

**Course Syllabus**  
**Business Ethics**  
**PHIL 332, Fall, 2007**

**Instructor:** Matt Zwolinski

**Office Hours:** M/F: 3:30 – 5:00 PM; W: 3:30 – 5:30 PM

**Office:** F167A

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**Required Books:**

All required readings are available on-line via the course website.

**Content:**

Business pervades our lives. Most adults spend the greater part of their day engaged in it, our televisions and magazines are saturated with advertisements bought by it, and the laws which govern our country, states, and cities are heavily influenced by it. Is this the way things ought to be? And given that things *are* this way, what should we as individuals do about it?

This course is a philosophic exploration of the ethical dimensions of business. The course divides into two parts, the first of which is concerned with the role of business in our individual lives. Here we will address questions such as the relationship between business and honesty (Is lying sometimes OK if it's an accepted practice within your business community?), the nature of integrity (What sort of division can we draw between our 'work lives' and the rest of our life?), and the demands of personal responsibility in an organizational context (Are you responsible for what your company does?). In the second part, we will examine the role of business in a just society. What positive role do markets serve in society? Do markets create unequal distributions of wealth, and if so, what should we do about it? And what responsibilities do businesses have to the environment and to the global community?

There are two immediate aims of this course. The first aim is to enable you to reason critically and philosophically about ethical issues pertaining to business. Attention will be given to forming and evaluating rigorous arguments as well as to the clarification of concepts. For instance, what does it mean to say that a particular business practice is 'fair' or 'unfair'? Is saying that a given practice is unfair enough to show that it ought to be prohibited? Why or why not?

The second aim is to enable you to express your thoughts on these ideas clearly. Take-home writing assignments will make up a significant portion of your grade, and it is important that you be able to (1) give a clear explanation of the views you are trying to discuss, and (2) provide logically sound arguments for your own reasoned opinion on the matter. The essence of philosophic writing is thoroughness and precision. These are skills that will help you in any career.

As with any course on ethics, however, the ultimate goal of this course is to help you lead more thoughtful, reflective and worthwhile lives. The questions we study are all ones I find theoretically interesting, but I think the even greater value lies in their practical interest. These are real-world issues, and some of the most important and perennial ones around. Take it personally!

## Course Requirements:

Philosophical readings are dense and difficult. It will probably take longer than you expect to read them once, and it will probably be necessary to re-read most pieces at least once in order to come to an adequate understanding of the material. You should expect to spend at least **six hours per week** outside of class time reading and re-reading the material. If you do this, you will have a much easier time with the short writing assignments, which should probably take up an additional **five to six hours each** in preparation time. Use the study questions on WebCT for help.

The requirements set out in this syllabus are subject to revision at the instructor's discretion.

- **Quizzes** – I will give 5-10 unannounced, multiple-choice quizzes over the course of the semester. The purpose of these quizzes is to test your completion and comprehension of the day's reading assignment, and to encourage attendance at class. You will not be excused from quizzes missed due to absences *unless* you either a) notify me *at least 24 hours in advance and in writing* (email is fine) that you will be absent, or b) provide me with a *documented medical excuse* after your absence. These are the *only* acceptable excuses for missing a quiz, and you may only be excused from two quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes are difficult, so it is vital that you read the material carefully and in advance of class.
- **Study Questions** – On the dates indicated on the syllabus, I will collect your answers to the study questions for the readings assigned up to and including that date. For example, on October 12<sup>th</sup>, I will collect your answers to the study questions for all readings up to and including Duska and Martin. Your answers to these questions will be graded on a check/check-plus/check-minus basis, depending on their thoroughness and accuracy. A passing set of study questions will *replace you lowest quiz score* with a "3," a "4," or a "5," respectively. Therefore, if you turn in check-plus responses to all three sets of study questions, your three lowest quiz scores will all be converted to 5s.
- **Papers** – I will assign three writing assignments over the course of the semester.
  - **Short Papers:** The first two will be relatively short – no less than two and no more than three pages (typed, double-spaced, 1 inch margins and normal fonts) in length. I will assign a topic for these papers which will involve two tasks: 1) reconstructing an argument or arguments from one or more of the readings we have covered in class, and 2) providing an original critical evaluation of that/those argument(s). These papers are short not to make life easy for you but in order to force you to think carefully about what is essential to an argument and what is not. I will grade these papers with an eye to *detail* and *conceptual rigor*. Expect to be challenged.
  - **Term Paper:** The third writing assignment will be longer – between 8 and 10 pages (typed, double-spaced, 1 inch margins and normal fonts) in length. You will have more freedom on this assignment with regard to your topic, but will still be expected to reconstruct and critically evaluate some of the arguments we have covered in class. This paper will be due on the day of your scheduled final. I will provide more guidance on my expectations for this assignment as the due date draws closer.
    - **Topic Proposal:** You will be expected to clear your topic with me in advance, by submitting to me an approximately ½ - 1 page proposal no later than November 19<sup>th</sup>. This proposal should state the subject of your paper (what debate will you be looking at), a rough version of your thesis (what position will you be arguing for), and a preliminary list of sources that you will be consulting. These sources must include at least three philosophic articles which we have not covered in class. Philosophic articles means journal articles or book chapters – internet sites do not count!
  - **Late papers:** Papers are due on Turnitin.com (see below) at the beginning of the class period on the day indicated on the schedule below. Late papers will be penalized 5 percentage points per day, without exception.
- **Participation** – Philosophy is best learned through active conversation with others. It is therefore important that you be a regular participant in classroom discussions. Ideally, you will be sufficiently

