

PHIL 225-100: Business Ethics

University of Louisville
Summer

Monday-Friday
8:00 am until noon

Dr. Brian Barnes

Ways to Contact Me

I am available to meet with you after each class. You may contact me at the central Crowne Plaza Hotel. If you would like to set up a more formal meeting, or if you need any help with class material, you may contact me by email: **brian.barnes@louisville.edu**

You may also text me at +1-502-338-1338.

General Overview: In this class we will examine a Central Question:

When is it acceptable to profit from harm to others as a result of business activities?

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 do those rules cover what is good and bad in all situations? 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.

An important consideration that is closely-related to our Central Question is to whom you are willing to hold yourselves accountable. In other words, to whom or what do you believe you owe duties, and to what extent are you willing to take those duties seriously?

Our Objectives and How They will be Met:

1. Become a better thinker (We will practice our thinking orally and in writing each day; we will also critique one another's thinking during discussions.)
2. Develop and apply critical thinking skills, especially strong sense Paulian Critical Thinking from The Foundation for Critical Thinking [website: www.criticalthinking.org // YouTube Channel with critical thinking videos: "criticalthinkingorg"] (We will practice with these methods daily. A link to the basic principles of Paulian critical thinking is on our Blackboard site.)¹
3. Become more aware of the role of corporations. (We will examine cases of corporate action and discuss how corporations are involved in those actions.)
4. Develop some informed ideas about shareholder versus stakeholder theories. (We will learn versions of these theories and apply them to business cases and situations.)
5. Decide when it is permissible to profit from harm to others within business. (We will take up this problem orally and in writing.)
6. Learn several methods for critically assessing discourse. (We will learn to use and

think about methods of analyzing thinking.)

7. Gain some understanding of the nature of truth, as it applies to ethics and to business. (We will examine the statements that businesses make about their actions.)

8. Become a more informed consumer. (We will examine the role of consumerism in culture and in our individual lives.)

9. Become conversant in the language of Business Ethics. (We will learn the vocabulary and many theories associated with doing business ethics, along with the methods of employing those tools.)

10. **This is a U of L General Education Requirement for this course.** Communicate an understanding of vocabulary, concepts, materials, techniques, and methods of intellectual inquiry within the arts and/or humanities. (We will do this daily, orally and in writing, regarding business ethics content applied to the humanities.)

11. **This is a U of L General Education Requirement for this course.** Describe and evaluate texts using primary and secondary materials. (We will examine several cases, articles, and writings about and using business ethics.)

12. **This is a U of L General Education Requirement for this course.** Analyze and synthesize texts, recognizing the diversity of cultures and historical contexts. (We will directly apply all of our coursework, most of which is intended for a US audience, to the Panamanian economic, social, and political systems. Your input will be invaluable in this task.)

Recommended Text No text is required for this class. All material is available online for free. You may purchase my Business Ethics electronic textbook, but it is optional: The Central Question: Critical Engagement with Business Ethics. <https://www.kendallhunt.com/store-product.aspx?id=143374>. The book costs \$44.09 online.

¹ “Paulian” Critical Thinking has been developed for four decades by Dr. Richard Paul, Dr. Linda Elder, Dr. Gerald Nosich, Dr. Rush Cosgrove, and others, including me, at The Foundation for Critical Thinking. This material is the Critical Thinking method adopted by U of L, and it is the one we will focus on in this course. It is also known as “The Paul-Elder Critical Thinking Framework” or “Paul-Elder Method”.

Attendance Policy

My policy is that you should attend class. I will not slavishly take attendance, but I will keep a record in order to learn your names and to enforce my attendance policy, which is outlined below. If you do not attend class when it is in session, your grade will be negatively impacted.

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 class without approval from QLU, you may lose one letter grade from your final average. I will not approve your absences; you will have to make arrangements for a QLU administrator to send me an email excusing your absence. This class is only two weeks long, and academics come first in my classes. I will keep track of your attendance, and you may ask me where you stand at any point.

In the event that I am late to class, please allow 15 minutes before you contact the QLU

administration to track me down. You will never be penalized for my failure to attend class. If exams or papers are scheduled for a day I am absent, please be prepared for those at the next scheduled meeting.

Academic Honesty

*You will fail the assignment on the first instance of academic dishonesty of any type.
You will fail the course if academic dishonesty is discovered twice during the semester.
Please do your own work.*

Disability Services

[This process must happen during the first week of class, even if the assignment that will be missed occurs in the second week.]

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.

Grading Scale:

My grading scale is identical to the one used by Blackboard.

