Business Ethics  
MSB 287 A (3 credits)  
King’s College, Fall 2015

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Class meeting time and location:  
MWF 9:00-9:50 a.m., McGowan 201

Course description

Examination of the vocation and moral context of business; critical reflection, through engagement with the philosophical and Catholic traditions, on how to make a living and live well; and extended consideration of issues and problems that arise in contemporary business settings. Prerequisite: Core 280.

Course objectives

By the end of this course, students should have:

developed familiarity with several theories of morality;  
become more proficient at recognizing, formulating, and addressing moral problems in the business context;  
developed a well-considered position on the purpose of business within society; and  
begun to develop an answer, for themselves, of what moral and spiritual values they want to live out in making a living.

McGowan School of Business Mission Statement

This course directly serves the mission of the McGowan School of Business. To quote (emphasis added):

The William G. McGowan School of Business seeks to develop in its students the professional knowledge and skills needed to function successfully in the dynamic environments of business with a commitment to exercising their professional responsibilities in an ethical and socially responsible manner in a global marketplace.
Learning Goals

The delivery of our business education program is guided by the following learning outcomes:

A student graduating from the William G. McGowan School of Business should be an effective communicator.

To this end, in this course, students will submit written work (including memos) and make oral presentations.

A student graduating from the William G. McGowan School of Business should possess information literacy.

To this end, in this course, students will identify, locate, and evaluate resources needed for required written work.

A student graduating from the William G. McGowan School of Business should be ethically and socially responsible.

To this end, in this course, students will develop familiarity with several theories of morality; become more proficient at recognizing, formulating, and addressing moral problems in the business context; develop a well-considered position on the purpose of business within society; and begin to develop an answer, for themselves, of what moral and spiritual values they want to live out in making a living.

A student graduating from the William G. McGowan School of Business should be professionally knowledgeable.

To this end, in this course, students will examine case studies and learn best practices in today’s business world.

The more nuts-and-bolts goals of this course are to help you develop skills that will serve you both in college and in your subsequent careers.

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<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Method of assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Read and think critically:</td>
<td>Analyze and bring critical understanding to difficult moral theories, grapple with cases exemplifying moral problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write well:</td>
<td>Write clearly and persuasively, supporting your positions with argumentation and evidence</td>
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<td>Communicate effectively orally:</td>
<td>Articulate your own views based on your reading and in response to the contributions of other students</td>
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**Master co-operative learning skills:**

| Work with and learn from other members of the class in a climate of mutual respect and support | Participation in class discussion, group projects |

**Assessment, etc.**

**Attendance/participation**

Attendance/participation will be worth 15 percent of the final grade. Please note that attendance is expected at all meetings, with due allowance for reasonable excuses. Each class that you miss will result in your losing 1/3rd point. Also please note that, per College policy, excessive absences must be reported to the Office of Student Success and Retention.

The attendance/participation grade will be determined using the following rubrics. Class participation deserving of an A grade (90-100) will be strong in most categories; participation that is strong in some categories but needs development in others will receive a B (80-90); a grade of C (70-80) reflects a need for development in most categories; D work (65-69) is unsatisfactory in several categories; and F work, unsatisfactory in nearly all.

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<th>Strong work</th>
<th>Needs development</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td>Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor</td>
<td>Sometimes displays lack of interest in comments of others</td>
<td>Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
<td>Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on reading, observations, questions</td>
<td>Sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation</td>
<td>Exhibits little evidence of having read or thought about assigned material</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of contributions</strong></td>
<td>Comments are relevant and reflect understanding of: assigned text(s); previous remarks of other students; and insights about assigned material</td>
<td>Comments sometimes irrelevant, betray lack of preparation, or indicate lack of attention to previous remarks of other students</td>
<td>Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks in seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on seminar</strong></td>
<td>Comments frequently help move seminar conversation forward</td>
<td>Comments sometimes advance the conversation, but sometimes do little to move it forward</td>
<td>Comments do not advance the conversation or are actively harmful to it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of participation</strong></td>
<td>Actively participates at appropriate times</td>
<td>Sometimes participates but other times is “tuned out”</td>
<td>Seldom participates and is generally not engaged</td>
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**Writing assignments**

