

Ethical Issues in Business

Christopher Newport University, Spring 2019

MEETING	Dr. Chris Tweedt	Philosophy 207, sec. 2
INFO	202 McMurrin Hall chris.tweedt@cnu.edu	MWF, 1–1:50 am 310 McMurrin Hall
OFFICE HRS	Monday & Wednesday 2–5 pm	
TEXTBOOK	<i>Moral Issues in Business</i> , 13th ed. by Shaw & Barry TopHat Test (Code: 401126)	
PURPOSE	The purpose of this class is to help you <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. identify, develop, analyze, and evaluate arguments relevant to business actions,2. understand moral frameworks and the reasons for and against those frameworks, and3. apply ethical thinking in concrete business contexts.	
OVERVIEW	This class is divided into two sections . <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. First, we'll address how to make ethical decisions. We'll discuss what ethics is and why it is important, whether ethical truths are determined by one's culture, whether the rightness of one's actions are determined by their results, and how to make difficult ethical decisions.2. Second, we'll apply the results of the first section to specific cases. We'll offer arguments for and against the moral permissibility of selling harmful products, price gouging, deceiving in advertising and sales, exploiting employees, offering bribes or insider trade secrets, discriminating in hiring and promotions, influencing legislation for business gain, and harming the environment.	
SCHEDULE	Intro to Business Ethics Jan 7 Seneca & Sisyphus : Your place in business and life Jan 9 Business Evolution : What business ethics is and the need for it Shaw, 3-12 (Introduction) Jan 11 Facts & Opinions : The difference between them and its effects Legality, Morality, Conscience Jan 14 Conditionals & Counterexamples : Moral reasoning practice Jan 16 Law, Conscience, & Morality : How do they relate? Shaw, 14-16 (Conscience) Jan 18 Moral Relativism : Cross-cultural impacts on morals Shaw, 12-14 (Relativism) Cultural Norms & Morality Jan 21 Arguments for Relativism : Disagreement & tolerance Jan 23 Arguments against Relativism : Correction, progress, & reformers Jan 25 How to reason about morality : Negotiating and Ethical Fading Shaw, 38-45 (Solomon Article) Goals, Results, and Others-Centeredness Jan 28 Egoism : Because it all comes back to me Shaw, 19-28 (Ethical Reasoning), 54-56 (Madoff Case), Shaw, 56-60 (Egoism) Julia Staffel on faking it until you make it Jan 30 Goal-Oriented Reasoning : It's good for the company Podcast: Planet Money's "The Wells Fargo Hustle"	

Feb 1 **Utilitarianism pt. 1**: The greatest benefit to the most people
Shaw, 60-66 (Utilitarianism-Theory), 110-114 (Utilitarianism-Justice)

Respecting intrinsic rights

Feb 4 **Utilitarianism pt. 2**: What's the problem with a focus on results?

Feb 6 **Deontology pt. 1**: What rights are

Feb 8 **Deontology pt. 2**: How to discover what rights we have
Shaw, 66-77 (Deontology)

Fairness and Equality

Feb 11 **Contractualism**: Providing basic conditions for flourishing

Shaw, 105-110 (Economic Inequality), 114-128 (Contractualism), 133-134 (Poverty)

Feb 13 **Libertarianism**: What am I entitled to?

USA Today's "Ford CEO Mark Fields picks up a nice pay increase"

Inc's "Here's what happened at that company that set a \$70,000 minimum wage"

Feb 15 **Virtue Ethics**: Developing character

Combining Ethical Theories

Feb 18 **Pluralism**: How to decide what you should do

Feb 20 **No class**: Conference

Feb 22 **No class**: Conference

Exam Week

Feb 25 **Summary**: Recap, Q&A

Feb 27 **Exam 1**: Taken in class through TopHat

Feb 22 **Review**: Learning from the exam

Spring Break Mar 4–8

Corporate Social Responsibility

Mar 11 **Stakeholders**: To whom is a corporation responsible?

Thesis 1: When directing business actions, your only responsibility is to increase profits.

