COURSE DESCRIPTION: Business Ethics is a part of the field of moral philosophy known as Applied Ethics – a field which also is home to topics such as Biomedical Ethics, Engineering Ethics, Environmental Ethics, to name a few. Applied Ethics focuses on the deliberations surrounding specific behavior as opposed to creating a general moral theory – in the case of Business Ethics the focus is on commercial activity. It goes without saying that these activities and the ways in which they are conducted can have huge ethical ramifications, but we won’t confine ourselves to the scandals alone. Business and the way it is conducted has the potential to promote much good or to engender much evil, but disputes over what actually is good and evil notwithstanding, it also has the power to radically affect the shape of human life.

Topics in Business Ethics are wide ranging. The ethical questions facing employees, employers, and corporations themselves are very different in their scope, in the resources required to answer them, and in the diverse facets of human life that they concern. We will be traveling from the very personal to the global and back many times by the end of the quarter. For this reason, completion of this course should also provide you with a decent introduction to the philosophical methods used for addressing moral and ethical questions in general.

INSTRUCTOR: Tim Linnemann
Office hours: Mondays from 10:30-11:30 & Tuesdays 10:30-11:30
timlinnemann@gmail.com
206-919-6934

TEXT: All readings will be available electronically. I will be emailing attachments with the reading selections which you can then print at your discretion.

OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES: The no. 1 goal for this class is to develop your access, awareness, and ability to engage with the ethical dimensions to be encountered in the business world. This class is not here to inform you what “the rules” are, or what specific choices you should make in certain situations. The design of this course will require you to step into defining and defending answers to questions over which there is extensive disagreement. But you will not be left only to your own devices. We’ll be getting acquainted with a host of theories and concepts that will help us frame these debates and provide you with resources you’ll be able to apply to whatever unique ethical dilemmas that life outside of the classroom throws at you. I hope this class will empower you to be able to take up a sincere exploration and evaluation of the ethical considerations that permeate business – with the additional bonus of perhaps also empowering you to be a force for making a more ethical world! (I won’t be grading you on that)

GRADING: 

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<td>Reading Comments/Journals</td>
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READING COMMENTS: These assignments will be composed of at least 3 questions or comments you have prepared for class discussion. There will be one reading comment assignment linked to every individual reading we'll cover (with the occasional extra assignment for our very long readings that cover more days). Consider them as possible contributions you’d make in class – so about as much as you’d say if you raised your hand in class to ask a question or respond to an idea being presented. Another analogy to help you think about what I’m looking for here would be to just
transcribe the kinds of things you might write in the margins as notes to yourself as you’re working through the reading. Comments on a reading will be due on the day we are planning to begin covering that reading. I want these in hardcopy (typed or handwritten), turned in AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS. These do not need to be extensively explained, but they should be pursued thoughtfully. Nor is it required that you actually share these contributions in class discussion, but the hope is that in doing these short assignments as you work through the reading, you may find it easier to make contributions in our class discussions since you already know what you’d want to say.

JOURNAL ENTRIES: Once a week you will be asked to write a short 1-2 page response on the material for the week. The journals are intended to be a forum for you to explore your ideas regarding the issues under consideration and have some practice in articulating them in an argumentative style. These are informal and will be graded only on a simple plus/check/minus system. The journals and class discussion go hand-in-hand and I will be trying to cater discussions to the interests I see students expressing. I am willing to comment on journal entries if students are interested – let me know if you don’t want them! Journals are due on the Friday of each week (with some TBA exceptions I will indicate). You will submit them online via the Canvas website. If, for whatever reason, this online method will not work for you, you may also turn in a hardcopy printout of your journal to me in class on Friday.

There are three important instructions for these journals. First, just pick one thing to talk about – a claim, argument, position, etc. You don’t need to try to cover the entire week – DON’T TRY! I prefer a deeper treatment of a smaller scope over a superficial treatment of a broad area. Second, the first half of your journal should be spent explaining the idea you want to discuss. Describe it as though you were presenting it to someone not in the class as much as possible. In other words, don’t write it for me! Be sure to not spend more than half the journal doing this. Lastly, the second half of the journal should see you responding to and evaluating the idea you presented. Tell us what you think of this idea – it is useful? Misguided? Needs fixing? Be sure to not just register your opinion, but to argue for it. Defend your stance as much as possible. This is the work of the philosopher and I’d like to see you getting into the game!

PAPERS: You will have two papers assigned in the course of the quarter. The first will be a 2000 word min paper where you will research some contemporary incident in the business world that has an ethical dimension to it. It is crucial that your topic have room for legitimate rational disagreement. The paper will require you to frame the debate, take a stance, and defend it using sources. I will expect that these sources will not be exclusively used to indicate the facts of the incident you are writing about, but that you will also be engaging with sources that argue for specific ethical evaluations of the incident. In other words, you’ll need to be in conversation with voices who are doing exactly what you are doing – defending a position. Moreover, I’ll want to make sure you’re not only restricting yourself to sources that agree with you! I’ll be providing much more guidance in and out of class as we gear up for this assignment.

The second paper will see you giving a critical response to a paper written by one of your classmates for the first assignment. This paper has only a 500 word min, so it won’t be worth as much of your final grade. The exchanges will be anonymous.

PRESENTATIONS: During the course of the quarter you will be required to perform one short class presentation. After we get through the first couple weeks of introductory material I’ll be having you sign up for readings. In the presentation you will be giving a critical (not necessarily negative!) evaluation of the reading – you will present a response and defend it. These assignments are
functionally very similar to the journals, but done through a different modality. You will not be required to turn in journals for the week in which you perform your presentation.