You will be required to write two papers, each worth 20 percent of the final grade. The papers will be graded using the following rubrics. An A-level paper will be strong in most categories; B papers will be strong in some but need development in others; C papers need significant development; D papers are unsatisfactory in most categories.
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<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Assumes audience is student who has familiarity with the text in question but could use still reminding; paper uses evidence to make points rather than to summarize</td>
<td>Spends inappropriate amount of time merely summarizing text or repeating material covered in class, or does not provide sufficient background/assumes too much knowledge of the text</td>
<td>Shows little evidence of having read the text; ideas mostly taken from class notes or class discussion and not developed further</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>Single clear thesis ( = answer to the question, What is this paper about?) that would be interesting to someone who had already studied the text</td>
<td>Thesis is either somewhat unclear or all too obvious to most thoughtful readers</td>
<td>No clear thesis, or multiple theses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introductory paragraph(s)</td>
<td>Avoids inflated generalizations and gratuitous praise; “hooks” the reader; introduces clear thesis; briefly explains how the paper will proceed</td>
<td>Extraneous generalization; connection to thesis not entirely clear; thesis statement not clear; lacks compelling “hook,” or statement of how the paper will proceed</td>
<td>No clear thesis statement or sense of where the paper is going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraphs in body of paper</td>
<td>Each paragraph does one and only one bit of work toward the paper’s goal and is supported by evidence and argumentation</td>
<td>Some paragraphs are “baggy monsters,” trying to do all too much; or some do not support thesis, or are not supported by evidence</td>
<td>Little relationship between paragraphs and thesis, little to no evidence mustered, paragraphs do not work toward the paper’s goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>All necessary points in proving or developing thesis are made; paper does not assume reader agrees with author but shows the reader why he or she should agree</td>
<td>Some missteps are made in proving or developing thesis; argument only compelling to someone who already agrees; only tells the reader that such-and-such is the case instead of showing the reader</td>
<td>Essay does not break any ground or develop a case</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Argument intelligently ordered and easy to follow, reflected in order of points and paragraphs</td>
<td>Logical flow of argument needs improvement by reordering some points and/or paragraphs</td>
<td>Material is disorganized with no clear logical connection between points and/or paragraphs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of Evidence</td>
<td>Draws relevant evidence from close reading of a variety of passages; all quotations correctly cited using MLA or Chicago format</td>
<td>Evidence drawn from only one or two passages in text; some evidence does not support points made; citations present but not in correct format</td>
<td>Little evidence used; does not support points made; material quoted without citation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Brings the paper full circle, ties all loose ends together; makes a new point that builds on all preceding points, so reaches a summit rather than providing a mere summary</td>
<td>Merely summarizes everything that has been said so far, and/or feels abrupt or forced</td>
<td>Simply recycles the introductory paragraph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A punitive grade of F will be given to work found to have been plagiarized. Please discuss with me any questions that you might have about the use of secondary material.

As a word to the wise, read your paper out loud to yourself, asking yourself whether you would say what you have written. Don’t write just as you speak, but be sure that you would say what you write. As you write, imagine that you are going to present your paper as a speech. Picture your audience: first and foremost, other students! Make sure that every sentence is clear and precise so that you can go on.

Note that late papers will be penalized one letter grade per day that they are late. (So a paper that would have been an A will be a B if it is late by a day, a C if it is late by two days, etc.) Again, due allowance will be made for reasonable excuses. You may also request extensions if need be. I urge you to take advantage of my office hours, listed above, in order to discuss the course generally and the paper in particular.

**Exams**

There will be three exams, each worth 13 percent of the final grade. The exams will consist of short-answer questions on our readings and discussions. Should you have a documented need for extra time, please tell me in advance.

