examination style without a large amount of stress.

The **Final Paper** will be a chance for students to pick their own case of a real ethical dilemma in business and write about it. Students can choose their own topics, and in an approximately 3-5 page paper, students will describe the background of the ethical dilemma, the approach the company took, what other options the company had, and what is the student's opinion of the best option and her/his justifications. A handout will be given describing this project in more detail.

Students will present their topics in a 2-4 minute **presentation** to the class.

Class participation is quite important for deeper learning. The professor will track student participation in the course. Since a goal of the course is to encourage students to share their ideas, substantial points can be earned through class participation. The quantity and quality of participation will be considered.

Cheating will be taken very seriously; this class has a zero tolerance policy for any form of cheating. Any student found to be cheating will receive an automatic ZERO on the assignment or test in question, and the matter will be referred to the Dean for further punishment.

Cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain, or aiding another to obtain credit for work, or any improvement in evaluation of performance, by any dishonest or deceptive means. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: lying; copying from another's test or examination; discussion at any time of answers or questions on an examination or test, unless such discussion is specifically authorized by the instructor; taking or receiving copies of an exam without the permission of the instructor; using or displaying notes, "cheat sheets," or other information devices inappropriate to the prescribed test conditions; allowing someone other than the officially enrolled student to represent same. (Source: Cal Poly Cheating Policy)

Anticipated Schedule (Subject to Change)

Day 1: Syllabus/ Introduction to Ethics / The "Right" Thing To Do

Day 2: Sandel: Utilitarianism - Bentham and Mill

Day 3: Sandel: Utilitarianism Bentham and Mill

Day 4: Sandel: Rights -Libertarians

Day 5: Sandel: Justice – Rawls

Day 6: Treviño: Introduction to Business Ethics

Day 7: Treviño: Ethics and the Individual – A Prescriptive Approach

Day 8: Midterm Exam

Day 9: Treviño: Ethics and the Individual – A Psychological Approach

Day 10: Treviño: Ethics and the Individual – Common Ethical Problems

Day 11: Treviño: Managing Ethics in the Organization – Ethical Conduct and Management

Day 12: Treviño: Organizational Ethics and Social Responsibility – Ethical Problems of Organizations

Day 13: Presentations

Day 14: Presentations

Day 15: Treviño: Organizational Ethics and Social Responsibility – Corporate Social Responsibility

Day 16: Final Exam