

# PHIL 164: Morality and Business

Fall 2018 – M/W/F 12:20-1:10  
Greenlaw 220

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Office Hours: M/W 2:30-3:30

## Course Description:

This course explores a range of real-world ethical issues that arise in contemporary business contexts. We'll begin with a brief introduction to ethical theory, paired with a discussion of the distinction between moral and legal obligation. We'll then analyze and rigorously evaluate ethical issues involving the nature and responsibilities of corporations, securities fraud and insider trading, corporate culture, the global context of business, big data, and algorithms. The main aim is to acquaint you with, and facilitate your understanding of, some of the deepest ethical problems facing business and the way it's practiced in our world today.

## Assessment:

Attendance & participation	10%
Mid-term exam	20% (October 22)
Final exam	25% (December 14, 12:00pm)
First essay (2,000 words)	20% (October 15, 11:59pm)
Second essay (2,500 words)	25% (November 26, 11:59pm)

## Attendance & Participation:

Attendance is mandatory. Participation and preparedness are also mandatory. Occasional pop quizzes will be given throughout the term that will aid in assessing your overall preparedness for class; these will count toward your attendance & participation score. Formal explanations must be provided for an absence to be considered excused. Arriving ten minutes late or leaving ten minutes early counts as an unexcused absence. Students with outstanding participation who have fewer than three unexcused absences will receive a bonus in their attendance & participation score. So too will students who attend at least three PPE-related events (<http://ppe.unc.edu/events/list>) over the course of the term (plus there's usually pizza).

## Submission:

Essays should be submitted to your Drop Box on Sakai, in .pdf format, by 11:59pm on the dates that they're due. You will lose 10% of your essay grade for each day that your essay is late. An essay will be considered late if (1) it's not turned in by the due date, (2) it's not properly uploaded to your Drop Box, or (3) the file is corrupted and so unable to be opened.

## Electronics:

No phones or laptops without prior permission.

## Email:

Please allow 24 hours for a response. If you don't hear back within 48 (business) hours, send a short follow up. Be sure to check this syllabus and the course site for answers to your questions before emailing to ask them—and please be professional in your correspondence.

**Required Texts:**

All assigned reading can be found either online or on the course website.

**Reading:**

All the readings for this course are worth reading. Please read them carefully. I advise reading each piece more than once. The goal should be to understand the author well enough to be able to state her/his argument(s) in your own words. Read critically. Question the author's claims, and question your questioning of those claims. See my website, under 'Teaching', for some helpful guides to reading philosophy: [www.chrismhoward.com/teaching.html](http://www.chrismhoward.com/teaching.html).

**Writing:**

A principal aim of this course is to help you develop your skills in producing informative and persuasive writing. The assignments are designed to facilitate this end. You will write drafts of each of your essays and exchange them for peer editing, prior to turning in a final draft. The details of this exercise will be explained in class. Before writing a draft of your first essay, I ask that you please view the guidelines for writing a philosophy paper available on my website: [www.chrismhoward.com/teaching.html](http://www.chrismhoward.com/teaching.html).

**Honor Code:**

All students must be familiar with and abide by the Honor Code, which covers such issues as plagiarism, falsification, unauthorized assistance or collaboration, cheating, and other acts of academic dishonesty. Violations of the Honor Code will not be taken lightly. See <http://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/honor-code/> for more information. Also: re-using paper for past courses qualifies as academic dishonesty, and so is not permitted.

