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BGEN 320E.03: Business Ethics and Social Responsibility

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The University of Montana
School of Business Administration
Department of Management and Marketing

SYLLABUS



BGEN 320E ~ Spring 2015

Course title: Business Ethics and Social Responsibility (3 credits)

Professor: Rob Walsh, Ph.D.

Semester: Spring 2015

Course designation: BGEN 320E

Section/CRN: 03 (CRN 33007)

Office: GBB 336

Office Hours: T/Th 11 –12 (drop-in) & by appt.

Phone: 243-6679 (office)

Email: rob.walsh@business.umt.edu (best way to contact me)

Class meeting times / room:

Section 03—TTh 9:40 – 11:00 GBB 09

Disability Services: This course is accessible to and usable by students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the modification process. For more information, contact Disability Services at 406-243-2243 in Lommasson Center 154.

Course Overview: This Business Ethics course is designed: (1) to show what moral judgments are and to see how they are an integral and important aspect of many business decisions; (2) to become more affectively sensitive to and cognitively aware of how you make moral judgments in your life every day; (3) to help you get better at making moral judgments through theoretical study, reflection, and practice; and (4) to learn to apply theoretical moral principles to the evaluation and judgment of complex ethical issues arising in business today. Our power of judgment is a kind of mental muscle, and like all muscles, it *develops through exercise*. The ultimate goal of this course is to activate and enhance the relationship between the study of ethics and living the best possible life. (You do want to live the best possible life, don't you?)

There are four basic dimensions to this course:

1. Ethical Theories Since theory naturally informs judgment, the course will begin with an overview of various classical theories of Ethics, including Self-realization or Self-actualization theory (Virtue Ethics); Deontology or Duty Ethics; Utilitarianism; Social Contract theory, Distributive Justice theory, etc., along with some objections to the very possibility of there being any genuine foundation for ethical reasoning at all, as is asserted by moral subjectivism and emotivism, for example. You will see how these traditional ethical theories provide a foundation for how you actually go about making moral judgments every day.

You will also see how moral judgment develops psychologically and how this development can be different for different people. You will be encouraged to distinguish your own ethical theoretical orientation—something that you *already* have in place right now and utilize every day. You will learn to see your moral system more clearly, to refine it as you see fit based on our studies, and to understand how your theoretical moral perspective influences the everyday moral judgments you make within the framework of the contemporary business world—and what difference this makes to you insofar as you desire to live the best possible life.

2. Sound Logic/Critical Thinking After the investigation of the various theories of ethical decision-making, the course will take a brief but important detour into the field of critical thinking and sound logical reasoning. You will learn about the various types of argumentation. You will see exactly what constitutes a sound argument and what are called the “informal fallacies” of logical argumentation, which hinder rational thinking about moral issues. There is a kind of morality to argumentation itself which the informal fallacies elucidate. *Ad hominem* attacks passed off as sound reasoning, for example, can be assaultive and morally reprehensible. On the other hand, restating your opponent’s argument *honestly and fairly (and perhaps with compassion)* before criticizing it, would be the just and prudent thing to do.

3. Analysis and evaluation of issues Analysis of particular moral issues and dilemmas will constitute the main part of the course. You will read about and evaluate numerous critical moral issues and/or issue contexts arising in the business world today, such as the true purpose of capitalistic business, whistleblowing, social media in the workplace, discrimination against women and the poor, advertising to children, sex on the job, sweatshops, etc., *with a special emphasis this semester on moral issues arising in the global workplace.* Issues generally will be presented in a pro and con format, using two or more texts drawn from recent literature, each presenting a different moral analysis of the issue. You will read, analyze, reflect upon, and carefully evaluate and judge a number of these moral issues.



A conscious effort has been made to incorporate a multicultural and gender-sensitive ethical perspective into the structure of this course.

4. Personal Development There will be a special emphasis on the relationship between the study of ethical ideas, principles and theories, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the actual practice of living an ethical life in the world as this is reflected in your everyday individual personal growth and development, which has both affective and cognitive dimensions. As Aristotle and other ethical thinkers have remarked: What good is it to study Ethics if you do not put this *theoretical* knowledge into *practice* in your life?

