

BUSINESS ETHICS

PHI 1317, January 7-16, 2013 (SMU-in-Plano)

Building 4, Room 204

9:00 – 4:00

Instructor: N. Popovic

Office: 211E Hyer Hall

E-mail: apopovic@smu.edu

Phone: 214-768-2118

Office hours: By appointment

Mailbox: Philosophy Department, 207 Hyer Hall

Texts:

- Nenad Popovic: *Moral Perspectives: Wrong and Right...in Business*

Course description:

An examination of the philosophical problems which arise in connection with moral and social issues in a context of business: justice and economic distribution, the nature of capitalism, corporate responsibility, civil liberties in the workplace, affirmative action, product safety and the consumers, and a variety of moral choices facing employees. Students will develop a basic familiarity with important topics in the history of ethics including a familiarity with the major positions and their supporting arguments. We will begin by surveying major ethical traditions, including the works of Aristotle, Mill, Kant, and Locke, among others. We will then turn to moral issues that exist in a contemporary business world, and apply ethical theory by analyzing and evaluating moral arguments.

Course Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with major ethical traditions.
- Students will develop techniques of formal reasoning, skills and abilities to analyze and evaluate moral arguments.
- Students will learn how to reason, argue and debate more effectively.
- Students will develop writing and analytic skills.
- Students will be equipped with knowledge of contemporary political and social issues as they occur in a business context.
- Students will build a foundation for achieving their life goals (e.g. a successful career, a rich intellectual life, etc.).
- Students will demonstrate a basic facility with the concepts and methods of philosophical analysis.
- Students will be able to describe and explain some of the general features and principal theoretical method of one of the fields of philosophy, religious studies, or ethics.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to critically reflect on or apply the theoretical methods of, one of the fields of philosophy, religious studies, or ethics via a focus on a specific area or set of issues.

Methods:

- Reading texts that express opposing philosophical views; trying to identify the weak and strong points of both positions.
- Focus on the major arguments that are commonly given in support of each position; discussion and critical examination of moral arguments and an ethical approach or general principles that they presuppose.

Course Requirements:**Grades:**

- In-class exams: Exam 1 – 25% of the grade; Final exam – 30% of the grade.
- Debates, class participation and attendance (20% of the grade).
- Final 6-8 page paper (25% of the grade).

Class Participation and Attendance:

- Essential for successfully completing the course.
- Participation, debates and attendance are part of the final grade.
- Readings, lectures and discussions combined are the best preparations for the exams and papers.
- Any student who misses more than half of the classes cannot receive a passing grade.

Late or Missed Work:

Late papers will be downgraded at the rate of a half grade point per class late (except in cases of documented illness or emergency).

Academic Ethics:

Any student caught cheating will fail the course and be brought before the Honor Council. Copying any part of a document other than your own (another student's work, a published work, course material, materials from the internet) counts as plagiarism.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

Jan 7 – Block 1: Introduction; Moral Reasoning; Ethical Relativism; Utilitarianism and Kant's Moral Theory

Jan 7 – Block 2: Aristotle's Virtue Ethics; Egoism; Morality and Self-Interest

Jan 8 – Block 1: Social Contract Theory; Libertarianism;

Jan 8 – Block 2: Evaluating Arguments- Fallacies of Reasoning

Jan 9 – Block 1: Justice and Economic Distribution

Jan 9 – Block 2: The Nature of Capitalism

Jan 10 – Block 1: Corporations

Jan 10 – Block 2: Exam 1

Jan 11 – Block 1: Civil Liberties in the Workplace

Jan 11 – Block 2: Organizational Influence in Private Lives

Jan 14 – Block 1: Moral Choices Facing Employees

Jan 14 – Block 2: Affirmative action

Jan 15 – Block 1: Consumers

Jan 15 – Block 2: Debates

Jan 16: Final Exam; **FINAL PAPER DUE**