PHL B06 H3Y – Business Ethics

Instructor: Etye Steinberg, etye.steinberg@mail.utoronto.ca
Lecture: Monday, 1:30-4:30, MW120
Office hours: Monday, 11:00-12:30, Room P104 in Portable 102.

Course Description:
The world of business often seems to be independent of ethical and moral considerations. It appears that moral norms do not function in the market in the same way as they do in our daily lives. Arguably, the only purpose of a business (be it a small firm or a publicly traded corporation) is to maximize its profits, and there should be no normative limitations to how businesses conduct themselves beyond legal restrictions. But is this correct? Are moral considerations completely out of place in the context of the market? Or do participants in the market – e.g. managers, employees, consumers – perhaps do have moral obligations that pertain to their business conduct?

In this course we will examine these questions and more. We will consider to whom are businesses (and high-ranking managers) accountable – only to shareholders, or other stakeholders such as employees and customers as well? What moral considerations and ethical questions come up in the context of business practices such as accounting, advertising, and employment (e.g. in sweatshops)? Is everything for sale, or should some things not be on the market at all?

Course + Learning Objectives:
The purpose of this course is to familiarize you with prominent normative philosophical theories in the area of business ethics, and for you to engage in discussion about these theories, as well as introduce you to contemporary debates and issues pertaining to real-life practices in the business world. The course will also provide you with the chance to practice and improve your skills of critical thinking, reading, and writing. These skills are essential to philosophical work, as well as your life more generally.

Evaluation:
Participation: 10%
3*(Blog posts + comments + response): 45% (15% each)
Final Assignment (900-1000 words): 20%
Final Exam 25%
Reading Schedule:

May 6 – Intro: “Business + Ethics = ?”

May 13 – Shareholder Theory – Take 1

Suggested readings:

May 20 – Victoria Day (University Closed)

May 27 – Stakeholder Theory

June 3 – Lecture canceled

June 10 – Shareholder Theory – Take 2

Suggested readings:

June 17 – The Market-Failures Approach

June 24 – State/Justice Failures

July 1 – Canada Day (University closed)

July 8 – Accounting Ethics
Film – *The Smartest Guys in the Room*

July 15 – Advertising, Part 1: Deceptive Advertising


**July 22 – Advertising, Part 2: Beauty**


**July 29 – Sweatshops**


**August 5 – Civic Holiday (University closed)**

**August 6 – Is Everything for Sale? (Note: Virtual Monday – Monday classes on Tuesday)**


**Policies:**

1) **Blog and Peer Review Submission/Instructions:**

There are three “blog” assignments during the semester. Each of them will follow the same three-stage format. All stages will be submitted and controlled through Quercus.

1) You will be assigned a topic for which you will write a 400-500-word blog entry. As with most blogs, the writing is meant to be informal and get straight to the point. Your task will be to explain the issue, and then to write your own personal take on it. This can either be in support of or contrary to the position. Your target audience are your peers – other university students who have an interest in philosophy but are not experts on the field.

2) Once the blog due date has passed, you will have three days to read and review two other blogs written by your peers. You will be randomly assigned blogs to review in Quercus. After you read a blog entry, you will be asked to enter three single sentence comments. The prompts for the comments are:

a. Single thing you liked most about the blog

b. Single thing the author could improve that would have the greatest positive impact: For this, you are looking to function more as an editor giving advice on how to improve the clarity or content of the blog.

c. Single content-based comment for the author to respond to – can be critical or constructive: The critical comment is something that is meant to be food-for-thought
for the author. Something akin to leaving a comment on an online forum where you are challenging or questioning an argument or point of view.

3) In this stage, you will read the reviews you received for your own blog, then you will write a 150-200-word reflection where you can address a single comment given to you by one of your peers. In this reflection you will look to directly address one philosophical criticism that you received from your peers. You can defend yourself from the criticism with an extension of your argument or further explanation, or you can admit that the criticism is strong but still try to show that your original views had merit.

Due to the staged nature of these assignments, late or missed stages cannot be accepted. If you have a medical or other legitimate reason for a missed or late stage, these will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Each blog exercise will be marked with slightly different criteria that will reflect increasing expectations throughout the semester. You will be provided the rubric ahead of time as well as a more detailed set of instructions for each exercise.

You must complete all three stages of the assignment in order to get a grade.

The due dates for all stages of the three blog assignments are as follows. For all days, the time of submission closure will be 11:59pm.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Blog entry due</th>
<th>Two comments due</th>
<th>Reflection/Response due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>28-May-2019</td>
<td>31-May-2019</td>
<td>4-June-2019</td>
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</tbody>
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Trial Blog (RECOMMENDED):

During the 1st week of class, a dummy assignment will be open on Quercus. The point of this is for you to familiarize yourself with the interface and the three-staged assignment. To participate, simply submit some gibberish and then go through the stages as per the posted schedule.

This is entirely optional, but I recommend it so that you will have less to worry about when your actual blogs are due.

2) Final Essay Submission/Instructions:

The purpose of the blog assignments is to get you to focus on and practice the core components of philosophical writing without the baggage of a formal writing assignment. Good philosophy papers typically follow the same format: 1) Summary of literature, 2) Personal commentary, 3) Counterpoint, and 4) Response to counterpoint. Your final essay will be of this form and will be a maximum of 1000 words. This paper will be submitted directly to Quercus. The final paper is due on August 6 at 11:55pm.

*** Late submissions will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends ***
If you must miss an assignment deadline for medical or other valid reasons, you should inform me in advance. When circumstances do not permit this (e.g. in an emergency), you must inform me as soon as possible. Students who wish special academic consideration for health reasons must submit a completed Verification of Illness form. Students who wish special academic consideration on other grounds must submit relevant supporting documentation. Alternate arrangements will be made only in the case of circumstances that are both legitimate and unforeseeable. Examples of circumstances that do not meet one or both of these conditions are: extra-curricular activities, employment obligations, and deadlines in other courses.

Paper submission through Quercus will go automatically through Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website. You can find the guide for student use here:
http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching/academicintegrity/turnitin/guide-students.htm

3) AccessAbility Services:
   Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and AccessAbility Services. The earlier you notify me of any potential accessibility issues, the more help I can provide.

4) Screens
   There has been much research lately about the negative effect that the use of screens (laptops, tablets, smartphones) has on the quality of learning. Screens distract our attention from the lecture, they distract others around us, and they limit our engagement with lecture material. For these reasons, I strongly prefer that you consider not using screens in our lecture. If you still choose to use screens in lecture, please sit on the left (my left) side of the lecture hall, to minimize the distraction to other students.

5) Academic Integrity:
   Academic integrity is a core value of academic work and research. Without abiding to rules of academic integrity, research becomes worthless. If an experiment’s results are forged, then that experiment cannot be useful in future work; if a paper does not properly cite its sources, then the continuous thread of knowledge is torn. This applies to the work of everyone taking part in the project of academia: from full time faculty members publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals, through graduate students and research assistants taking their first steps in research, and all the way to first year undergraduate students writing short essays.
The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at the UofT. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that your UofT degree is valued and respected as a true signifier of your individual academic achievement.

The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:
- Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

On tests and exams:
- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else’s answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor’s notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me.

If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the Writing Centre, the English Language Development Centre, or the U of T Writing Website. These are great resources not just for learning about academic integrity, but also for acquiring further tools for academic writing and research – I strongly encourage you to check these out!