I believe that what you learn in this course will be of real, practical value to you for the rest of your life, and is well worth the investment of your time and effort now.

Moodle: There is a **Moodle web site** for this course. You are expected to have taken the Moodle tutorial and be able to log into the class web site on a daily basis. This is an important course component.

My Expectations: I have high goals and expectations for myself as a scholar and professor. I also have high expectations for you as a student in this course. I expect that you will attend all classes and do all the reading, writing, and research assignments by the due dates. I expect that you will spend a minimum of two hours of philosophical focus time outside of class—reading, writing, talking, thinking—for every hour of focused classroom time. I expect that you will participate in class by taking notes, asking questions, contributing to discussions, and participating in class interactive assignments. Finally, I expect that your efforts will pay off by making you a more ethically knowledgeable, responsive, and successful business practitioner.

My Commitment to You: I consider it an honor and privilege to be able to engage in philosophical inquiry and disputation with you this semester. I promise you that I will do my very best to make it worthwhile for you to come to every class. Regarding the necessity to grade your work, I promise you that I will evaluate your

work fairly, impartially, and to the best of my professional ability without prejudice. I hope that you enjoy this course, that you do well, and *that you benefit from it personally*. I hope the same for myself. Ultimately, as I am sure you already realize, the benefit you get out of your philosophical study of Ethics—as with any endeavor—will be proportionate to the amount of effort you put into it. The same goes for me. I always have more to learn. I look forward to working together with you in this collaborative educational effort.

Grading

- Three (3) Exams: 0 to 100 pts. ea. = **300 points**
- Five (5) in-class/out-of-class assignments: 0 to 10 pts. ea. = **50 points***
- Five (5) in-class quizzes: 0 to 10 points each = **50 points**
- Eight (8) Discussion Forum Posts: 0 to 10 pts per post = **80 points**
- One (1) special project (TBA) = **10 points**
- Course survey = **5 points**
- Attendance = **5 points**

*If you miss a class for a legitimate reason (e.g., illness, school-related function, etc.) in which a project is offered and wish to make up the project, you must present *written proof* of your bona fide reason for the absence within one week of the project date. No exceptions. Thanks.

Total number of possible course points: **500 points****

**Some 'Bonus Points' (in addition to the 500 course points) may be offered during the semester.

Your final numerical grade, based on the 100 point scale below, will be determined by adding together all of the points you earn and dividing by 5; then use the **Grading Scale** below to convert your numerical grade to a letter grade (Note: fractions .5 or less will be rounded down and .6 and over will be rounded up to next whole number when computing final grades; no exceptions)

➤ **Please note:** If you miss an Exam for verified, legitimate reasons, you *must* take a written make-up exam within a week of the exam, during my regular office hours. Make-up exams will be different than regular exams. *Penalties may apply depending on reason for missing the scheduled exam.*

Grading Scale: 100 point scale

A = 100-93	B = 86-83	C = 76-73	D = 66-63
A- = 92-90	B- = 82-80	C- = 72--70	D- = 62--60
B+ = 89-87	C+ = 79-77	D+ = 69--67	F = 59 >

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend all classes. You should only miss class for a legitimate reason. Miss 0 classes = 5pts; miss 1=4pts; miss 2=3pts; miss 3=2pts; miss 4=1pt; miss 5=0pts **Please do not come to class if you have a contagious cold or flu, etc.** N.B.: Some material presented only in class will be on exams.

Academic Misconduct: All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php It is your responsibility to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code.

SoBA Code of Conduct: <http://www.business.umt.edu/Soba/SoBAEthics/CodeofProfessionalConduct.aspx>

Class Protocol:

Name placards: All students should have a name placard on her or his desk while in the classroom. This really helps me get to know everyone. I can supply you with the placard form, if you need it.