**Co-curricular events and supplementary readings**

There are two final requirements: first, that you attend and write a report on one (1) co-curricular event over the semester; second, that you read and write a report on three (3) supplementary readings, one for each third of the semester (marked part I, part II, and part III).

There are currently five co-curricular events to choose from, all listed in the schedule. There are twenty-four supplementary readings, likewise listed.

For the co-curricular event, write me, within one week of the event, a two-paragraph email 1) describing the event (just the facts) and then 2) reflecting substantively on it. For each supplementary reading, write me, within two weeks of where the reading falls in the syllabus, another two-paragraph email 1) summarizing the reading (just the facts) and then 2) reflecting substantively on it, in part by connecting it to our assigned readings or class discussion. You must choose one (and only one) supplementary reading from each third of the semester (weeks 1-5, 6-10, and 11-15).

The co-curricular event report counts for 3 percent of the final grade, and the
three supplementary reading reports 1 percent each for 3 as well.

In sum:

- Attendance/participation = 15 percent
- Two papers = 40 percent (20 each)
- Three exams = 39 percent (13 each)
- Three supplementary readings = 3 percent (1 each)
- One co-curricular event = 3 percent

= 100

**Academic integrity**

To quote (with a few edits) from the Student Handbook (76-77):

In order for faculty members to perform their duty of fostering and accurately evaluating the individual academic progress of each student, they need to assume that laboratory reports, examinations, essays, themes, term papers, and similar requirements submitted for credit as a part of a course or in fulfillment of a College requirement are the original works of the student. Put simply, a violation of academic integrity is an action where a student tries to violate this assumption of the faculty member. Therefore, students shall not knowingly

1. receive or attempt to receive non-authorized assistance in the preparation of any work (when direct quotations are used, they are to be properly cited, and when the ideas of another are incorporated into a paper or paraphrased, they are to be appropriately acknowledged by citation);
2. sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish, or attempt to sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish unauthorized assistance to another in such preparation of any work;
3. take or attempt to take, steal, or otherwise procure in an unauthorized manner any material pertaining to the conduct of a class, including tests, examinations, grade change forms, grade reports, roll books, or reports, etc.;
4. sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish to any unauthorized person any illicitly obtained material that is known to contain questions or answers to any examination scheduled to be given at some subsequent date or time offered by the College;
5. submit the same work for more than one course unless the faculty member to whom the work is being submitted has given their prior consent;
6. possess or use, without authorization of the instructor, copies of tests, answer sheets, books, notes, calculators, computers, cheat sheets, or similar means that could interfere with the fair, accurate testing or evaluation of a student;
7. obtain, without authorization of the instructor, answers from another student’s exam, quiz, computer, or paper; and
8. provide false information to an instructor or College official for the purpose of misrepresenting an activity outside of class (reports on field
experiences, internships, etc.), or improperly seeking special consideration or privilege (excused absences, postponement of an exam or due date of papers or project, etc.).

Accommodations for students with disabilities

All students who have a documented learning or physical disability are encouraged to schedule an appointment with the instructor during the first week of class to discuss any needed accommodations.

Required texts


Schedule (which will likely be revised as we proceed)

PART I

Week 1: The nature of morality and the vocation of business

8/31 Introduction  

Week 2: The vocation of business

9/7 LABOR DAY; NO CLASS  
9/11 Friedman, continued

CO-CURRICULAR EVENT #1: Dr. David Feldman, Chair, Department of Economics, College of William and Mary, “Turbulent Waters: Challenges Facing America’s Colleges and Universities,” 2015 Labor Day Lecture, Wednesday, September 9, 7:00 p.m., Burke Auditorium, McGowan School of Business


Week 3: The vocation of business and utilitarianism

CO-CURRICULAR EVENT #2: “After Ferguson: Law and Order, Race, Poverty, and Social Justice”: A Panel Discussion with Jerry Dessoye, Edward Martin, Stefanie Salavantis, and Larry Singleton, Thursday, September 17, 7:00 p.m., Burke Auditorium, McGowan School of Business


