PHIL 3314 A Business Ethics
Spring 2015 Syllabus
Instructor: Dr. Stephen Striby
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Office: Sullivan 107, 713-525-3184
Office Hours: M, W, F: 11:30- 1:30
T, Th: 8:30- 9:30, 12:30- 1:30
Text: Ethics in the Workplace (2002), ed. by Robert Larmer

Course Description: “A second course in ethics with emphasis on the moral issues that arise in modern business life. Among issues to be considered are the role of profits, property rights, workers’ rights, fairness in hiring, truth–telling and whistle–blowing.” (UST Undergraduate Course Catalog 2012-2014)

Course Content: The course will begin with a discussion of fundamental ethical principles, happiness, virtue ethics, rights and the common good. Following this treatment of general ethical notions, the issues listed in the course description will be examined under the three relationship categories of business to employee, business to consumer, and business to society, in that order. In addition, particular cases from recent history will be discussed and analyzed, using the general ethical notions examined in the first few weeks of the course.

Course Objectives: By the end of the course, the successful student will be able to:

1) express an understanding of virtue ethics, Kant’s categorical imperatives, the notion of the common good, and of individual rights,

2) apply the above ethical principles, notions of various virtues, and the ideas of rights and the common good in general discussions of the relationships between businesses and their employees, businesses and their consumers, and businesses and society, and in particular cases falling under those three relationship categories,

3) better articulate and defend, by both written and oral means, his or her own positions on issues and cases under the above three categories,
in light of the ethical principles and particular applications discussed in class.

**Grading and Attendance:** There will be two essay tests, each worth 15% of the final grade, and a comprehensive final exam worth 20% of the final grade. Every student will participate in two group projects, each of which will include a 10 page written analysis of a case and a defense of an ethical position on that case. Each project will be worth 12% of the grade. In addition, each student will write a case study of 5-7 pages, worth 12% of the grade. There will be six quizzes on the readings worth 18% of the final grade. These will occur at the beginning of class and will not be previously announced. There will be no makeup quizzes, but provisions can be made to make up a test if the student is excused for his or her absence. For the possibility of an absence being excused, the student must contact Dr. Striby by the end of the day of the absence, and have a sound reason for his or her absence. Students may gain or lose up to five percentage points based on their attendance and participation in class discussions. In accordance with university policy, more than three unexcused absences will cause the student to lose points on the final grade, and more than five unexcused absences may cause the student to be dropped from the class.

**Grading scale:** A: 94-100, A-: 90-93: A grade of A reflects excellent work on the part of the student. To earn a grade of A, the student must excel on all or most of the assignments and tests, show considerable understanding of concepts and arguments presented in class and in the readings, produce well written, diligently researched papers, and have good attendance and participation. B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82: To earn a grade in the B range, the student must complete all of the assignments and tests, show good understanding of the aforementioned concepts and arguments, produce well written papers, and have good attendance and participation. C+: 77-79, C: 73-76, C-: 70-72: To attain a grade of C, the student must complete all of the assignments and tests, show some understanding of concepts and arguments, write a good paper, and consistently attend class. D+: 65-69, D: 60-64: To attain a grade of D, the student must complete the assignments and tests,
show some understanding of concepts and arguments, and show some consistency in attending class. **F:** Below 60: A grade of **F** is given when the student fails to complete assignments, fails to show any consistency in attending class or in understanding the material, plagiarizes on a paper, or cheats on a test.

**Calendar of Readings- Business Ethics**

**Week One (Jan. 13, 15):** What is ethics? Grading and policies; Aquinas on Happiness, Aristotle on moral virtue and Kant’s categorical imperatives

**Week Two (Jan. 20, 22):** Carr vs. Koehn on business ethics in general (4-15); John Paul II and the U.S. Bishops on the dignity and rights of workers (BB)

**Week Three (Jan. 27, 29):** Hiley, “Employee Rights and the Doctrine of At Will Employment” (77-83); Desjardins, Duska and Cranford on Drug Testing employees (101-120)

**Week Four (Feb. 3, 5):** Sass, “The Worker’s Right to Know, Participate and Refuse Hazardous Work” (193-199); Machan, “Human Rights, Worker’s Rights, and the ‘Right’ to Occupational Safety” (200-208)

**Week Five (Feb. 10, 12):** Review for Test #1; **TEST #1 (12th):**

**Week Six (Feb. 17, 19):** Collective Bargaining and Right to Work Legislation.

**Week Seven (Feb. 24, 26):** Presentations for Case #1

**Week Eight (Mar. 3, 5):** Davis, “Avoiding the Tragedy of Whistleblowing” (208-216); Larmer, “Whistleblowing and Employee Loyalty” (216-220)

**Spring Break**

**Week Nine (Mar. 17, 19):** Werhane, “The Ethics of Insider Trading” (235-239); Machan, “What is Morally Right with Insider Trading” (239-244)

**Week Ten (Mar. 24, 26):** Bishop,“The Moral Responsibility of Corp. Executives” (386-392); Larmer,“Corporate Executives and Moral Resp.” (392-5) **PAPER DUE (26th)**

**Week Eleven (Mar. 31):** Machan, “Advertising: The Whole or Some of the Truth”(336-342); Waide, “The Making of Self and World in Advertising”(343-8)

**Week Twelve(Apr. 7, 9):** Review for Test #2; **TEST #2 (9th )**
Week Thirteen (Apr. 14, 16): Randels, “Business and ‘Family Values’” (480-489); Mele: Organization of Work and Family Rights of Employees” (489-496)

Week Fourteen (Apr. 21, 23): Presentations for Case #2

Week Fifteen (Apr. 28, 30): Brenkert, “Private Corporations and Public Welfare” (526-535); Review for Final Exam

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 12th, 8:30am