Leaving classroom during class: Students leaving or coming into the classroom while class is in session may be disturbing to the learning environment of the whole class. Out of fairness to everyone, therefore, please adhere to the following protocol: *arrive early and be prepared to remain in the classroom for the entire class period once class has started. If you know in advance that you must leave the classroom during class for a bona fide reason, please notify me before class that you will be doing so. Thank you.*

Computers in the classroom: Computers, pads, smartphones, etc. are permitted in class for the sole purpose of taking notes, connecting with the Moodle website, or researching material clearly connected with class. *Connecting to the internet during class for any reason beyond the immediate scope of the course (or legitimate emergency) is strictly prohibited.*

General comportment: Side-remarks, private jokes, guffawing, side-conversations, cell phones ringing, etc. in class can disturb the classroom learning environment that *every* student has a right to. Please be respectful.

Honor Code: The Honor Code is a centrally important feature of this course. Please read it, and, if you agree with the terms and conditions, do nothing further. If you do not agree, please see me before continuing with the course. Thank you for your cooperation creating a successful learning environment for all.

Daily Class Topics & Exam Schedule

The daily reading and lecture schedule—as well as all texts to be read—are available in the most up-to-date version on the Moodle website for this course. Please check that schedule as final arbiter of discrepancies. Assigned readings should be read prior to the class in which they will be discussed. *All texts can be accessed and downloaded through the Moodle web site for this course.*

Section I: Moral Concepts, Judgment, Emotions, Stages, Theories

1. Introduction: Philosophy, Ethics, and Moral Judgment

T 1/27 ... Course intro, syllabus, Honor Code, Moodle web site for course, etc. What is (Business) Ethics? [Case 1: Sophie's Choice]

2. Moral Psychology; Moral Development; Ethical Theories

Th 1/29 ... Moral Judgment. Kohlberg's Moral Stages theory. Ethical Theories (Virtue Ethics) [Case 2: Heinz's Dilemma]

T 2/02 ... Ethical Theories (Virtue ethics; Duty Ethics) [Case 3: What Should Mary do?]

Th 2/05 ... Ethical Theories (Utilitarianism, Social Contract) [Case 4: Overcrowded lifeboat; Case 5: Runaway trolley]

T 2/10 ... Skepticism; Existentialism; Critique of Ethics: Moral Relativism, Absolutism, Pluralism; [Case 6: Four Questionable Cultural Practices]

Th 2/12 ... Distributive Justice, Morality and Legality, Human Rights, and Moral Principles (Virtue, Duty, Respect, Welfare, Cosmopolitanism, Sustainability, etc.) [Case 7: Drowning child]

T 2/17 ... (continued) Distributive Justice, Morality and Legality, Human Rights, and Moral Principles (Virtue, Duty, Respect, Welfare, Cosmopolitanism, Sustainability, etc.) [Case 7: Drowning child]

Th 2/19 ... The Essentials of Good Argument, Fallacious Reasoning, & the Informal Fallacies

T 2/24 ... The Essentials of Good Argument ... continued; in-class review for EXAM 1

Th 2/26 ... **EXAM 1**

Section II: Application of Ethical Theory to Moral Issues in Business

1. Market Capitalism and Moral Responsibility

T 3/03 ... ISSUE 1: Do Capitalist Businesses Have Any Moral Responsibility?

Th 3/05 ... continued ISSUE 1: Do Capitalist Businesses Have Any Moral Responsibility?

T 3/10 ... ISSUE 2: Conscious Capitalism: Does it Really Make Sense?

2. Moral Issues in the Workplace

Th 3/12... ISSUE 3: Should Quotas for Women on Corporate Boards be Mandated by Law?

T 3/17 ... ISSUE 4: Can Individual Virtue Survive Corporate Pressure?

Th 3/19 ... ISSUE 5: Can Ethics Codes Build 'True' Corporate Ethics?

T 3/24 ... ISSUE 6: Does Blowing the Whistle Violate Company Loyalty?

Th 3/26 ... **EXAM 2**

SPRING BREAK

3. Moral Issues in Advertising, Marketing, and Compensation

T 4/07 ... ISSUE 7 ***SPECIAL PRESENTATION*** "Epictetus, Jules Evans, and Philosophy for Life (and Business!)"

