



HUMANITY FOR SALE

ETHICS IN BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY

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Instructors:

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Course Description:

The world of business is cutthroat. It's a dog eat dog world out there and you have to use any advantage you can against the competition. In order to survive out there, you will have to use others as your stepping stones to victory. Or do you?

As technology evolves, the opportunity for creating great good and great evil becomes more and more bountiful. With the rise of the internet, we now have more connections around the world than ever before. This allows large corporations to more easily exploit foreign policies, peoples, and the planet as a whole. When these choices are presented to us, we need to be armed with the correct knowledge in order to ensure that we choose the most ethical path. This path is walked through taking actions to protect

not only ourselves but for other people as well. Our responsibility is to the people and the environment. In this course, we aim to arm you with the knowledge that allows you to do business morally, ethically, and successfully. Some may find these terms to be contradictory in the world of business, however, throughout this course we will explore how tackling a business with a goal of ethics leads to a more successful career.

Considering how sensitive the economy is due to the current pandemic, owning a business is harder than ever. Ethics in business is important both morally, as well as financially. More often than not, the short term financial gain at the expense of ethics often results in unforeseen consequences later on. With Covid-19 spreading, many businesses have been pressured to close or take precautions that they otherwise wouldn't have to take. As you emerge into the business world, these issues will become more and more prevalent. You will be forced to make difficult decisions so it is crucial for you to have a basis of ethical business practices. As a business owner, there will be choices you have to make that may seem to be financially beneficial but will sacrifice ethics. As we have seen in the past, sacrificing ethics is not only wrong, but it often becomes a detriment to the financial aspect of your business, commonly through lawsuits, poor reputation, etc. These decisions are becoming more prevalent, not only because we are in such an unstable time, but because we are also experiencing rapid advancements in technology as well. These advancements as stated earlier make the exploitation of people and the environment much easier and seemingly more profitable. Looking further down the road, it is becoming more common for artificial intelligence and automation to be seen in the commonplace, and the ethical implications of these advancements have yet to be fully discovered. As our technology evolves further and further, our understanding of ethics (especially in the business place), needs to evolve with it.

We invite you to explore how these current global events, socio-political issues, and technological advancements affect you and the way you do business in the future.

Course Goals: In this course, we will look at major writers from around the world whose words and voices helped readers to understand ethics, business practices, and individual responsibility. Writers like Plato, Aristotle, Wole Talabi, and Dave Eggers share fundamental views on philosophy and ethics which exposes students to various perspectives. The literature created by these writers resonates with the different issues arising in the business world. The course goals are for students to:

- Gather knowledge (or facts or theories) about each topic area from readings, instructor lecture material, and reading quizzes from the class.
- Demonstrate comprehension through research paper: critical thinking and problem-solving involve the ability to explain an ethical issue and construct a strong argument that articulates conclusions and their consequences.
- Understand the nature of the good and how through the application of the learned material, we can answer specific issues and challenges in business ethics.
- Analyze the impact of multiple factors on the interconnectedness of diverse peoples in the global environment.

Required Textbook: Business Ethics: Decision Making for Personal Integrity and Social Responsibility, Hartman & DesJardins & MacDonald, 5th Edition, McGraw-Hill, 2021.
ISBN10: 1260260496

Other Online Readings and Cases:

- *Plato. Plato's The Republic. New York :Books, Inc., 1943.*
Link:<https://mvlindsey.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/allen-bloom-the-republic.pdf>
- Aristotle., Robert C. Bartlett, and Susan D. Collins. *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
Link: <https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/aristotle/Ethics.pdf>
- Wole Talabi, “Necessary and Sufficient Conditions”
Link: <https://apex-magazine.com/necessary-and-sufficient-conditions/>
- “Cases.” *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases*, by O. C. Ferrell, et al., 10 ed., Cengage Learning, 2015, pp. 380-614,
<http://125.234.102.27/bitstream/TVDHBRVT/19528/1/BusinessEthics.pdf>.
 - “Case 2: Starbucks’ Mission: Social Responsibility and Brand Strength” pg. 396-403
 - “Case 3: Walmart Manages Ethics and Compliance Challenges” pg. 407-419
 - “Case 7: Google: The Quest to Balance Privacy with Profits” pg. 458-471
 - “Case 10: Home Depot Implements Stakeholder Orientation” pg. 498-505
 - “Case 14: Apple Inc.’s Ethical Success and Challenges” pg. 537-545
 - “Case 15: PepsiCo’s Journey Toward an Ethical and Socially Responsible Culture” pg. 548-560
- Eggers , D. (2013). *The Circle: A Novel.* New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
Link: https://www.mondotheque.be/wiki/images/c/cc/Dave_Eggers_The_Circle.pdf

Learning Objectives:

After completing the requirements of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand the techniques of moral reasoning and argumentation that are needed to analyze moral issues in business.
2. Evaluate the individual actions in economic and business transactions within a variety of moral frameworks.
3. Identify and interpret how technology can cause ethical controversy for a business in regards to moral philosophy, social responsibility, and corporate culture.