Shaw, 202-215 (Corporations), 12-22 (Corporate Wrongdoing)

Milton Friedman's "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits"

Mar 13 **Invisible Hand**: Do corporations need to think about others?

Thesis 2: It is always wrong for corporations to take advantage of others.

216-220 (Invisible Hand, Government)

AP's "Influence Game: GM bill is self-driving and self-interested"

Mar 15 **Explaining Corporate Wrongdoing**: Eliminating factors contributing to wrongdoing

Operations: Bribery, Privacy, Exploitation

Mar 18 **Bribery**: When does it happen, and why is it wrong?

Thesis 3: It is morally wrong to offer or accept a bribe.

Shaw, 503-507 (Bribery)

NPR's "Drug company payments mirror doctors' brand-name prescribing"

Mar 20 **Privacy**: Why is it important, and when is it violated?

Thesis 4: Companies have the right to monitor employees, even without their permission.

Shaw, 498-503 (Sharing Information)

TechCrunch's "Uber reportedly tracked Lyft drivers"

James Rachels' "Why Privacy is Important"

Mar 22 **Exploitation**: Eliminating factors contributing to wrongdoing
Mar 25 **Exploitation pt. 2**: Eliminating factors contributing to wrongdoing

Marketing: Promotion, Products, Pricing

Mar 27 **Promotion**: When and why is it impermissible to mislead consumers?
Thesis 5: It is morally wrong for companies to mislead consumers about their products.
Shaw, 281-295 (Deceptive Marketing/Advertising/Sales)
Ars Technica's article on Huawei
Recode's "What happened to the Lily camera drone?"

Mar 29 **Products**: Is it ever permissible to sell a product with harmful effects?
Thesis 6: It is morally permissible for a business to sell any product it is legal to sell.
Shaw, 264-275 (Harmful Products)
Information on the effects of cigarettes
The Washington Post on plastic surgery in South Korea
The Drive's article on Kobe Steel
NYT's article on the famous Tylenol recall
BBC's article on asbestos in baby powder

Apr 1 **Pricing**: Can companies permissibly set prices however high they want?
Thesis 7: Businesses should be allowed to set prices however high they want.
Price gouging: Shaw, 276-281 (Pricing)
LinkedIn's story on HEB during hurricane Harvey
Forbes' Price Gouging is bad politics but good economics
Washington Post's article on airfare before hurricane Irma

Wrongs of Omission and Long-Term Outlook: Dumping, Discrimination, Reporting

Apr 3 **Environment**: Do corporations have an obligation not to pollute?
Thesis 8: Companies are obligated not to emit waste that damages the environment.
Shaw, 30-32 (Dumping)
Ecowatch's "Fast fashion is the second dirtiest industry in the world"
The Weather Channel's article on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch
The Guardian's article on the irreversible effects of plastic pollution

Apr. 5 **No class**: Paideia

Apr 8 **Discrimination**: What it is, when it happens, and whether it's impermissible
Thesis 9: Companies should practice affirmative action.
Discrimination: Shaw, 380-400
NYT's "Jerks and the Start-Ups They Ruin"

Apr 10 **Discrimination pt. 2**: Discrimination in marketing, pricing, and AI
The Guardian's "AI programs exhibit racial and gender biases"

Apr 12 **Obligation to Give**: Do corporations have an obligation to give to charities?
Thesis 10: Corporations are obligated to provide for those in need.
Giving to others: Peter Singer's "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Current Affairs' "It's Basically Just Immoral to be Rich"

Exam Week 2

Apr 15 **Obligation to Report**: Do individuals have an obligation to report wrongdoing?
Apr 17 **Summary**: Recap, Q&A
Apr 19 **Exam 2**: Taken in class through TopHat

Apr. 26, 2-4:30 pm **Comprehensive Exam**: Audio Case Study and Paper/Outline due
The paper/outline must have sources, but only the content of your Audio Case Study is graded.

