

Ethical Business Behavior (H-2-X, A-4, F-X)
by Halina Cowin

Course Description

Ethical Business Behavior explores the ethical issues that business decision-makers face and examines the moral principles that are used to help resolve these issues. Decisions with ethical dimensions can be the most important and memorable of those that are made.

Ethical decisions in the workplace can have tremendous influence on the individuals and the corporations involved. The outcomes of unethical behavior can affect reputations, trust and career path. Results have been as severe as loss of employment, physical harm to individuals, corporate bankruptcy and even impacts to the economy.

The scandals of 2002, including Enron and Worldcom, and resulting regulations have created a cultural shift particularly in financial fields that has renewed emphasis on ethical business behavior. We will evaluate business situations involving financial scandals, harm from poor product safety, truth and deception in advertising, affirmative action, sexual harassment, release of trade secrets, dangerous work environments and international ethics.

Theories that frame ethical decision-making are examined in this course. These include ethical relativism, utilitarianism, Kantianism, rights, justice, virtue and care. Methodologies are applied to help evaluate ethical considerations based on alternative theories and to make moral decisions.

Students are placed in decision-making roles through exercises, case studies and role-playing. Reasoning skills are honed through identification of ethical issues and alternative means to analyze these issues. Ethical behavior is evaluated using analytical skills to apply ethical concepts to business situations.

Course Competencies

Competence	Competence Statement
A-4	Can analyze a problem using at least two different ethical systems.
H-2-X	Can demonstrate an understanding of how individuals interact with organizations in making ethical business decisions.
F-X	Can apply ethical principles to analyze and create recommendations for a specific business issue to be determined by student/instructor.

Course Goals

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand major ethical theories and the role that ethics plays in business situations.
- Identify ethical business issues, analyze them using at least two different ethical principles and apply ethical principles to create recommendations.
- Describe characteristics of ethical business behavior and how individuals interact with organizations to make ethical business decisions.

Course Structure

This course will explore ethical business behavior and various theories for evaluating ethical issues using one collaborative learning exercise (role-playing and report development), multiple case analyses, evaluation of various advertisements, discussions identifying real-world applications of issues, and internet resources.

The course consists of 5 modules, which include multiple units. Assignments and readings will be provided for each module. Ideas will also be exchanged with other students in structured discussions. Assignment deadlines will be based on estimated time for completion of each subject area as listed below.

Course Map

Module	Module Name	Units	Time to Complete
1	Foundations for Ethical Thinking in Business	1.1 Why Worry About Moral Standards in Business? 1.2 Ethics & the Economy, Law, Corporate Culture and Honesty	2 weeks
2	Ethical Principles in Business	2.1 Major Ethical Theories 2.2 Guidelines for Evaluating Ethical Issues: Applying the Theories	2 weeks
3	Ethics of Marketing	3.1 Advertising, Sales, Pricing and Packaging 3.2 Product Safety	2 weeks
4	Organizations and Employee Issues	4.1 Whistle-blowing, Conflicts of Interest and Trade Secrets 4.2 Job Discrimination, Affirmative Action and Sexual Harassment	2 weeks
5	Ethics in Employee Safety and International Issues	5.1 Occupational Health and Safety 5.2 International Business Ethics	2 weeks

Look for a course schedule giving specific dates in the “Course Info” Discussion Conference.

Course Resources

Textbooks:

Boatright, J. R. (2003). *Ethics and the Conduct of Business Fourth Edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Additional Text References Used by the Facilitator (optional; referenced in the Supplemental Reading section in Resources):

De George, R.T. (1999). *Business Ethics* (5th Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Dwyer P., Carney D., Borrus A., Woellert L. Palmeri C., (2002, Dec. 16), Year of the Whistleblower. *Business Week online*. Retrieved May 3, 2003:
http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/02_50/b3812094.htm

Ferrell, O.C., Fraedrich J., Ferrell L. (2002). *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases* (Fifth Edition). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Goodpaster K. E., (2002). *Blackwell Guide to Business Ethics*. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Haas R. (1996). Multinational Businesses Can Be Socially Responsible. *Business Ethics at Issue* (pp. 80-87). San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press Inc.

Kidder, R.M. (1995). *How Good People Make Tough Choices*. NY, William Morrow and Co., Inc.

Rachels J. (1998). *Elements of Moral Philosophy*. Highstown, NJ: McGraw Hill.

Scheier, L. (2003, April 20). Bitter Pill. *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, 9-33.

Snoeyenbos M., Aldemer R., Humber J. (2001). *Business Ethics* (Third Edition). Amherst, NY, Prometheus Books.

Velasquez, M.G. (2002) *Business Ethics Concepts and Cases Fifth Edition*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Additional Resources:

Supplemental discussion notes, including citations for additional references, are provided in the Module Resources sections of the course guide.

Various on-line resources

Assessment

Student learning will be assessed based on participation in discussion forums, a research report, case/scenario analyses, one collaborative role-play, an analysis of deceptive advertising/puffery, a summary perspective statement and personal credo statement.

Ethical Business Behavior is a graded course. Your final grade will be based on performance and completion of the assignments described below. Weighting for each assignment is provided below.

The learning outcomes for each module will be used to assess achievement of the competencies that you are fulfilling.

Evaluation Weighting:

Category	Percent of Grade	# of Deliverables
Participation in Discussions	25%	throughout the course
Research Paper	25%	1
Case Studies	36% (4% each)	9
Collaborative Role Play	8%	1 (in 2 parts)
Deceptive Advertising/Puffery Analysis	3%	1
Packaging Scenario Analysis	2%	1
Summary Perspective Statement	1%	1
Personal Credo Statement	1 bonus point	1

Academic Policies

Attendance

The instructor should be notified if conflicts do not allow you to participate for more than one week. This is particularly important when collaborative projects (e.g. role-playing) are part of the course work.

Expect to devote as much time to this course as would have been devoted to classroom and travel time in a “traditional” classroom course i.e. approximately 6-8 hours per week.

Academic Integrity

DePaul's policy on Academic Integrity will be followed strictly regarding matters of student conduct including issues such as plagiarism.

Interactions and Discussion

Each student is expected to log on to the Discussion Forum at least 3 times per week and to make at least one contribution per discussion in the forum. Your responses to both instructor questions and to other students' comments will enhance the learning experience for all students.

Your contributions to discussions should include a supporting statement(s). Draw from your text readings, magazines, work or any personal experiences, etc. to explain why you agree/disagree with another student or why you have the perspective that you have.

Text does not carry the tone and nuances of face-to-face conversations. Students read messages through their own perceptions, so misinterpretation is both easy and common. Congenial interaction in online conversations facilitates the learning process. Extra attention is needed in online dialogue for these reasons.

A Q& A discussion conference will be available for you to ask questions about the course. In this way, everyone can benefit from the questions that you have. Contact the facilitator by email with any concerns about course performance, personal reasons for late assignments, advising issues or with any matters that should be private from other students.

In on-line courses, the student is an interactive learner with the facilitator providing guidance and mentoring.

Electronic Submissions and Communications

Work must be sent as e-mail attachments or pasted into the body of an email message (when the text doesn't need special formatting). Microsoft Word is the supported word processing software. Word revision tools will be used to correct student work. Zipped files should not be sent; zipped files will not be read. E-mail communications with the facilitator are the preferred and primary format. Graded work will not be faxed to students.