CLASS ATTENDANCE: I am making attendance and participation a fourth of the final grade to emphasize the importance of philosophic engagement in its social dimension. Most of the issues we will be discussing in Business Ethics are of a broadly social concern – whether this is expressed in federal or state laws or happens behind board-room doors, the implications of these debates have consequences for many people, and the way in which we justify these practices as much concerns each other as ourselves. I will be striving to create a classroom atmosphere where these debates can be pursued productively and comfortably, but I will need your help in realizing this project. Three things will be of particular advantage: mutual respect as a standard for discussion, careful listening, and critical engagement.

For our purposes, respect must not be a conclusion, but rather a premise. Disrespectful engagement is unprofessional and unphilosophical regardless of whether it is offensive. As an example, to think a certain line of thinking is indicative of a lack of intelligence does nothing to provide a reasonable argument for why we should consider such reasoning philosophically problematic. The disrespectful attitude does nothing to add to the debate (whatever else it does contribute).

Careful listening and critical engagement are very closely connected. To properly respond to an idea, one must first understand it as thoroughly as possible. But just understanding the point of someone’s idea is also not enough – we must analyze its virtues and deficiencies. Our discussions will always be oriented to gauging the strength of proposed resolutions to ethical conundrums, and in as much as we will contribute ideas of our own, we will be assessing how well our attempts fare as well. When engaging in this way with one another an open audience is as crucial as a critically invested audience – respect helps prepare us for both. Finally, (back by popular demand!) anyone who misses more than 4 sessions will automatically fail the course. This is not negotiable, so please respect it!

STUDENT ACADEMIC CONDUCT: The principle of academic honesty underlies all that we do and applies to all courses at Bellevue College. One kind of academic dishonesty is plagiarism, which may take many forms, including, but not limited to, using a paper written by someone else, using printed sources word-for-word without proper documentation, and paraphrasing or summarizing the ideas of others without acknowledging the source. Plagiarism can also occur when non-written ideas are taken without documentation—using someone else’s design or performance idea, for example. In short, plagiarism is passing off someone else’s ideas, words, or images as your own; it amounts to intellectual theft—whether or not it was your intention to steal. Bellevue College instructors have access to commercial plagiarism detection software, so please be advised that any work you submit may be tested for plagiarism.

Participating in academic dishonesty in any way, including writing a paper or taking a test for someone else, may result in severe penalties. Dishonestly produced papers automatically receive a grade of "F" without the possibility of make-up. The Dean of Student Services will also be notified of such conduct, and repetition of the behavior will result in progressively more serious disciplinary action (for example, an instructor may recommend that the student fail the course for a second offense or even that a student be expelled for a serious offense, such as stealing an exam).
Grades lowered for plagiarism or other forms of dishonesty may be appealed through the regular channels, and any further disciplinary action taken by the Dean may also be appealed through existing processes.

Information about Bellevue College’s copyright guidelines can be found on the Bellevue College Library web site.

DISCLAIMER: I reserve the right to make any changes to the course (content, grading, etc.). Further, I reserve the right to establish procedures for grading of students in exceptional cases. All and any modifications to this syllabus will be in accordance with the rules and regulations of Bellevue College. This syllabus does not constitute a contract between any combination of the student, the professor, or Bellevue College.

**BRIEF LIST OF COURSE TOPICS**

*This is our basic “schedule” and we’ll be going through these in a linear fashion. However, it is always extremely difficult to predict how much time we’ll need to spend on each topic, so a discrete schedule is pretty much pointless! Flexibility is the name of the game here, but if your scheduling needs require a more precise forecast, please get in contact with me and we can discuss possible steps for preparation.*

**INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL**
- Code of Intellectual Conduct;
- Moral Disagreement;
- Moral Relativism;
- Egoism;
- Meta-theory;
- ‘The Idea of Justice’ Amartya Sen

**THE “CLASSICAL” ETHICAL THEORIES**
- Kantian Deontology – *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant
- Utilitarianism, *Utilitarianism* J.S. Mill
- Virtue Ethics, *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle
- Ethics of Care, *In a Different Voice* Carol Gilligan

**FIDUCIARY DUTIES**
- ‘The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits’ Milton Friedman
- ‘Fiduciary Duties and the Shareholder-Management Relation: Or, What’s so Special About Shareholders?’ John R. Boatright

**WHISTLE-BLOWING**
- ‘Some Paradoxes of Whistleblowing’ Michael Davis
- ‘Whistleblowing and Employee Loyalty’ Ronald Duska
- ‘Whistleblowing and Employee Loyalty’ Robert A. Larmer

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**
- ‘What is Wrong with Reverse Discrimination?’ Edwin C. Hettenger

**INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS**
- ‘Globalization and the Failure of Ethics’ Manuel Velasquez
‘Exporting Mental Models: Global Capitalism in the 21st Century’ Patricia H. Werhane
‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ United Nations

SOCIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE
‘An Egalitarian Theory of Justice’ John Rawls [from A Theory of Justice]
‘The Entitlement Theory’ Robert Nozick [from Anarchy, State, and Utopia]
‘Illusions About Private Property and Freedom’ G.A. Cohen

SUCCESS & THE AMERICAN DREAM
Selections from The Gay Science Nietzsche
‘Success and the American Dream’ William A. Wines
Supplements: ‘Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development’ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs