

Business, Society, and Ethics

Fall 2023

Room
Course

Tepper 2700
70332



**Carnegie
Mellon
University**

Instructor

Dr. Derek Leben (he/him)

Email

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Office Location & Hours

Tepper 4120; MW 12:30pm-
2:30pm and by appointment.

I say it: “Lee-ben.”

I can be addressed as “Professor
Leben,” “Dr. Leben,” or “Derek”

*My working hours are 9am-6pm
on weekdays.*

Course Description

What sorts of ethical obligations do businesses have towards their customers, employees, and the public? This course will explore ethical challenges faced by modern corporations, and frameworks which can be used to develop responsible corporate policy. The course is divided into four main units: (1) autonomy and consent, (2) the scope and locus of corporate responsibility, (3) fair treatment and outcomes, (4) the limits of labor and commodification.

Learning Objectives

The goals of this course are: (1) to gain knowledge of ethical frameworks for corporate decision-making, and (2) to develop the skills to criticize and defend the policies of a business on ethical grounds. Performance in the knowledge component will be assessed by quizzes, and performance in the skills component will be assessed by papers. Regular engagement will be assessed by mandatory attendance.

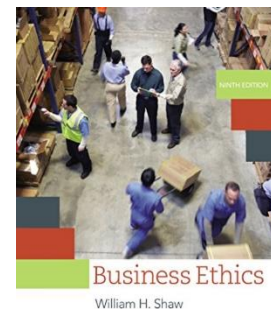
We are defining a “policy” about X as a description of the conditions under which your company believes it is permissible to do X (and the conditions under which it is *not* permissible), in as much detail as possible.

Textbook

Business Ethics: a textbook with cases (9th edition)

William Shaw, Cengage Publishing

ISBN: 978-1305582088



Requirements

- Attendance (7%)
- Quizzes (8.25% x 4)
- Group Presentation (10%)
- Paper 1 (25%)
- Paper 2 (25%)

Detailed Requirements

Attendance

During each class, you will mark your attendance on a physical piece of paper with a physical writing device. Each student has exactly two “free” absences. This means that there should be no need to contact the instructor with excuses for absences, unless it is with a record of a *legitimate reason* (below) which requires more than two absences.

The slides are minimalist by design, and are intended to be used as visual “section headings” for the material in lecture and class discussion, which means you will need to take notes during lecture.

Audio recordings of lectures will be shared individually with students (via a Box link) whenever a student cannot attend class for a *legitimate reason*, which is shared with me before the time of the lecture.

Quizzes

There will be four quizzes, in the last 30 minutes of the last class of each unit. You will be asked to label key terms and answer multiple-choice questions about definitions, positions, and arguments.

If you cannot attend class on a quiz day for a legitimate reason, you may take a make-up quiz during my office hours.

Group Presentations

By the end of week 1, all students must sign up for a presentation team on Canvas. The presentation list is located under the module for Week 1. The groups will all have a maximum of 3 students; if a group has 3 students, you must sign up for another group. If all groups are filled, please email me. Presentations must be recorded and uploaded to Canvas by the due date specified on the sign-up page. Students are expected to view presentations and come prepared with objections.

Groups will present on a specific practice from the company described, and the ethical challenges presented which relate to the topic and readings from that week. They will be expected to argue that the corporate practices are either permissible or wrong.

Unlike the papers, I don’t expect you to make use of course readings and materials to make your points (although this is welcome). The rubric for presentations is on Canvas.

Papers

The term paper is an argumentative paper. The papers are arguments for a specific policy about ONE case study, using ONE normative theory. Any standard formatting and citation styles are acceptable. The papers must be at least 7 complete, double-spaced pages (with standard font and margins), and at most 8 complete pages, not including title page or references.

You are welcome to meet with me to go over drafts. I do not schedule meetings on evenings, weekends, or the paper due date. The rubric for the papers is available on Canvas.

Late grades will be penalized with a deduction of 3 points per day late.

