

Soc 140
Ethics in Management
Spring 2003
Dr. Gary Hull

Offc. Loc.: 240 North Bld.
Offc. Hrs.: MW 1-2 (call first)
Phone: 660-5608
Email: gahull@soc.duke.edu
Website: vem.duke.edu

Syllabus

The purpose of this course is to convince you that ethics is critical to your professional and personal life. We will study major theories of ethics, e.g., altruism and egoism, as they apply to specific business and political issues such as: the profit motive, the nature of a corporation, foreign trade, insider trading, affirmative action and diversity, government regulation, employer/employee relations and obligations.

Because ethics deals with issues that are fundamental to a person's life, the ideas covered in this course are more abstract than are the ones taught in most management courses. We will see, however, that ethics has a very practical effect on your life.

Textbooks: *Ethical Issues In Business*, 6th Edition, Donaldson and Werhane
Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal, Ayn Rand
Class Packet

For the second class: read Class Packet Essay #5, and in conjunction with this, be prepared to discuss the case "The Aircraft Brake Scandal" in Donaldson and Werhane. Also, in at most one or two paragraphs each (handwritten is fine), answer these two questions: 1) What does it mean, to me, to be moral? 2) Why should one be moral? Your answers are due on the second day of class.

Weeks 1-3: General introduction to the course: What is ethics, and who cares? What are moral values? Why are they necessary? The importance of thinking in principles, especially in moral principles. Why can't I just do "whatever company policy demands"? or "whatever everyone else is doing"? or "just decide case by case"? What is a principle? Moral principles vs. pragmatism; relativism vs. absolutism; overview of the 3 codes: egoism vs. unbridled egoism vs. altruism. Some concrete illustrations of moral issues in the marketplace and beyond.

Weeks 1-3 Reading: CP: 1 - 4
CUI: 144-149
DW: 21-24; 111-18; 119-20; 133-37;
285-96; 373-76; 380-84; 385-88

Week 3: Quiz #1, 15 minutes.

Weeks 4-7: The moral code of altruism: what is it? Plato, religion, Kant, Utilitarianism, Egalitarianism as the main types of altruism. Altruism's highest

virtue: self-sacrifice; surrendering personal desires to the needs, wishes, wants of others.

Week 7: Quiz #2, 15 minutes.

Week 8: Egalitarianism as a form of altruism – "equality of results;" non-value above value; rankings and evaluations as unjust. If time: altruism's other virtues. Summary of altruism. Altruism and the marketplace: are they compatible? Smorgasbord morality: why not choose a little of altruism and a little of egoism?

Weeks 4-8 Reading: CP: 7, 8, 15
DW: 25-27; 225-33; 297-303; 446-47;
466-477; 526-538

Week 8: First paper due

Week 9: Egoism and the foundational issues: man's nature as the standard of value; rationality as the highest virtue. Independence a virtue; dependence a vice. Integrity, Honesty, Justice as egoist virtues; Compromise, Dishonesty, and Mercy as egoist vices.

Weeks 9-13 Reading: CP: 8, 9, re-read 3
CUI: 44-71; 102-121; 135-137; 192-201
DW: 138-42; 154-59; 247-56; 340-51; 360-72;
442-45

Weeks 10-14: Productivity and Pride as the last two egoist virtues; productivity versus the skater and the looter; pride versus humility. If there is time: isn't everyone selfish? charity; the "conflict" of interests among egoists.

Week 12: Quiz #3, 15 minutes.

Final papers: TBA

Grading policy: There are two 5-7 page papers.

Each paper is 30% of your grade. I will give you a list of paper topics. There are model papers available, which I highly recommend that you read.

Quizzes: 30%. There are three of these. I will give you a list of three questions one-week prior. From this, I will choose one question on the day of the quiz, and you will have 15 minutes to write your answer. You may not use notes or books. The questions will be on the major issues covered in class or in the reading.

Class participation: 10%

A Few Pointers on How to Navigate this Course Successfully

Ethics deals with broad, timeless issues. As a result, the material is abstract, especially in comparison to most other management courses. Additionally, most people have never explicitly identified their moral premises. These factors can at first make our subject matter seem purposeless, detached from everyday life, too "theoretical." It is none of those – as I will prove. But these factors do place an extra burden on you. You must constantly seek to relate the course material to the details of your own life and work. When you hear an idea discussed in class, ask yourself: How does this apply to me? What concrete situation did I face that exemplified this idea? Do I understand it? Do I agree/disagree with it? Doing this will help make the material easier to understand and more real.

The principles we cover are the most valuable aspect of this course. Roughly two-thirds of the time is spent understanding the content of certain ethical principles, with examples sprinkled in for clarity. The one complaint in the past, though, has been that there wasn't enough time spent on applying the principles to cases. "We wanted to see more of how the principles applied in practice," has been a remark along these lines. Toward this end, the Donaldson and Werhane textbook will help. It is filled with concrete cases. Further, you should, if you don't already do so, identify your own ethical premises, and see how they apply to specific issues, e.g., private property, environmentalism, affirmative action. Here's a pointer: when reading an editorial or contemplating a personal issue, ask yourself: which moral *principle* is relevant here? Doing this will enable you to understand better your own life and world events.

Your contexts vary. Students come to this course with different educational backgrounds, professional pursuits, and varying abilities to "see the big picture." The class, though, is designed for a typical student who is not majoring in philosophy. If, however, we seem to be going too fast, see me before the problem becomes overwhelming.

On class participation. It is absolutely critical. If you want to defend yourself verbally, you must practice. Further, one way to show that you understand the material is to answer and ask questions. This shows that you have been thinking about the issues.

On my lecturing method. The following is intended to make it easier for you to take notes in class. *Every* time a new idea is introduced, I will start by answering two questions: (1) What is X? (2) Why is it important to know X? I.e., what is the motivation for understanding this point?

A former student said that what he wanted from a business degree was not just to be a competent technician, but to be a great business *leader*. And, he added, this course helped him to understand the principles necessary to accomplish that goal. The course moves fast, the issues are controversial, complex, and abstract. However I hope that you will find the reward worth the effort.