THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

BUSI2814 Business Ethics

GENERAL INFORMATION

Instructor: David Bishop
Office: KKL 1313
Phone: 9492 8308
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Aligned Programme Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLO1: Gain the ability to explain ethical theories and concepts related to business ethics, both within Hong Kong and globally.</td>
<td>PLO 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLO2: Critically assess the main concepts of business ethics within the context of real-life business scenarios, and create appropriate solutions to ethical problems.</td>
<td>PLO 2, 3, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>PLO 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLO4: Demonstrate effective communication skills, both in written and oral formats.</td>
<td>PLO 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### COURSE TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Teaching and Learning Activities</th>
<th>Expected contact hour</th>
<th>Study Load (% of study)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T&amp;L1. Lectures, quizzes, and in-class discussions:</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T&amp;L2. Interim Writing Assignments</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T&amp;L3. Final Writing Assignment</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T&amp;L4. Independent Study</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>136</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Assessment Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Methods</th>
<th>Brief Description (Optional)</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Aligned Course Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1. Class Participation and Attendance; Quizzes</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2. Interim Writing Assignments</td>
<td>Students will be required to write three short papers relating to various ethics subjects discussed in course readings and movies.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3. Final Writing Assignment</td>
<td>Students will be required to write a ten page paper concerning an ethical topic.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2,3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STANDARDS FOR ASSESSMENT
Course Grade Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+, A, A-</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+, B, B-</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+, C, C-</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+, D</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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%)**
   Students will be required to write three short papers relating to various ethics subjects discussed in course readings and movies. 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**

**TOPIC 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.

**TOPIC 2: Behavioral Ethics and Economics**
In this section we will explore how evolutionary biology, behavioral psychology, economics, and other external incentives influence ethical decision making.
ETHICS AND THE CORPORATION

TOPIC 3: 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.

TOPIC 4: 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

TOPIC 5: 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.

TOPIC 6: 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 intellectual property laws, counterfeit products, and plagiarism, among other things.

TOPIC 7: Finance Ethics
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.

TOPIC 8: 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.

TOPIC 9: 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.

TOPIC 10: 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 additional 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/](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.