Week 4: The vocation of business and deontology

9/23 Shaw, continued
9/25 Review

CO-CURRICULAR EVENT #3: Panel Discussion on Pope Francis’s Encyclical *Laudato Si*: *On Care for Our Common Home*, Monday, September 21, 4:00 p.m., 3rd Floor, Sheehy-Farmer Campus Center


Week 5: The vocation of business and deontology

9/28 Exam #1

Paper #1 assigned

PART II

Week 6: The vocation of business, Catholic Social Teaching, and the environment

10/5 William Byron, “Ten Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching,” America, October 31, 1998 (on Moodle)
10/7 Byron, continued
10/9 Pope Francis, Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home, introduction, §§1-16, chapter 1, §§17-26, and NASA, “Global Climate Change: Evidence, Causes, Effects, Consensus, Vital Signs, Questions” (on Moodle)

Week 7: The vocation of business, Catholic Social Teaching, and the environment

10/16 FALL BREAK; NO CLASS

SUPPLEMENTARY READING: #11 Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, “Global Warming’s Six Americas” (on Moodle)

Paper #1 due

Week 8: Capitalism and corporate social responsibility, revisited

10/19 Shaw, Moral Issues, 149-156, 167-172, 206-212, and 220-221
10/23 Scharding, continued


Week 9: Capitalism and corporate social responsibility, revisited

“Some Retailers Rethink Role in Bangladesh,” *New York Times*, May 1, 2013 (on Moodle)

CO-CURRICULAR EVENT #4: Patrick Ryan, S.J., Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society, Fordham University, “Francis, Ignatius, and Francis: Catholic Encounters with Muslims,” 2015 Feast of Saint Francis Lecture, Wednesday, October 28, 7:00 p.m., Burke Auditorium, McGowan School of Business


Week 10: Product Safety and pricing

11/6 Review


**PART III**

Week 11: Unions

11/9 Exam

Paper #2 assigned

CO-CURRICULAR EVENT #5: Dr. Heather Reid, Professor and Chair of Philosophy, Morningside College, “College Football’s Gladiators,” Thursday, November 12, 7:00 p.m., Burke Auditorium, McGowan School of Business

Week 12: Hiring, firing, and privacy

11/18 Shaw, continued

Week 13: Applying


THANKSGIVING BREAK; NO CLASS

Paper #2 due

Week 14: Loyalty, conflicts of interest, and whistleblowing

11/30 Shaw, Moral Issues, 486-490 and case 10.1, 511
12/2 Shaw, continued
12/4 Shaw, Moral Issues, 495-500


Week 15: Whistleblowing

Final exam (exam #3)

Method for discussion of case studies

1) What are the relevant facts of the case? Just the facts; no analysis, no argumentation, etc. List.

2) What are the ethical problems, challenges, questions to consider? Not questions of fact; instead, a) questions of responsibilities and obligations, b) questions of what would be morally permissible and what morally impermissible, c) questions of what would be right, what wrong, what good, what bad, d) questions about what a virtuous person would do, which is to say what a kind, thoughtful, courageous, charitable, generous, gentle, tender, wise, etc. person would do (see the list of virtues at The Virtues Project, http://www.virtuesproject.com/virtuesdef.html.) List again.

3) What are different courses of action that might be taken? Only those courses that appear ethically defensible—that appear permissible (that is, nothing stands in the way) or justified (that is, there is, moreover, positive moral reason to go ahead). List.

4) What is the best or most ethical choice among the different possibilities? What reasons recommend this choice over the others? Discuss/argue, pushing toward basic claims or principles.

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1 Note that an action may be “right” in two senses. We might call an action right because it is the best course of action available in a given situation. Still, we may not want to praise this action; we might even have reason to regret that the person in question has put himself in the situation where he has to act one way or the other. We might also call an action right because we want to commend it—because it is the action that a virtuous person would take.