

PHIL 225: *Business Ethics*
University of Louisville
Quality Leadership University
Panama City, Panama

Office Hours and Contact Procedure: Please feel free to contact me at the Crown Plaza Hotel. I will meet with you after class each day at QLU, if requested.

Phone Numbers: Crown Plaza Hotel; details will be disseminated in class

Email Address:

You are not permitted to operate electronic equipment during class time. Please turn cell phones to silent, please ignore text messages, please do not send text messages, and please do not operate pagers. Please do not operate laptop computers during class. I consider all of this behavior quite rude and counter to our purpose as a class.

General Overview: In this class we will examine a central question: When is it permissible to profit from harm to others during business? It is accepted that many harms are merely the price society and individuals pay in order to have the influence and prosperity commerce brings us. Do we ever stop to consider whether that influence and prosperity are always good? What about the rights of those who pay some price without choosing to do so? What are the responsibilities of corporations? What about personal responsibility on the part of consumers? Does the government have a role to play? There are rules for business operations, but are those rules absolute? What are their ethical foundations? How does logic fit into the picture? Can multiple sides be right at the same time? What do my business actions have to do with my own happiness? We will examine these questions and many others, paying particular attention to Panama City and its environment.

The Objectives for the course are as follows:

1. Become a better thinker.
2. Develop and apply critical thinking skills, especially the Paul-Elder Framework.
3. Become more aware of the role of corporations.
4. Develop some informed ideas about shareholder versus stakeholder theories.
5. Decide when it is permissible to profit from harm to others within business.
6. Learn several methods for critically assessing discourse.
7. Gain some understanding of the nature of truth.
8. Become a more informed consumer.
9. Learn some ethical theories and how to apply them.
10. Become conversant in the language of Business Ethics.

Required Texts and Video (all provided on Blackboard)

The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking—Paul/Elder (2009)

The Myth of Gyges--Plato

The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Profits--Milton Friedman(1970)

The Ethics of Belief--William Clifford (1877)

All readings are posted to Blackboard. (list TBD)

You will be required to watch some videos outside of class. The links to these videos will be posted to Blackboard.

The Smartest Guys in the Room

The Corporation

Inside Job

Flow

Black Gold

No Logo

selections from *The Yes Men* media

selections from www.justiceharvard.org

Attendance Policy

My policy is that you should attend class. Since I am coming from a point of view that assumes you know little about this topic, it seems unwise for you to miss class. If you miss more than one of our meetings this semester without prior approval and appropriate documentation, **I will lower your semester grade by one letter.** *You will lose one letter grade per absence missed beyond one. If you must miss more than two classes, you should seriously consider dropping the course immediately. Exceptions will not be made!!* Academics come first. I will inform you when you have lost a letter grade due to your attendance.

Panama Time and Respect: You will be unable to take daily quizzes if you are late to class. Class begins at the times listed on this syllabus. Regular disruptions from leaving class at inappropriate times, refusal to cooperate with the professor, or other insubordination will negatively affect your grade. I might throw you out of class, too. If you are expelled from class, you are responsible for all missed work.

If I am more than 15 minutes late, please consult Mariana Leon or Maria Alejandra Quintero for instructions.

Academic Dishonesty

Any discovery of cheating, plagiarism, collusion, or other forms of academic dishonesty will be dealt with to the full extent outlined in your student handbook. Look it up and avoid these behaviors.

Disability Services

In the event you are unable to fully satisfy the syllabus due to a university-documented disability, please do the following.

- 1) Bring me a letter from the university documenting your disability.
- 2) Propose a make-up project for the missed percentage of your grade.

Missed Work

Missed assignments must be scheduled to be made up. Be sure to meet with me if you miss an assignment. Feel free to email me to schedule a makeup; I prefer to hold makeups after class. Please satisfy any late work at your earliest opportunity. I expect appropriate documentation if you expect me to accept your late assignments without penalty.

Grading Scale

98 and higher (A+) // 97-92 (A) // 90-91 (A-) // 89-88 (B+) // 87-82 (B) // 80-81 (B-) // 79-78 (C+) // 77-72 (C) // 70-71 (C-) // 69-68 (D+) // 67-62 (D) // 60-61 (D-) // 59 and below (F)

Graded Elements

1. Essays: 5/10/15=30%

Three times during this course, you will be asked to research and prepare two business ethics issues as identified by the Wall Street Journal or some other media. These are posted to Blackboard. I will provide three problems for you at a time, and you should research two of the three problems, informally answer any associated questions, and react to the controversy through the lens of ethics. Your written comments for both weekly problems must be no more than two typed, single-spaced paragraphs on one side of one piece of paper in 12-point font. I will not accept more text than this; be concise.

The value of assignments increase as you develop more competence, more sophisticated use of ethics language, deeper thought, and better critical thinking skills.

2. Daily Quizzes (DQ) (8@5% each=40%)

Quizzes begin at 8 am. If you are not present, you miss the quiz.

3. Personal Trash Collection: 10%

4. Final Exam: 10%

5. Solving a business ethics problem in Panama City 10%--Group film project; details TBA

Dissent is expected. Have courage when presenting your position. No one is penalized for merely disagreeing with my stated position, which may or may not be my actual position. Assume nothing. Spin is everywhere.

Tentative Schedule : This syllabus may change at any time without prior notice from the professor. I will strive to publish any changes immediately through Blackboard. Semper Gumby.

Wednesday, December 7: Introduction and Milgram Experiments; Practice Case 1

Thursday, December 8: The Critical Thinking Framework; DQ 1

Friday, December 9: The Neoclassical Model of Corporate Social Responsibility; Practice Cases; DQ 2; Discuss The Corporation

Monday, December 12: Simple Subjectivism; Altruism; Psychological Egoism; Ethical Egoism

(Bring your trash to class!); DQ 3; discuss *The Smartest Guys in the Room*

Tuesday, December 13: *Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and the dialectic; Graded Case 1 due*

(Bring your trash to class!); DQ 4; discuss *Inside Job*

Wednesday, December 14: *Social Contractarianism, Utilitarianism, and Deontology; Practice Cases* (Bring your trash to class!); DQ 5; discuss *Black Gold*; discuss justiceharvard.org

Thursday, December 15: *Libertarianism; Stakeholder Theories; Graded Case 2 due*

(Bring your trash to class!); DQ 6; discuss *Flow*; discuss justiceharvard.org

Friday, December 16: *Sustainability and Radical Sustainability; The Story of Stuff Project; Graded Case 3 due; DQ 7; discuss No Logo*

(Bring your trash to class! *Awareness Videos or Essays Due.*)

Monday, December 19: *Advertising; Review; Graded Case 4 due; DQ 8; discuss The Yes Men* footage

Tuesday, December 20: *Panamanian Video Trash Project and Written Plan Due; Final Exam is in class.*