GRADING	440 > A > 405	395 > B+ > 387	351 > C+ > 343	307 > D+ > 299
SCALE	404 > A- > 396	386 > B > 361	342 > C > 316	298 > D > 273
	263 > F > 0	360 > B- > 352	315 > C- > 308	272 > D- > 264

EVALUATION 200 points 2 tests

Purpose: to test your understanding of what we have learned in class

Tests are comprehensive, focusing on content from the most recent half of class.

These will be hard, forcing you to read carefully and apply knowledge from class.

Tests will be taken on a computer or tablet during class times specified above.

30 multiple-choice questions—some 3 pts, some 4 pts

Test dates are on the schedule above.

50 points 5 quizzes

Purpose: to measure attendance and attention during class times

These quizzes are entirely multiple choice, made available on Scholar.

Quizzes contain 5 questions about the last meeting and the reading for the day.

You need a secret passcode to take the quiz.

The secret passcode will be given in the first 10 minutes of 5 unspecified classes.

You can have the passcode without attending class only if you have a good excuse.

You are responsible for determining whether there was a quiz on a day you missed.

You only have 2 calendar days to make up missed quizzes.

There are no retakes.

There is a super secret, super harsh penalty for students who give out the passcode.

90 points 8 argument papers

Purpose: to reward thoughtful engagement and consistent effort

Each paper must argue for or against a thesis of the day, given on the schedule.

You may write one and only one argument paper for each thesis.

Papers must contain no more than 100 words.

Papers must contain only a thesis and reasons for that thesis.

I will describe how to write your papers in class.

Papers will be graded only on insight or thoughtfulness of the reasons for the thesis.

Papers are due within 10 minutes of the start of each class that contains that thesis.

10 pts per paper, extra 10 pts for having completed 8 above 7 points each.

You get an automatic 0/100 on all papers if you plagiarize on one paper.

If you miss a class, you have at most 2 days to make up missed papers.

100 points 1 case study

Purpose: to measure ability to apply class material to a real-world business case

Must be in an audio format, maximum 3 minutes.

Must have an accompanying paper with all your sources cited.

Must be emailed to profitweedt@gmail.com or uploaded to Scholar by dates on schedule.

The first part must contain a description of a real-world business case <15 years ago.

The case must not be in the textbook or discussed in class. You need to find your own.

The second part must contain an analysis.

What is the action you are evaluating?

What stakeholders are affected?

Is the action wrong? Why or why not?

What excuse could someone give for their action?

Why is that excuse insufficient?

What should the person or business do now as a result of their action?

Students are graded only on demonstrated insight from class and correct application.

Only content, not smoothness of presentation, matters. Coughing and pausing is fine.

Due date is on the schedule above. No redos allowed.

0 points Extra Credit

I will tell you if I offer extra credit. Focus on doing well on regular class work.

At your job, you work hard to get a raise. Please don't ask for a raise without performance.

I wasn't in class. Did I miss anything important?

Definitely. You can kind of assume that I'm going to talk about at least one important thing in class. Also, something from class will definitely be somewhere on a test. I recommend you ask other students for their notes.

What did we cover last class? Will you please send me notes?

I don't send notes (you wouldn't be able to understand my lecture notes anyway—messy handwriting) but I will gladly send you pictures I took of the whiteboard from the last class. Just send me an email, and I'll reply with the pics.

Will my grade round up?

It will round up to the nearest percent. I will also grade generously. You're content with that, right? I remember this story about a company giving out generous salaries plus a bonus at the end of the year, and one employee complained that he didn't get a bigger bonus. Can you guess what happened to the employee? It's a good idea to practice now not to do the kind of thing that employee did.

Is there anything else I can do to raise my grade?

Well, think of it like this: you begin the semester with 0 points, and for each assignment, quiz, and test, you are raising your grade. The purpose of the syllabus is to tell you exactly how to get this 0 all the way up to the top. If you're asking whether there are any other assignments that are not on the syllabus, the answer is: no, I have a policy against keeping assignments secret from my students.

I worked really hard. Please raise my grade.

