BUSINESS: INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ETHICS – BUAD 5706

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Contemporary business culture reflects complex ethical territory – ethics requires the moral agent to weigh evidence critically and navigate significant uncertainty in making decisions that may profoundly impact their employees, the natural environment, and entire cultures in developing nations. International business adds additional complexity, introducing concepts like multiculturalism and differing mores and laws regarding populations – what is assumed to be true or right in our culture may be viewed very differently in another culture, producing a conflict in setting domestic and international corporate policy. Broadly, business ethics asks a number of important questions: Are businesses accountable to only their shareholders or to all the people who are impacted by a particular decision? What sorts of principles should guide ethical business decision-making? What is a healthy corporate and organizational climate? How should a corporation handle a third-party supplier who relies on slave labor or other forms of exploitation and harassment? These are but a handful of topics the course is designed to cover, providing students with the tools needed to navigate the complexities of current domestic and international business.

The course has ten central components, beginning with essential elements of ethical theory, ethical methodologies, and distributive justice. Once the students understand these bases, the course will shift to address specific applications in hiring/firing, corporate and organizational environments (drawing on elements of organizational leadership), and marketing (among other topics) using a problem- and case-based approach to learning.

TOPICS TO BE COVERED:

1. Meta-ethics and Ethical Methodologies
   a. Absolutism/Relativism
   b. Utilitarianism
   c. Deontology
   d. Virtue Ethics
   e. Natural Law
   f. Care Ethics
   g. Casuistry

2. Social and Economic Justice
   a. Contractarian/Communitarian
   b. Libertarian

3. The Purpose of the Corporation
   a. Stockholder/Stakeholder
   b. The Economics of Inequality, Exclusion, and Consumerism
   c. Ethical Organizational Culture (e.g., Toxic Leadership/Followership, groupthink)
   d. Ethical Choices in a Corporate Environment
   e. Social Investment
   f. Social Responsibility to Consumers (Tobacco, alcohol, pharma)

4. Ethical Treatment of Employees
   a. Hiring/Firing of Employees (Nepotism, connections)
   b. Diversity
   c. Occupational Risk
   d. Whistle-blowing

5. Diversity, Discrimination, and Harassment in the Workplace
   a. Diversity and Affirmative Action
   b. Sexual Harassment

6. Marketing and Information Disclosure
   a. Advertising and Disclosure
   b. Marketing to the Bottom of the Pyramid
   c. Competitive Intelligence

7. Ethical Issues in Finance and Accounting
   a. Auditing after Enron
   b. Financial Services
   c. Conflicts of Interest/Insider Trading
   d. Tax evasion

8. Ethical Issues Regarding the Natural Environment
   a. Business and Environmental Obligations
   b. Sustainable Development
9. Ethical Issues in International Business
   a. Universalism, Relativism, and Human Rights
   b. Sweatshops and Bribery
   c. Human Trafficking
   d. Globalization
   e. Multiculturalism/Imperialism/Cosmopolitanism

10. Other
   a. Honesty in the Workplace
   b. Regulation/Deregulation
   c. Contract Formation

Students will also have the opportunity to discuss complex ethical issues with working professionals from major institutions in London. Tentatively, guest speaker and site visits are planned around the following topics:

1. Privacy and data mining (Google)
2. Lessons learned in corporate accountability (BP)
3. Direct marketing of medications
4. Globalization and exploitation
5. Transparency in financial reporting
6. Public/Private/NGO engagement
7. Social media use
8. Intellectual Property
9. Child Labor/Human Trafficking

Students will draw from lectures, guest speakers, and outside class activities in designing their final papers. They will synthesize these with their own original research exploring a question agreed upon by them and the professor of record. Specific dates for topic coverage are listed at the end of the syllabus, but may change dependent upon speaker and venue availability. Additional and alternative outside class activities are currently being explored.

RESOURCES (TENTATIVE)

Lectures are based around one central text and supplemental reading. Students will be provided a PDF document of the readings required for the course. They will be encouraged, but not required, to purchase the textbook.


Sample selected additional readings:


Freeman, R. Edward. “Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation.”


-----. *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958* (No. 111).

-----. *Minimum Age Convention, 1973* (No. 138).

-----. *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999* (No. 182).


