

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS**

**School of Business
BUSI2814 Business Ethics**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Instructor: David Bishop
Office: KKL 1313
Phone: 3917 4215
Email: dbishop@hku.hk
Consultation times: by appointment

Tutor: TBC
Pre-requisites: None
Co-requisites: n/a
Mutually exclusive: n/a

Course Website: TBC

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Global business today has powerfully reinforced the importance of ethical behavior, especially for managers and leaders. Over the past few years, we have been inundated with stories of corporate scandals, misfeasance, and malpractice. Now more than ever, the eyes of corporate stakeholders are on business leaders, and ethical standards are being enforced. That makes it imperative for all current and future leaders to understand clearly what business ethics entails, and have the tools to make ethical decisions when the need arises.

The purpose of this course is to help you understand the role of ethics in business administration in a complex, dynamic, and global environment. We will work together to develop the tools necessary to face complex ethical situations, where action often must be taken quickly and under considerable pressure. Business leaders cannot avoid making difficult ethical decisions, and any future leader must be ready.

The goal of this course is not to explain the difference between right and wrong. In this course we will provide a broad view of life in business, and practice identifying the ethical dimensions embedded in everyday business decisions. Further, we will seek to gain clarity both on our own values, and the psychological/environmental factors that influence ethical behavior.

The study of ethics is actually more of conversation about human interaction and interconnectedness than it is an exact, quantitative science. In discussing ethics we will explore areas such as law, accounting, finance, employment, corporate structure, and organizational behavior. This conversation is necessary to shape and sometimes even counterbalance the more quantitative and amoral aspects of business and economics education.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students are constantly inundated with moral and ethical standards – both positive and negative, and whether realized or not. This is especially true for business and economics students, who have been shown in studies to be more unethical in their decision making than other university majors. Therefore, this course is largely to help you *unlearn* what you have learned.

This will be an ongoing and life-long process, but we hope that by the end of the course you will:

1. be able to recognize ethical issues and critically examine your own ethics standards;
2. have developed or enhanced your ability to critically analyze complicated business scenarios and make difficult ethical decisions based on what you think is 'right' rather than outside influences;
3. have developed a stronger sense of identity and self-worth;
4. appreciate that all humans are susceptible to psychological influences and unethical behavior (including you!), and therefore we must plan ahead to avoid ethical lapses in both ourselves and others whom we manage;
5. develop a general management perspective that includes an ability to formulate, analyze, and defend decisions in ethical terms.

Program Learning Outcomes

PLO1: Acquisition and internalization of knowledge of the programme discipline			
PLO2: Application and integration of knowledge			
PLO3: Inculcating professionalism and leadership			
PLO4: Developing global outlook			
PLO5: Mastering communication skills			
COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES			
Course Learning Outcomes		Aligned Programme Learning Outcomes	
CLO1: Gain the ability to explain ethical theories and concepts related to business ethics, both within Hong Kong and globally.		PLO 1, 2	
CLO2: Critically assess the main concepts of business ethics within the context of real-life business scenarios, and create appropriate solutions to ethical problems.		PLO 2, 3, 5	
CLO3: Demonstrate the inter-relationship of members, directors, creditors, the public, and the registered company, and analyze the role, powers and duties of such persons in the context of ethical leadership.		PLO 2, 3, 4, 5	
CLO4: Demonstrate effective communication skills, both in written and oral formats.		PLO 5	
COURSE TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES			
Course Teaching and Learning Activities		Expected contact hour	Study Load (% of study)
T&L1. Lectures, quizzes, and in-class discussions:		36	26%
T&L2. Individual Writing Assignments		35	26%
T&L3. Final Writing Assignment		30	22%
T&L4. Independent Study		35	26%
Total		136	100%
Assessment Methods	Brief Description (Optional)	Weight	Aligned Course Learning Outcomes
A1. Class Participation and Attendance; Quizzes	Students must attend and actively contribute to discussions relating to the readings and other topics. A few brief quizzes will be arranged to test students' knowledge of the course reading materials.	20%	1,2,3
A2. Interim Writing Assignments	Students will be required to read two books and watch two movies during the course, and write a short paper about the subject matter discussed in said movies and books.	40%	3,4
A3. Final Writing Assignment	Students will be required to write a ten page paper concerning an ethical topic.	40%	2,3,4
Total		100%	
STANDARDS FOR ASSESSMENT			

Course Grade Descriptors

A+, A, A-	Demonstrate evidence of original thought, strong analytical and critical abilities as well as a thorough grasp of the topic from background reading and analysis; should demonstrate excellent organizational, rhetorical and presentational skills.
B+, B, B-	Demonstrate evidence of critical and analytical thinking but not necessarily original in their thinking; show adequate grasp of the topic from background reading and analysis; should demonstrate strong organizational, rhetorical and presentational skills.
C+, C, C-	Demonstrate evidence of a reasonable grasp of their subject but most of their information is derivative, with rather little evidence of critical thinking; should demonstrate fair organizational, rhetorical and presentational skills.
D+, D	Demonstrate evidence of being able to assemble the bare minimum of information, poorly digested and not very well organized in presentation. There is no evidence of critical thinking.
F	Demonstrate evidence of poor knowledge and understanding of the subject, a lack of coherence and organization, and answers are largely irrelevant. Work fails to reach degree level.