4. Relate the significant issues of an ethical controversy in business to moral philosophy, workgroup influence, corporate culture, and social responsibility.
5. Incorporate the individual reasoning processes of others when resolving ethical dilemmas.
6. Examine the consequences of unethical and ethical business decisions.

Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to Ethics and Business

1/5: Read Plato Republic (selections)

1/7: Read Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics

1/8: Week 1 reading quiz due at 11:59pm

Week 2: The Essential Elements of the Firm

1/12: Read "Chapter 1: Ethics and Business"

1/14: Read "Case 15: PepsiCo's Journey Toward an Ethical and Socially Responsible Culture"

1/15: Week 2 reading quiz due at 11:59pm

Week 3: Philosophical Ethics and Business

1/19: Read "Chapter 3: Philosophical Ethics and Business"

1/21: Read Dave Eggers "The Circle" Book 1

1/22: Week 3 reading quiz due at 11:59pm

Week 4: The Corporate Culture

1/26: Read "Chapter 4: Corporate Culture - Impact and Implications"

1/28: Read Dave Eggers "The Circle" Book 2

1/29: Week 4 reading quiz due at 11:59pm

Week 5: Corporate Social Responsibility

2/2: Read "Chapter 5: Corporate Social Responsibility" & Dave Eggers "The Circle" Book 3

2/4: Midterm, 2-4pm

Week 6: Ethical Decision Making

2/9: Read "Chapter 6: Ethical Decision Making"

2/11: Wole Talabi, "Necessary and Sufficient Conditions"

2/12: Week 6 reading quiz due at 11:59pm

Week 7: Emerging Business Ethics Issues

2/16: Read "Case 2: Starbucks' Mission: Social Responsibility and Brand Strength"

2/18: Read "Case 3: Walmart Manages Ethics and Compliance Challenges"

2/19: Week 7 reading quiz due at 11:59pm

Week 8: International Business Ethics

2/23: Read “Case 7: Google: The Quest to Balance Privacy with Profits”

2/25: Read “Case 10: Home Depot Implements Stakeholder Orientation”

2/26: Week 8 reading quiz due at 11:59pm

Week 9: Ethics and Marketing

3/2: Read “Chapter 7: Ethical Decision Making: Technology and Privacy in the Workplace”

3/4Thursday: Read “Case 14: Apple Inc.’s Ethical Success and Challenges”

3/5: Week 9 reading quiz due at 11:59pm

Week 10: Sustainability

3/9: Read “Chapter 9: Business and Environmental Sustainability”

3/11: Final Review

3/12: Week 10 reading quiz due at 11:59pm

Finals Week

Cumulative Final exam: Tuesday, March 16, 2-4pm

Grading Breakdown:

Reading Quizzes	20%
Attendance/Participation	10%
Research Paper	20%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	30%

Reading Quizzes (20%): Reading quizzes are intended to give students credit for completing the required readings, which are essential to achieving success in this class. The quizzes will cover only the readings assigned to that specific week, and the format may include multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and true or false questions. There will be a total of seven Reading Quizzes, each consisting of 10 questions with the allotted time of 12 minutes. These quizzes are designed to ensure that the material is being digested so that students will have an easier time completing future tasks. If you are struggling with the quizzes, that likely means that you are rushing through the reading and lecture material. Some of the required readings are hard to digest after the first read, therefore it may be beneficial to try reading them more than once. A very common technique is to skim the text first, and then take notes while reading it for the second time. This often helps when the literature’s themes become more clear by the end. Going back through allows you to find things in the reading that you may have missed in the first reading. If you continue to struggle with understanding the readings, Office Hours will be available after every Thursday lecture.

Attendance/Participation (10%): Students will be expected to show up to all scheduled zoom meetings during class time to gather knowledge, facts, and theories about each topic area and participate in order to demonstrate their comprehension of class material in addition to sharing class-related thoughts and questions. A majority of the information found on the exams will come from what is discussed in the lecture, which will allow students to understand the nature of the good and how this material can be applied to the real-world. Cameras are not required to be turned on and microphones must be muted until students choose to speak. Due to the current circumstances, students are allowed ONE free absence, however, you are expected to attend all zoom meetings for every class session.

Research Paper (20%): Students will choose a topic of their liking related to any ethical issue in the business industry and write a 4-5 page paper due on Friday, March 12 at 11:59 PM. The paper must be in MLA format, with a works cited page.

- Topics: (Please choose the most interesting issue from the list below. If you are interested in a different issue, check with Professor first to make sure that it is appropriate for the paper)
 - Accounting/finances
 - Social media
 - Harassment and discrimination
 - Health and safety
 - Technology and privacy practices
 - Unethical leadership
 - Nondisclosure and corporate espionage
 - Environmental responsibility
 - Decision-making issues
 - Compliance and governance issues
- Requirements: The paper must include a thorough analysis of major ethical issue(s), a description of the company's overall standard of ethics, and two ways in which you think the company could have handled the issue(s) in a more ethical way. Students should end the paper with a reflection on how the ethical issue(s) altered the image and reputation of the company and any other companies involved. The overall goal of this paper is to show that students can analyze and evaluate what happens when a company stands on the wrong side of ethics, and to demonstrate their understanding of moral reasoning. At least 5 credible sources must be used and cited in MLA format. Footnotes are encouraged, but not required. There will be a list of instructions on how to access the different databases through the Library on the class Canvas page.

Exams (20-30%): There will be two exams, one midterm during week 5 and one cumulative final exam during finals week. The exams are created for students to show how well they comprehend the topics discussed in class. The midterm will test students on ethical concepts in business to prove their understanding of the idea as a whole. The

final will heavily focus on the different cases we will be reading and how different methods are applied to certain situations. It will present students with business issues and ask them to correct those issues using the same methods discussed throughout the quarter. This will show how well students can apply what they have learned in class to situations they may face in the future. The midterm will consist of students picking one of three essay prompts to write about during the class period. These prompts will be focused on key issues arising in the business world. The final will consist of 30 multiple choice questions that are based on the case studies previously assigned. There will also be 4 short answer questions focused on topics discussed throughout the quarter. Both exams will be taken during the 2 hour class period on the dates provided in the class schedule.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Improper academic conduct shall be interpreted to mean the obtaining and using of information during an examination or for an assignment by means other than those permitted by the instructor, including supplying such information to other students. You and your student peers must have a strong commitment to personal and professional integrity that informs your behavior both before and after graduation, discouraging you from creating a false appearance of achievement by presenting the work of others as your own, or bending or breaking the rules of any situation. Either action can lead to serious consequences, academic and otherwise. All forms of academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, and falsification of academic records are subject to disciplinary action. Please thoroughly familiarize yourself with the [Office of Students' Rights and Responsibilities page on Academic Integrity](#), as well as the information found on the [Academic Programs and Planning website regarding cheating and plagiarism](#).

Disability Services

If you have a disability for which you are or may not be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the [Disability Resource Center \(DRC\)](#), at (805)756-1395, as early as possible in the term. Use of Disability Resource Center Services, including testing accommodations, requires prior authorization by the DRC and compliance with approved procedures.

Student Writing and Learning Center

The Cal Poly Writing and Learning Center offers online tutoring sessions led by peer learning facilitators (PLFs), undergraduates who are trained to help at any stage in the writing process and with writing assignments from across the curriculum. This is a great resource for the research paper assignment and academic support. Website: <https://writingandlearning.calpoly.edu/center>

Additional Notes

We all have days where we feel that we are not at our best. Not every comment needs to be brilliant, and not every paper, assignment, or contribution will be brilliant. This is a

space for all of us to learn and to create a community of learning based on a common desire to know and learn from the texts we are studying this quarter. I don't expect you to present completely worked out thoughts in class. I do expect you to provide contributions that engage with the material and with your peers, to come to class prepared, and to help build a learning community during our time together. Class participation is always welcome, but if you are not a frequent talker or unsure about how much you should contribute, one comment should be given each week at a minimum.

If you have an issue with the texts, or if you are experiencing difficulties that impact your ability to learn, please let me know so that I can help or point you toward the appropriate resources.