

Philosophy 243/Business 242 Business Ethics

Fall, 2018

MW 2:30-3:45 pm at UW-Stevens Point at Wausau (formerly UW-Marathon County)

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[I read both but I read the home one more often.]

Syllabus

On what you are to learn in philosophy

I would like very much to focus this course on exploration. More and more I like the standpoint: "Here is something we don't know, let's look around." More and more I would like to equip to help you do explorations of areas of thought and also to do investigations once you have found something to examine.

You should know at the outset that an important part of philosophy has been encouraging examination of alternative views – each of them.

In a lot of cases there are nothing but alternative views, because no reliably accepted general view is available. How to understand capitalism would be an example. No clue really, but different theories abound. What ethics really is would be another example. And I would encourage you not to think the way you put things together will stay for your entire life. As we encounter things, our view of the world changes.

Some studies have pretty much decided on how most of the study should proceed. If you take science courses and probably courses in other kinds of studies, you will find "a right answer" often, because a lot has been settled in how to do the studies. That took a long time and it was only when the method was overall successful (or seemed better than other methods) that it became "the way to do things." BUT! Even then, the more you advance in your study of a science the more you get to deal with debates within that study! So debates, and figuring things out on your own, will never leave you.

Really I think college education should help you be a better *investigator* and not a newly knowledgeable person filled with new facts. (Along this line, Steve Martin, the comedian once said, "You take all these courses in college and you forget them all, but you remember just enough philosophy to screw you up for the rest of your life.")

To get you there, philosophy should help. In philosophy you are gain the ability to defend views – even those you don't hold or a just trying out and then to deal with objections to those views. And in that way you can start an examination on your own.

Book and reading material

The book to buy or rent is *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases*, by Manuel G. Velasquez, Seventh Edition. We will read a section in Chapter 1, all of Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. And we will read a short section in his Chapter 8.

A lot of the material that will be online consists of things I wrote myself. That includes chapters to replace Velasquez's chapters on moral theory (we do look a little

bit at a few things he says).

The other things you need to read will either be in the D2L site or handed out in class or both.

Summary of Assignments:

- In-class essay (short essay exam) Sept 12 [10% of total grade for the course]
- First version of research paper October 5 [8% of total grade]
- Final version of research paper Oct 26 [18% of total grade]
- In class exam Nov 14 [20% of total grade]
- Shorter paper due Dec 7 [21% of total grade]
- Final exam TBA [23% of total grade]

Philosophy is more a class in acquiring skills than it is a class in packing in information. The skills are (a) learning how to understand reasoning that is given for positions and (b) being able to think of criticisms of that reasoning, even if one likes the conclusion of that reasoning. Another skill is (c) constructing reasoning oneself – either for a position you want to hold or for objecting to a position you are against. This involves being able to examine opposing viewpoints and being “logical” about what one holds.

Business ethics covers the issues that come up in business dealing with good or bad treatment and beyond that trying to figure out if the economic system itself should be examined and criticized.

General remarks on the “mechanics” of the course

The in-class essay is a discussion question you write in class on a topic that is announced in the previous week.

An important component in the course is the research paper. The grade of the two parts is over a quarter of the class grade. It is about figuring out the operative ethic in a branch of business. To do the paper you have to interview some people in that business – *without mentioning the word “ethics”* to them because that will bring out different answers than are useful (surprise).

The in-class exam is like the in-class essay, except that you will have two essay questions to answer instead of just one.

The shorter paper is about 500 words in length (two pages). Before the paper is due you are invited to submit a draft of it to me for review.

I give you study questions in advance of any exam so you know what the exam will cover. If you can answer the study questions well, you will have the background for the examination – even though I never put a study question as an examination question. The examinations are *open-book*, but if you reading it for the first time, you won’t have time to do the exam.

Keeping track of your grade

The UW System is concerned that you know what grade you are running in your classes. Mid-term exams were instituted for that purpose. With the D2L site for this class things are even better. Your grades are kept under “Activities” then under “Grades.” First you can check on me. You can see if we agree on my record-keeping. Secondly you can see what grade you are headed towards at the point you check on it

(under “Calculated Final Grade” – remember that). If you can’t find your “Calculated Final Grade” (it is always the grade to which you are headed at the time), let me know. I like both features of D2L very much.

Office times:

My office is Room 329. That is upstairs at the north end of the main building. One up there look for the narrow hallways off the main hall. Room numbers in each direction should be posted. If you want a map of campus buildings and rooms, click on this (or paste into your browser):

http://uwmc.uwc.edu/sites/uwmc.uwc.edu/files/imce-uploads/about/overview/map/campus_building_map_wrooms-ro82512.pdf

My schedule is packed because I commute to Marshfield on Tuesdays and Thursdays and I am also taking choir here, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Here are the times I plan to be sitting in my office and you don’t need to schedule anything:

Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:15 to 11:50 am

The 3rd and 4th Tuesdays of the month from 12:30 to 1:00 pm.