Assessment Rubrics for Each Assessment (Please provide us the details in a separate file if the space here is not enough)

1. **Class Participation, Attendance, and Quizzes** (20%)

Students must attend and participate in classroom discussion. Periodic short quizzes relating to the course reading materials may be introduced over the course of the semester to test reading completion and comprehension.

2. **Interim Writing Assignments** (40%)

Each Student will watch two movies, and read two books and then write about one or more ethical aspect of such movies and books. The submissions should be written in the form of executive summaries in no more than two pages (single-spaced, 12 pt. font, not including a bibliography or list of references). Appendices of research and analytical information must be attached, where appropriate. Students who do not include such information will have points deducted.

The following grading criteria are applicable:

- Content of the report – 50%
- Writing Style (Coherence/Clarity/Mechanics) – 25%
- Presentation and Support (Structure/Balance/Quality of Sources) – 25%

3. **Final Writing Assignment** (40%)

Students will write a paper relating to a specific ethics topic. More details concerning this assignment will be provided during the course.

COURSE CONTENT AND TENTATIVE TEACHING SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS ETHICS CONCEPTS

WEEK 1: Introduction, Course Overview, and Concepts in Ethics

We will begin by providing a basic foundation relating to business ethics education today. We will discuss the basic theories and “schools” of ethical thinking, and analyze the relationship between ethics, the law, CSR, and corporate governance. We will also review the history and stated purpose of business school education, and discuss whether business schools are creating positive value for society.

WEEK 2: Whose Values? Differing Sources of Ethics and Moral Standards

We will focus on different sources of ethical and moral standards, including differing religions, cultures, and generations. We will focus primarily on the difference between Western and Asian ethics teachings.

WEEK 3: Behavioral Ethics and Economics

In this section we will explore how evolutionary biology, psychology, economics and other external incentives influence ethical decision making.

ETHICS AND THE CORPORATION**WEEK 4: The Nature and Purpose of the Corporation**

The corporate form is at the center of most business transactions, and can both enhance and inhibit ethical decision making. This week we will discuss the history of the corporate form, the concept of corporate personhood, and how to help companies be more ethical.

WEEK 5: Fiduciary Duties and Agency

Markets and companies cannot function without trust. In this section we will discuss the nature of fiduciary obligations, agency, and enlightened self-interest. We will also discuss what happens when fiduciaries betray the trust placed on them.

SPECIFIC BUSINESS ETHICS TOPICS**WEEK 6: Marketing Ethics**

Is it possible to be an ethical marketer? We will consider this and many other points relating to the ethics of marketing in this section.

WEEK 7: Ethics, Information, and the Internet

Here the class will discuss the ethics challenges that come from advances of technology, particularly the internet. What internet content do we own, and what information should stay private? How can we control a borderless and anonymous internet? Should we try?

WEEK 8: Ethics and Ideas

This week we will focus on what ideas can be owned and protected, and which ones should remain community property. We will discuss IP laws, counterfeit products, and plagiarism, among other things.

WEEK 9: Ethics in Finance

Hong Kong is a finance hub, and many of our graduates aspire to work in that industry. But the financial crisis spotlighted some of the inherent problems with the finance industry. In this section we will discuss what it means to be an ethical banker, and why society needs an ethical finance system.

WEEK 10: Ethics and Globalization

Changes to the world economy over the past three decades have completely changed the ethics landscape, and created or exacerbated significant ethics issues. Here we will discuss the challenges of corruption, maintaining a supply chain free from unethical labor, and what is necessary to make globalization work.

WEEK 11: Ethics and Sustainability

How can we ensure our businesses and families make decisions that are both ethical and sustainable? How can we ensure both profitability and sustainability? We will also explore our personal obligation, if any, to consume ethically.

WEEK 12: Ethical Leadership and Joyful Living

For our final week we will look inward and discuss what it takes to be an ethical leader, how we can lead purposeful and joyful lives, and how we will measure success.

REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED READINGS & ONLINE MATERIALS

Students will be provided with course packet by the instructor.

MEANS/PROCESSES FOR STUDENT FEEDBACK ON COURSE

- Mid-term survey in addition to SETL around the end of the semester & online response via Moodle site.

COURSE POLICY (e.g. plagiarism, academic honesty, attendance, etc.)

Academic Honesty and Integrity

You are expected to do your own work whenever you are supposed to. Incident(s) of academic dishonesty will NOT be tolerated. Cheating or plagiarism of any kind will result in an automatic F grade for the course plus strict enforcement of all Faculty and/or University regulations regarding such behavior.

The University Regulations on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced! Please check the University Statement on plagiarism on the web: <http://www.hku.hk/plagiarism/>.

Academic dishonesty is a behavior in which a deliberately fraudulent misrepresentation is employed in an attempt to gain undeserved intellectual credit, either for oneself or for another. It includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following types of cases:

- a. *Plagiarism* - The representation of someone else's ideas as if they are your own. Where the arguments, data, designs, etc., of someone else are being used in a paper, report, oral presentation, or similar academic project, this fact must be made explicitly clear by citing the appropriate references. The references must fully indicate the extent to which any parts of the project are not one's own work. Paraphrasing of someone else's ideas is still using someone else's ideas, and must be acknowledged.
- b. *Unauthorized Collaboration on Class Projects* - The representation of work as solely one's own when in fact it is the result of a joint effort.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION (e.g. e-learning platforms & materials, penalty for late assignments, etc.)

This course will utilize the MOODLE framework.