**Accessibility Resources & Service (ARS):**

UNC-Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations for students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health struggles, chronic medical conditions, temporary disability, or pregnancy complications, all of which can impair student success. See the ARS website for contact and registration information: <https://ars.unc.edu/about-ars/contact-us>

**Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS):**

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short- or long-term needs. Go to their website: [www.caps.unc.edu](http://www.caps.unc.edu) or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Service building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

**Topics and Readings:****Introduction to Ethical Theories in Business**

22 August	Introduction & Overview
24 August	Donaldson & Werhane, "Introduction to Ethical Reasoning"
27 August	Kramer, "Legal and Moral Obligation"

## Responsibilities to Whom? The Nature of the Corporation

29 August Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits”

31 August Denning, “The Origin of ‘The World’s Dumbest Idea’”

3 September *No class – Labor Day*

5 September Freeman, “Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation”

7 September Hasnas, “Whither Stakeholder Theory?”

10 September Heath, “A Market Failures Approach to Business Ethics”

12 September Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, “Ethical Breakdowns”

14 September *Group Discussion*

## Business and Government

17 September Osnos, “Lawrence Lessig v. Citizens United”

19 September Hubbard & Kane, “In Defense of Citizens United”

21 September *Group Discussion*

24 September Day, “How the Maker of TurboTax Fought Free, Simple Tax Filing”

Huseman, “Filing Taxes Could Be Free and Simple. But H&R Block and Intuit Are Still Lobbying Against It”

On The Media, “Why So Tedious, Taxes?”

26 September Russakoff, “Schooled”

28 September *Group Discussion*

## Securities Fraud

1 October Anderson, *Insider Trading: Law, Ethics, and Reform*, ch. 6

Vardi, “With Bill Ackman, Tennis and Herbalife Can Be a Dangerous Mix”

Kolhatkar, “When the Feds Went After the Hedge-Fund Legend Steven A. Cohen”

**\*Rough draft of essay 1 due at 11:59pm\***

3 October Anderson, *Insider Trading: Law, Ethics, and Reform*, ch. 9

- 5 October *Group Discussion*
- 8 October Boddy, “The Corporate Psychopaths Theory of the Global Financial Crisis”  
Bilton, “How Elizabeth Holmes’s House of Cards Came Tumbling Down”
- 10 October Henning, “Why it is Getting Harder to Prosecute Executives for Corporate Misconduct”
- 12 October *No class – University Day*

### **Corporate Culture**

- 15 October Bok, “Whistleblowing and Professional Responsibility”  
Fowler, “Reflecting On One Very, Very Strange Year at Uber”  
*\*Essay 1 due at 11:59pm\**
- 17 October Retro Report, “Why Hasn’t Sexual Harassment Disappeared?”  
Bennett, “The ‘Click’ Moment: How the Weinstein Scandal Unleashed a Tsunami”  
This American Life, “Five Women”
- 19 October *No class – Fall Break*
- 22 October *\*Midterm Exam\**
- 24 October Dempsey, “Moral Responsibility, Shared Values, and Corporate Culture”
- 26 October *Group Discussion*

### **Global Context**

- 29 October Donaldson, “Values in Tension”
- 31 October Heineman, “The Google Case: When Law and Ethics Collide”  
Gallagher, “Google Plans to Launch Censored Search Engine in China, Leaked Documents Reveal”
- 2 November *Group Discussion*
- 5 November Zwolinski, “Sweatshops, Choice, and Exploitation”
- 7 November Kates, “The Ethics of Sweatshops and the Limits of Choice”
- 9 November *Group Discussion*

## Big Data

- 12 November Richards & King, “Big Data Ethics”  
*\*Rough draft of essay 2 due at 11:59pm\**
- 14 November Menand, “Why Do We Care So Much About Privacy?”
- 16 November *Group Discussion*
- 19 November Mittelstadt & Floridi, “The Ethics of Big Data: Current and Foreseeable Issues in Biomedical Contexts”
- 21 November *No class – Thanksgiving Break*
- 23 November *No class – Thanksgiving Break*

## Algorithms

- 26 November Mittelstadt et al., “The Ethics of Algorithms: Mapping the Debate”  
*\*Essay 2 due at 11:59pm\**
- 28 November Tufekci, “Algorithmic Harms Beyond Facebook and Google”
- 30 November *Group Discussion*
- 3 December Kate Crawford on Algorithmic Illusions  
Barocas & Selbst, “Big Data’s Disparate Impact” (pp. 673-693)
- 5 December Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* (selections)
- 14 December *\*Final Exam @ 12:00pm\**