engaged with the material to contribute to these discussions spontaneously and voluntarily. As an additional stimulus, however, I will call randomly on students to answer questions in class. If you cannot answer a question satisfactorily (due to lack of preparation or absence), your class participation grade will be affected. Well thought-out contributions to the website will also count toward your participation grade.

- **Community Service Learning** - You will have the opportunity to participate in a minimum of 10 hours (not including the orientation) of CSL at either Juvenile Hall or Twain Junior/Senior High to apply your knowledge from the class and gain experience to facilitate your thinking on ethical issues. You may take your own car or USD CSL will supply transportation for you. Contact your CSL Student Leader for any questions related to CSL.
- **CSL Journal:** Each week during which you serve, write out a labeled summary section, titled "Summary" followed by a labeled application section titled "Ethical Application". For the Summary section, type a brief description (min. ¼ page, double space, 1-inch margins per week) of your experience at the end of each volunteer week. Include the date(s) and the hours you worked (e.g., 03/28/05, 10:00 AM-11:00 AM), followed by a brief description of what you actually did and/or what you observed. For the Ethical Application (min. 1 page, double space, 1-inch margins per week), discuss how what you observed relates to some concept or argument that we have either read about or discussed in class. The connections might not always be direct or obvious, so this section will require some independent thought on your part. At the end of the semester, the journal should be at least 13 pages of typed double spaced text all in 12-point font, double space, with 1-inch margins. Papers will be considered late if turned in after class starts on December 14th and 5 points will be deducted per each late day. E-mail attachments are acceptable, as long as they arrive by the specified due date. Include with your journal a log of your verified hours, which should be signed by your supervisor at your CSL placement. Do not call or go to the CSL office to verify your hours. Late verification forms will result a 5 point deduction per day penalty.

**Your Grade**

Each activity in this class is worth a certain number of points. Your grade will be determined based on a straight (un-curved) analysis of percentage of points earned vs. total points.

Quizzes 5-10 @ 5 points each	25-50
2 Short Papers @ 10 points each	20
Term Paper Topic Proposal:	5
Term Paper:	30
Participation	10
CSL:	10
Total Points:	100-125

A+	97 - 100%
A	93 - 96.9
A-	90 - 92.9
B+	87 - 89.9
B	83 - 86.9
B-	80 - 82.9
C+	77 - 79.9
C	73 - 76.9
C-	70 - 72.9
D+	67 - 67.9
D	63 - 66.9
D-	60 - 62.9
F	59.9 or below

## Respect

This is a course in ethics, and one of the fundamental ethical values we will study is *respect*. I will treat you with respect in this course, and expect you to do the same for me and your fellow students. What this means in practice is (at a minimum):

*For me:*

- I will arrive on time and prepared for each class meeting scheduled on the syllabus.
- I will take student questions seriously and attempt to address them as helpfully as I can within the constraints of class time.
- I will keep my scheduled office hours, or provide advance notice if this is not possible.
- I will return written assignments within a reasonable time and provide you with ample constructive criticism and an adequate explanation of your grade.
- I will treat you as an adult. Part of what this means is taking your philosophical opinions seriously. But taking your views seriously does not mean treating you with kid gloves. It means that I will assume that you have put some thought into your position and that I will hold you accountable for it, and challenge you when appropriate. I expect the same from you.
- I will respect your time and not give you “busy work.”

