

[Abbreviated syllabus with course materials]

P240 Business and Morality

Instructor: Levi Tenen

Spring 2019

MW 5:45 – 7:00pm

Office Hours: Mondays 4:45 – 5:45 and Tuesdays 3:00 – 4:00

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Course Description

What responsibilities does a business have?
Who is to blame when a company harms the environment?
Is it wrong to mislead or manipulate customers to make a sale?

These are among the questions that we will raise in this course. More generally, we will be interested in ethical issues surrounding business practices and the economic market. My goals for this course are fourfold. First, I aim to provide you with an introductory understanding of the field of Business Ethics. Second, I aim to have you relate course content to your own lives, your other courses, and to the world around you. Third, I seek to cultivate your philosophical skills, and in particular your analytic writing and your ability to comprehend a variety of texts. Together, these goals feed into a fourth, overarching one: I want you to walk away from this class with an appreciation of the ethical complexities of certain business decisions, and an ability to analyze what is at stake in such decisions.

To achieve these ends, I will expect you to do a substantial amount of reading and writing. For almost every class, you will have assigned reading.

The course addresses the following General Education Arts and Humanities learning goals:

1. Gaining knowledge of the cultural, intellectual, and historical contexts through which expressions and artifacts are interpreted
2. Developing the ability to think critically and creatively
3. Developing skills of inquiry and analysis

Grade Breakdown:

Short Responses: 30%

Worksheets and quizzes: 10%

Participation: 10%

Exams: 25%

Final Paper: 25%

In your final paper, you will critically engage with philosophers about a course topic. I will give you a list of topics to choose from (as well as the option to create your own topic). You will be graded largely on three things:

- (1) How accurately you interpret the philosophers you engage with
- (2) How well you *critically* engage, philosophically, with their work (this will require formulating a thesis of your own)
- (3) How well you consider and respond to potential objections to your thesis.

As for mechanics, the final paper should be around 5-6 pages, double-spaced, in length.

*** *Absolutely no late assignments will be accepted.* ***

If you are ill or have a family emergency, please provide a doctor's note or the equivalent.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Fundamentals of Moral Theory

Jan 7: Monday: Introduction to moral theories

Jan 9: Wednesday: James Rachels' "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

Business and Society: Is Capitalism Justifiable?

Jan 14: Monday: Excerpt from Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*.

Jan 16: Wednesday: Bassiry and Jones' "Adam Smith and the Ethics of Contemporary Capitalism"

Jan: 21: Monday: MLK DAY

Jan 23: Excerpt of Karl Marx "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" and excerpts of Friedrich Engels' "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific"

What Responsibilities does a Business Have?

Jan 28: Milton Friedman "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits"

Jan 30: Wednesday: Elizabeth Anderson "The Business Enterprise as an Ethical Agent"

Feb 4: Andrew Carnegie "Gospel of Wealth"

Feb 6:

Exam I

Exploitation

What Is Exploitation?

Feb 11: Mikhail Valdman's "A Theory of Wrongful Exploitation"

Feb 13: Hallie Liberto "Exploitation and the Vulnerability Clause"

Sweatshops

Feb 18: Matt Zwolinski "Sweatshops, Choice, and Exploitation"

Argument Analysis on Zwolinski

Feb 20: No reading. Class discussion.

Surrogacy

Feb 25: Carmel Shalev's introduction to *Birth Power*

Feb 27: Debra Satz' "Markets in Women's Reproductive Labor"

Argument Analysis on Satz

Lies and Manipulation

What counts as a lie?

March 4: Excerpt from Sissela Bok's *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*

March 6: Harry Frankfurt's "On Bullshit"

March 11 & 13: SPRING BREAK

What is manipulation and is it wrong?

March 18 Anne Barnhill "What is Manipulation"

March 20 Marcia Baron's "Manipulativeness"

Sales tactics

March 25: David Holley "A moral Evaluation of Sales Practices"

March 27:

Exam II

Culpability of Corporations

April 1 Melany Banks' "Individual Responsibility for Climate Change"

April 3 No reading.

Thesis response for final paper due

Work and Personal Life

Drug testing

April 8 Joseph DesJardins and Ronald Duska's "Drug Testing in Employment"
Discussion of Privacy Rights.

April 10 Paper writing workshop

Employee Rights

April 15 David W. Ewing "An Employees' Bill of Rights"

April 17 Patricia Werhane "Employee and Employer Rights in an Institutional
Context"

Meaningful work and leisure

April 22 Susan Wolf's "Meaning in Life and Why It Matters"

April 24 Bertrand Russell "In Praise of Idleness"

Final paper due Monday, April 29 by 9:15pm to levitenen@gmail.com