Th 4/09 ... ISSUE 8: Should Advertising Directed at Young Children be Restricted?
T 4/14 ... ISSUE 9: Is Immersive Advertising to Young Children Morally Acceptable?
Th 4/16 ... ISSUE 10: Are Organic Foods Really Worth the Cost?
T 4/21 ... ISSUE 11: Are Multinational Corporations Free from Moral Obligation?

4. Moral Issues in the Global Workplace

Th 4/23 ... ISSUE 12: Do MNCs Have Duties to Workers in Their Supply Chain Factories?
T 4/28 ... ISSUE 13: Global Justice and International Business
Th 4/30 ... No Class (Asia-Montana Energy Summit)

Section III: Toward a Sustainable Prosperity for All People

1. Moral Issues Regarding the Triple Bottom Line: Economy, Environment, Human Welfare

T 5/05 ... ISSUE 15: Extraction Ethics: Should the Keystone XL Pipeline be Approved? Should we continue to rely on fossil fuels? Are fracking and other risky extraction techniques morally justifiable? Etc.
Th 5/07 ... Course summary; evaluations; Review for **EXAM 3**

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will gain a working knowledge of various mainstream ethical theories including Virtue Ethics, Natural Law Theory, Kantian Deontology, Utilitarianism, Existentialism, Pragmatism, and Distributive Justice.
2. Students will acquire an understanding of logical reasoning and critical thinking skills, including the nature and function of reasoning; the structure of philosophical argument; inductive and deductive reasoning, etc.
3. Students will be able to recognize in readings and their own work various informal fallacies such as Ad Hominem, Begging the question, Composition, False generalization, Straw man, etc.
4. Students will learn to evaluate various aspects of the business world from an ethical perspective, including the nature of capitalism, human resources, consumer issues, global objectives, corporate responsibility, and environmental policy.
5. Students will learn to read, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate numerous specific cases involving Business Ethics questions, including such issues as CSR, whistle-blowing, direct to consumer advertising, the 2008 economic meltdown, corporate personhood, company loyalty, workplace privacy, sweatshops, and many others.
6. Students will learn to make better moral judgments in their personal lives and will be less likely to be fooled by spurious moral arguments.
7. Students will work within a collaborative teaching model that distributes the learning workload throughout individual, partnership, and/or small group structures.

SoBA MISSION STATEMENT

The University of Montana's School of Business Administration enhances lives and benefits society by providing world-class business education in a supportive, collegial environment.

We accomplish this mission by acting on our shared core values of creating significant experiences, building relationships, teaching and researching relevant topics, behaving ethically, and inspiring individuals to thrive.

LEARN, APPLY, THRIVE

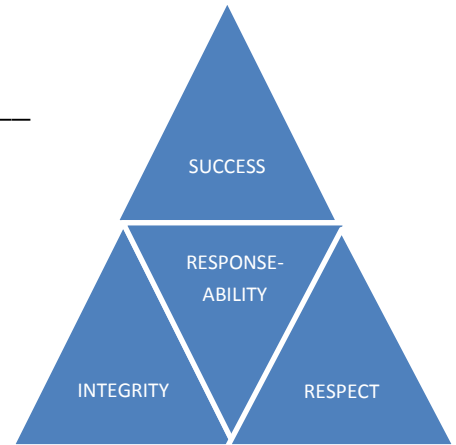
HONOR CODE AFFIRMATION FORM

BUSINESS ETHICS & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
BGEN 320E Spring 2015

Name (print) _____

Major _____

Year you expect to graduate _____



The Code of Honor

Integrity, Respect, Response-ability

- ◆ By signing this “Honor Code Affirmation” I hereby promise to accept the terms and conditions for achieving success in this course as stated in the course syllabus.
- ◆ I agree to work to the best of my ability in this class and realize that the benefit I get from this class will be proportionate to the effort I put into it.
- ◆ I agree to honestly do the work that is assigned; to complete assignments by the date due; to cooperate with other students in group activities; to actively participate in and contribute to the class; and to act honorably at all times.
- ◆ I agree to abide by the terms and conditions of this Honor Code and understand that it is an integral part of this course.

Signature

Date