My last class on Mondays and Wednesday is over at 3:45, so you can set something up after that.

What about Fridays? Set something up between 1 and 2 pm at the campus. As it gets colder I can be there more times (I do mowing for the Monk Botanical Gardens Friday mornings, and when the grass stops growing I don’t do that! I also have departmental meetings at Point every three weeks, but that 1-2 pm period should be good even then.

I really like going over class work with students, so don’t be shy about setting something up. And certainly use email to ask me questions or get help!

Course schedule

1) September 5

Class topics: Ethics, business, and what the course is about.

Reading: In D2L in Week 1 under “Content”: “The usefulness of philosophy” (less important) and “Who is to say and subjectivism” (more important)

2) September 10-12

Class topics: What is ethics or morality? What are they doing?

Reading: In D2L in Week 2 under “Content”: “Hosler’s Introduction to Business Ethics,”

Graded assignment: In class essay September 12th [10% of total grade]

3) September 17-19

Class topics: Hard choices and dilemmas; do dilemmas show that everything is

subjective?

Reading: In D2L in Week 3 under “Content”: Hosler discussion “Dilemmas and hard choices”

4) September 24-26

Class topics: Understanding policy (law counts as policy)

Reading: In D2L in Week 4 under “Content”: Hosler discussion “On Policy.”

5) October 1-3

Class topic: Ethics versus Wisdom

Reading: In D2L in Week 2 under “Content”: “Ethics versus Wisdom”

Graded assignment: First version of research paper due October 5th [8% of total grade]

6) October 8-10

Class topics: Evil doing in business – how some people are brought into it (others start out that way!)

Reading: In D2L in Week 6 under “Content”: “Darley article on socialization into evildoing” and in the Velasquez book, Chapter 8, pages 427 to 430 [Two subsections “The Right to Freedom of Conscience” and “Whistleblowing”]. Also in D2L in Week 6 under “Content”: Article “An Unusual Whistleblower.”

7) October 15-17

Class topics: Economic systems, Locke and private property, Adam Smith and “the invisible hand”

Reading: Velasquez, Chapter 3, “The Business System: Government, Markets, and International Trade,” pages 152 to 171. In D2L in Week 7 under “Content”: Hosler online discussion entitled “The Two Opposed Moral Views on Capitalism.”

8) October 22-24

Class topics: Social Darwinism, Ricardo, and Marx

Reading: Velasquez, Chapter 3, “The Business System: Government, Markets, and International Trade,” pages 171 to 189

Graded assignment: Final version of research paper due Friday October 26th by 6:00 p.m. [18% of total grade]

9) October 29-31

Class topics: The market place and its issues – monopoly and oligopoly

Reading: Velasquez, Chapter 4, “Ethics in the Marketplace,” pages 198 to 230.

10) November 5-7

Class topics: Environmental issues for business

Reading: Velasquez, Chapter 5, “Ethics and the Environment,” pages 244 to 293

11) November 12-14

Class topics: Consumer protection issues; the start of discussing racial category formation in the US.

Reading: Velasquez, Chapter 6, “The Ethics of Consumer Production and Marketing,” pages 304 to 334. In D2L in Week 11 under “Content”: “The formation of whiteness and blackness – with the idea there being no real human races.”

Graded assignment: In class exam November 14th [Worth 20% of the total grade.]

12) November 19-21

Class topics: The formation of racial categories, continued. Start of discussion of racial structure in the US – with reference to other “structures” (a word Hosler uses to refer to something he does not experience).

Reading: Velasquez, Chapter 7, “The Ethics of Job Discrimination,” pages 348 to 388. In D2L in Week 12 under “Content”: Hosler discussion “Racial structure and privilege” and the article “Housing for black players made Lombardi Packers great.”

13) November 26-28

Class topics: Continued discussion of what is “privilege” and what kinds are there? Affirmative action.

Reading: In D2L in Week 13 under “Content”: “On affirmative action”

14) December 3-5

Class topics: Sexual harassment

Reading: In D2L in Week 14 under “Content”: “Characterization of sexual harassment” and “A list of things in the way of reporting abuse” *and* in the Velaquez book the EEOC’s definition of sexual harassment that you will find on page 371 of that book.

Graded assignment: Paper Due December 7th by 6:00 p.m. [Worth 21% of the total grade.]

15) December 10-12

Class topics: Sexual misconduct issues and course review

Reading: In D2L in Week 15 under "Content": "Sexual Harassment the depressing truth" and "Sexual Harassment and HR."

Final exam: TBA [Worth 23% of the total grade.] If you do a paper in place of the final exam it is due at the time (not the place) of the end of the final exam (most likely you will upload it to Dropbox on this website).