Legitimate Reasons for Absence

Medical, legal, or other serious obligations which override your obligations as a student. Travel for personal or family plans is not a legitimate reason. As a CMU student, you have agreed to be present for all lectures in the regular term, including lectures before vacation periods, and you must make personal or family plans around your class schedule.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

Student Wellness Resources

As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. CMU services are available, and treatment does work. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at: <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Support is always available (24/7) from Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS): 412-268-2922. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal or in danger of self-harm, call someone immediately, day or night:

- CaPS: 412-268-2922
- Re:solve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226

If the situation is life threatening, call the police

- On campus: CMU Police: 412-268-2323
- Off campus: 911

Diversity, Equality, Inclusion

The university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:

Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion: csdi@andrew.cmu.edu, (412) 268-2150

Report-It (Links to an external site.) online anonymous reporting platform: net (Links to an external site.) username: tartans password: plaid

All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any following actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate to be more equitable and just.

Academic Integrity:

You are responsible for reading and understanding the Academic Integrity Guidelines in the Student Handbook. The optional readings and SEP entries should contain all of the materials you will need, and you should also consult the CMU libraries as well as your instructor if any further materials are needed. Below are some specific interpretations of these guidelines which are relevant for this course.

Plagiarism and Improper Use:

In this course, plagiarism is a deliberate attempt to submit another person's words or ideas as your own. As such, it constitutes deception. We do employ the "Turn it in" function on Canvas to screen every paper for plagiarism. If there is material from another source presented without proper acknowledgment, we will evaluate the case based on factors like:

Was the material cited, but just improperly acknowledged?

Was this material from an official text in the course, or from outside material?

How much material was copied/used?

Depending on the severity of the offense, the following penalties may be applicable, along with an official Academic Integrity Violation report:

Small grade penalty (e.g., half a letter grade), Moderate grade penalty (e.g., up to a letter grade), Regrade with elimination of the copied material, Grade penalty and regrade with elimination of the copied material, Grade of 0 on the paper, Grade of 'F' in the course

Cheating

In this course, cheating is the use of outside material (including the work of other students) on a quiz/exam. No exams in this course may make use of any material during the exam itself. Cheating on exams will depend on the severity of the case. Taking attendance for another student is also an instance of cheating.

The Use of Generative AI

The use of generative AI as a research tool for finding references and information is an improper use of materials. Models trained on data from the Internet are not the same as search engines, and will often "hallucinate," or fabricate, information that is presented as true.

The use of generative AI for producing *the content or words* of a paper, even a single sentence, is plagiarism. Turning in work which has been written by another agent, either human or machine, without acknowledging proper authorship, is always a violation of academic integrity.

It is permissible to use generative AI as inspiration, the way you might look at the papers of another student as inspiration. But you should treat any content generated by AI the same way you would treat the content generated by other students in the class. You may also engage with AI models in mock debates the way you would with other students, challenging it to present objections and criticisms of the arguments which you have written.

If the graders suspect that any portion of a paper has been generated by AI, and an AI detection tool suggests that this is also the case, there may be an interview scheduled with that student, where we will ask the student to review past writing and compare styles. We will use evidence from toolkits, our own judgments, and comparison with past writing styles to evaluate if plagiarism has occurred.

Course Schedule

UNITS: 1 2 3 4

Week	Topic	Reading	Dates
Week 1	Ethics and Business	Ch.1: “The Nature of Morality”	8/29, 8/31
Week 2	Normative Theories	Ch.2: “Normative Theories of Ethics”	9/5, 9/7
Week 3	Respect for Consumers	Ch.6: “Consumers”	9/12, 9/14
Week 4	Respect for Employees	Ch.8: “The Workplace (I)”	9/19, 9/21
Week 5	Respect for Businesses	Ch.10: “Moral Choices Facing Employees”	9/26, 9/28
Week 6	Corporate Agency	Ch.5: “Corporations”	10/3, 10/5
Week 7	Environmental Impacts	Ch.7: “The Environment”	10/10, 10/12
Week 8	<i>FALL BREAK (No class)</i>		
Week 9	Social Impacts	Ch.4: “The Nature of Capitalism”	10/24, 10/26
Week 10	Discrimination (Procedural Justice)	Ch.11: “Job Discrimination”	10/31, 11/2
Week 11	Fair Outcomes (Distributive Justice)	Ch. 3: “Justice and Economic Distribution”	11/9
Week 12	Welfare Economics	Moulin, “Fair Division and Collective Welfare” (ch.1-2)	11/14, 11/16
Week 13	Privacy	Moore, “Privacy: its meaning and value”	11/21
Week 14	The Limits of Markets	Marx, “Alienated Labor” Sandel, “What Money Can’t Buy”	11/28, 11/30
Week 15	Meaningful Work	Ch. 9: “The Workplace (II)”	12/5, 12/7