*For you:*

- You will respect the opinions of your classmates, and respond to them with seriousness, courtesy, and charity.
- You will show up to class on time.
- You will read the material assigned for class prior to the meeting at which we are scheduled to discuss it.
- You will take responsibility for turning in your written assignments on time.
- You will respect my time and the time of your fellow students by helping to make our time together as productive and conducive to learning as possible.

## Integrity

Doing your own work is part of what it means to have respect for me, for your fellow students, and for yourself.

As above, my treating you with respect involves treating you like an adult. As an adult, you are responsible for knowing the University’s regulations concerning Academic Integrity. **“I didn’t know it was plagiarism” is not an excuse.** Any violation of the Code of Academic Integrity is grounds for failure from the class in addition to any further penalties deemed appropriate by the Academic Integrity Committee.

USD subscribes to a service called Turnitin.com. Turnitin.com is a web-based application that compares the content of submitted papers to the Turnitin.com database and checks for textual similarities. All required papers for this course may be subject to submission to Turnitin.com for textual similarity review and to verify originality. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting textual similarities and verifying originality. Each student is responsible for submitting his or her papers in such a way that no identifying information about the student is included. A student may not have anyone else submit papers on the student’s behalf to Turnitin.com. A student may request in writing that his or her papers not be submitted to Turnitin.com. However, if a student chooses this option, the student may be required to provide documentation in a form required by the faculty member to substantiate that the papers are the student’s original work.

**Schedule of Readings for PHIL 332: Business Ethics  
Fall, 2007  
Matt Zwolinski**

**KEY DATES AT A GLANCE**

Oct 1	-	WA1 Due
Oct 12	-	SQ1 Due
Oct 19	-	No class (Fall Holiday)
Nov 2	-	No class (this course only)
Nov 9	-	WA2 Due
Nov 19	-	Term Paper Topic Proposal Due, SQ2 Due
Nov 21-23	-	Thanksgiving Break: no class
Dec 14	-	Last Day of Class, SQ3 Due
Dec 17	-	Section 2 Term paper Due at 2:00 PM
Dec 22	-	Section 1 Term Paper Due at 2:00 PM

**Schedule of Readings**

All readings are due on the first day of the week for which they are assigned, unless otherwise specified in class.

**Part 1 – Business and the Good life**

Week 1 (Sept 5-7)	<b>Introduction to the Course</b> How Unethical Are You?
Week 2 (Sept 10-14)	<b>A Brief Introduction to Ethical Theory</b> Five Traditional Theories
Week 3 (Sept 17-21)	<b>Honesty and Advertising</b> Carr, Den Uyl
Week 4 (Sept 24-28)	<b>Integrity and Business</b> Taylor
Week 6 (Oct 1-5)	<b>Individual Responsibility</b> Video: Obedience to Authority Lachs, Kolers <b>Writing Assignment 1 due October 1<sup>st</sup></b>
Week 7 (Oct 8-12)	<b>Loyalty and Whistleblowing</b> Duska, Martin <b>Study Questions #1 due Oct 12<sup>th</sup></b>
Week 8 (Oct 15-19)	<b>Creativity</b> <b>No Class October 19<sup>th</sup> (Fall Holiday)</b> Rand, Novak
Week 9 (Oct 22-26)	<b>Rationality and Morality</b> In-class experiment, Oct 23 <sup>rd</sup> Axelrod, Tullock

**Part 2 – Business and the Just Society**

Week 10 (Oct 29-Nov 2)	<b>Who do Businesses Serve?</b> <b>No class November 2<sup>nd</sup></b> Friedman, Evan+Freeman
Week 11 (Nov 5-9)	<b>Why Markets?</b> Read, Hayek, Nozick <b>Writing Assignment 2 due November 9<sup>th</sup></b>

Week 12 (Nov 12-16)	<b>Distributive Justice – Inequality</b> Rawls, Inequality
Week 13 (Nov 19)	<b>Distributive Justice cont.</b> <b>No class November 21-23 (Thanksgiving)</b> <b>Topic Proposal due November 19<sup>th</sup></b> <b>Study Questions #2 due Nov 19<sup>th</sup></b>
Week 14 (Nov 26-Nov 30)	<b>Questionable Payments</b> Questionable Payments + A Note on Questionable Payments
Week 15 (Dec 3-7)	<b>Business and the Environment</b> Hood + Singer
Week 16 (Dec 11-14)	<b>Globalization and Sweatshops</b> Maitland + Arnold/Bowie <b>Study Questions # 3 due Dec 14<sup>th</sup></b>