Course Assignments and Point Values (120 points)

Quiz 1 (Tuesday)—5
The Corporation Quiz (Tuesday)—10
Quiz 2 (Wednesday)—5
Quiz 3 (Thursday)—5
Quiz 4 (Friday)—5
Quiz 5 (Monday)—5
Trash Pic 1 online (no theme) (Monday)—2
Quiz 6 (Tuesday)—5
Trash Pic 2 online (make little people.) (Tuesday)—2
Quiz 7 (Wednesday)—5
Trash Pic 3 online (make more little people.) (Wednesday)—2
Video Check in document (Wednesday)—5
Trash Pic 4 online (make the people do something.) (Thursday)—2
Position in support (Thursday)—10
Position against (Thursday)—10
Trash Pic 5 online (Friday) (make the people do a different thing.)—2
Cumulative Final Exam (Friday)—20
Business Ethics Video with Panamanian Twist (Friday)—20

Calendar for the course:

First Week

Monday: 8 am until noon.

1. Discussion of the course.
2. Discussion of the syllabus.
3. Discussion of resources.
4. Discussion of professor.
5. Introduction to ethical reasoning
6. Critical Thinking Principles
7. Watch "The Corporation" for homework. You may watch it at this link or from any other source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y888wVY5hzw>
8. Next class, there will be two quizzes. There will be a quiz over the content of The Corporation film, and there will be a quiz over the syllabus and the material discussed during today's class meeting.

Tuesday: 8 am until noon.

1. Quiz 1
2. The Corporation and Corporate Personhood trivia discussion
3. Psychological Egoism
4. Ethical Egoism
5. Altruism
6. The Butterfly Effect
7. Small World Experiments
8. The Milgram Experiments
9. Blass's Milgram meta-research
10. The Corporation Quiz
11. Next class, there is a quiz on today's material.

Wednesday: 8 am until noon.

1. Quiz 2
2. Capitalism as an ethical theory
3. Adam Smith (The Theory of Moral Sentiments: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smMS.html>; An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html>)
4. Shareholder Theory (Milton Friedman)
5. Stakeholder Theory (Edward Freeman)
6. Watch The Smartest Guys in the Room in class: <http://documentary-movie.com/enron-the-smartest-guys-in-the-room/>
7. What's the muddiest point for you?
8. Next class, there is a quiz on today's material.

Thursday: 8 am until noon

1. Quiz 3
2. Epicurus
3. Bentham's Utilitarianism
4. Mill's Utilitarianism
5. Popper's Utilitarianism
6. Singer's Utilitarianism
7. Watch No Logo for homework: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= 22In38nHgQ>

8. What's the muddiest point for you?
9. Next class, there is a quiz on the homework and today's material.

Friday: 8 am until noon

1. Quiz 4
2. Discuss No Logo
3. Discuss video assignment
4. Put students into 8 teams
5. The Dialectic (ancient)
6. Kant (modern dialectic)
7. Hegel's dialectic
8. Marx's dialectic
9. Midterm Team Trivia for Bonus points on the Final Exam!
10. Group meeting time
11. For Monday's class, please be sure to watch Behind 'The Big Short' documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBuJhJ6ZtpA>, The Big Short: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Big_Short_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Big_Short_(film)), and Too Big to Fail: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1742683/>. The two feature films may need to be purchased on Netflix or some other streaming service.

Second Week

Monday: 8 am until noon

1. Quiz 5
2. Discuss The Big Short
3. Trash Pic on Blackboard discussion board
4. Discuss Too Big to Fail
5. Social Contractarianism
6. Thomas Hobbes
7. Other? M?
8. John Locke
9. John Rawls
10. Muddiest point?

Tuesday: 8 am until noon

1. Quiz 6
2. Trash Pic on Blackboard
3. Assign pairs for point/counterpoint
4. Make two good demonstrations
5. Make two bad demonstrations
6. Watch Inside Job for homework: <http://documentarylovers.com/film/inside-job/>
7. Muddiest Point

Wednesday: 8 am until noon

1. Quiz 7
2. Trash Pic on Blackboard
3. Video check-in document is due during class. Everyone's name must be on the document, which I will take as a hardcopy or over email. Must discuss original scenario and what makes it a business ethics scenario.
4. Watch Capitalism: A Love Story: <http://documentary-movie.com/capitalism-a-love-story/>
5. Make two demonstrations—students judge and discuss

6. Group time.

Thursday: 8 am until noon

1. Arguments concerning business ethics topics. Students vote for winner in each case.
2. Trash Pic on Blackboard
3. Students ask Questions about Final Examination tomorrow. Each student gets an opportunity.

Friday: 8 am until noon

1. Trash Pic on Blackboard
2. Finish any incomplete arguments.
3. Cumulative Final Exam
4. Video due by 5 pm.