Perhaps unfortunately, this class rewards results, not effort. I don't grade you on working hard but on how well you completed the assignments. If I rewarded effort, I'd have that on the syllabus, but that's really hard to measure, so I don't give points for effort. Personally, though, I commend it. Great job working hard!

I need a higher grade in this class. Please raise my grade.

I understand the thought, but I don't really think you need a higher grade. To show this, think about why you got a lower grade than you wanted. Is it because you didn't put in the effort? If so, that shows me you either don't really think you need a higher grade, or you didn't care. And if you didn't care, then what you *need* is something (like a low grade) to motivate you to care about these things in the future. Perhaps your low grade is because you didn't understand the class content. If that's the case, then what you really need is not to go into programs or careers that assume you do understand it—that's precisely one of the purposes of grades. So, really, you did get the grade you need, which is kind of good news. Right?

Can I go back and do the homework I missed?

If you want, but I won't give you a new grade for it, for fairness reasons—I need to grade everyone in the same way, and I do not have the resources to re-grade everyone's past homework.

Can you make an exception just this one time?

Think of the syllabus as a contract I have with my students. I can't really violate that contract, and if I did, it would probably be because I was giving more to students who were confident enough to ask for more, and so rewarding confidence instead of performance, or something like that. Perhaps this confidence has worked out well for you. If so, that's great. But, you know, it doesn't always work out.

But I've definitely improved. My grade does not reflect my current understanding.

The assessments are designed so that those who perform better later get a high grade in the course. If you still think there was a glitch or that an assignment was graded unfairly, you may email me to ask for a grade audit.

HONOR CODE By being enrolled in this class, each student is expected to read, understand, and abide by the CHU's honor code. CNU reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. This conduct includes plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes.

Class Policy: You'll receive an automatic F in the course if you share test or quiz questions with other students. The purpose of these tests is to, well, test your knowledge. If you allow other students to prepare, it undermines the testing process. If you discover someone sharing questions and report it to me, you will get free ice cream. Also, I'll report all seeming-plagiarism to CHECS and give you a 0 for the assignment. I won't argue with you whether you did it intentionally. We all know how that will go. You'll argue that you didn't mean to do it, just like people who do it intentionally argue. So I'm not even going to ask. Please be intentional about not doing it.

DISABILITY, ACCOMMODATION In order for a student to receive an accommodation for a disability, that disability must be on record in the Office of Student Affairs, 3rd Floor, David Student Union (DSU). If you believe that you have a disability, please contact Dr. Kevin Hughes, Vice President of Student Affairs (594-7160) to discuss your needs. Dr. Hughes will provide you with the necessary documentation to give to your professors. Students with documented disabilities are required to notify the instructor no later than the first day on which they require an accommodation (the first day of class is recommended), in private, if accommodation is needed. The instructor will provide students with disabilities with all reasonable accommodations, but students are not exempted from fulfilling the normal requirements of the course. Work completed before the student notifies the instructor of his/her disability may be counted toward the final grade at the sole discretion of the instructor.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT The Center for Academic Success (located in Christopher Newport Hall, first floor, room 123) offers free tutoring assistance for Christopher Newport students in several academic areas. Staff in the center offer individual assistance and/or workshops on various study strategies to help you perform your best in your courses. The center also houses the Alice F. Randall Writing Center. Writing consultants can help you at any stage of the writing process, from invention, to development of ideas, to polishing a final draft. The Center is not a proofreading service, but consultants can help you to recognize and find grammar and punctuation errors in your work as well as provide assistance with global tasks. You may visit the Center for Academic Success to request a tutor, meet with a writing consultant, pick up a schedule of workshops, or make an appointment to talk one-on-one with a University Fellow for Student Success. If I become concerned about your course performance, attendance, engagement, or well-being, I will speak with you first. I also may submit a referral through our Captains Care Program. The referral will be received by the Center for Academic Success as well as other departments when appropriate (Counseling Services, Office of Student Engagement). If you are an athlete, the Athletic Academic Support Coordinator will be notified. Someone will contact you to help determine what will help you succeed. Please remember that this is a means for me to support you and help foster your success at Christopher Newport.