PHIL 103 – sections 3 and 4. Business and Computer Ethics  
Spring 2016

Instructor

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Office hours

I will be available for office hours on Tuesday and Wednesday 11-12 in Mendocino 3012. While I’m happy to meet face-to-face, you can also send me a SacCT message during those times and expect an immediate response (unless I am with another student). You can also send a SacCT message to request a real-time virtual meeting using SacCT’s online chat tool (Collaborate).

WARNING: Administrative Drops

This fully online course has strict participation and activity requirements, including engagement with the course material on a weekly basis. Students who do NOT:

1. login to the course at least once each week
2. be actively engaged with assigned coursework

will be considered to have abandoned the course and may be administratively dropped by the instructor within the first two weeks of the semester. Re-enrolment will not be permitted.

Reasonable Accommodation

If your circumstances require accommodation or assistance in meeting the expectations of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. You may need to provide documentation to the University office of SSWD (in accordance with the University policy outlined here: http://www.csus.edu/umanual/acad/UMA00215.htm).

Course Description

From the catalogue: Analytical treatment of controversial moral issues which emerge in the business world, e.g., affirmative action, corporate responsibility, the global economy, industry and environmental damage, social effects of advertising, the computer threat to personal privacy, ownership of computer programs. Discussion will focus on basic moral principles and concepts relevant to these issues.

More!

The corporate model of business organization has been and is a source of productivity, wealth and technological advancement and so contributes to the well-being of society. But corporations and business leaders also act immorally and irresponsibly. Ideally, we’d have more of the former and less of the latter. This course supposes that the tools of ethical analysis can
be of some help in explaining some of these problems and proposing ways to avoid them. It can, first, at a micro-level. What should we think about our individual involvement with these organizations — as customers of them, as employees of them, as executives of them, as investors in them? At a macro-level the issues more concern what this mode of organization would look like in a just society. In what ways would the operations of corporations be constrained or regulated with respect to its treatment of the environment, their employees, the local and global communities, their consumers and our privacy?

**Objectives and outcomes**

By the conclusion of this course, it should be true that students (a) understand the moral and political issues that affect questions of the appropriate role of corporations in a just society and are able to (b) apply this understanding to make sense of existing social practices and institutions (c) analyze current problems and controversies and (d) evaluate proposed solutions to them. You will need to give evidence of your ability to understand, apply, analyze and evaluate in your writing and contributions to class discussions.

Phil 103 is a GE course in area D ([http://www.csus.edu/acaf/ge/Area%20D%20Learning%20Outcomes.pdf](http://www.csus.edu/acaf/ge/Area%20D%20Learning%20Outcomes.pdf)). Area D learning outcomes are that you:

1. Describe and evaluate ethical and social values in their historical and cultural contexts.
2. Explain and apply the principles and methods of academic disciplines to the study of social and individual behavior.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of human diversity in human society, for example, race, ethnicity, class, age, ability/disability, sexual identity, gender and gender expression.
4. Explain and critically examine social dynamics and issues in their historical and cultural contexts.

**Text**

All required readings are pieces available as links or .pdf documents from the “Schedule and learning modules” folders in SacCT. The schedule is duplicated below.

**Class procedures and conduct**

This is a fully online course. You must have regular and reliable access to the internet. I will be providing a variety of resources the “Schedule and learning modules” folders in SacCT. The folders, or modules, will be numbered to coincide with the schedule below and the weeks of the semester.

Each folder/module/week will have any of the following:

- Required readings
- A video lecture to complement or support the reading assignment
• One or more assessment activities (see the section on Assessment below).

Assessment

Please do not plagiarize or cheat. If you do then at a minimum you will be marked with a zero on the assignment. Multiple and/or flagrant violations will lead to me assigning a failing grade for the course and initiating disciplinary action through the Office of Student Affairs. Familiarize yourselves with the University’s Academic Honesty Policies and Procedures document (here: http://www.csus.edu/umanual/student/STU-0100.htm).

Your writing assignments will be vetted through Turnitin in SacCT. Here is the CSUS policy regarding Turnitin:

“Consistent with Sacramento State’s efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, instructors may use a tool called Turnitin to compare a student’s work with multiple sources. The tool compares each student’s with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a ‘similarity score’. The tool does not determine wither plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, the instructor must make a complete assessment and judge the originality of the student’s work. All submissions to this course may be checked using this tool.

You may choose to submit papers to Turnitin assignments without identifying information included in the paper (e.g. name or student number). The system will automatically show this information to faculty in your course when viewing the submission.

Turnitin services are now integrated in the Assignment function of SacCT. More information is available here http://www.csus.edu/atcs/tools/turnitin/index.html.”

I also recommend the use of the Smarthinking tool for your writing assignments. Smarthinking is a FREE on-demand, live person, writing assistance service provided by Pearson Publishing. This allows students to submit their written work and receive constructive feedback to improve their writing, typically within 24 hours. It is available as a link at the top of the SacCT page.

Your final grade is determined by how many points you earn, with these grade thresholds: 93 points=A, 90 points=A-, 87 points=B+, 83 points=B, 80 points=B-, 77 points=C+, 73 points=C, 70 points=C-, 67 points=D+, 63 points=D, 60 points=D-, and F = all scores less than 60 points.

There are these ways of earning points:

1. Answering questions correctly on 15 online quizzes (1 per week) based on reading assignments and video lectures. 75 possible points.
2. Being an active and thoughtful participant in 6 online forum discussions. 2 possible points each for a total of 12 possible points (see expectations below).
3. Picking at most 2 reading assignments to be the basis writing a commentary or response paper. 10 possible points each for a total of 20 possible points (see expectations below).
You will notice that there are a total of 107 total possible points.

Discussion forum expectations

Six times throughout the semester I will provide a discussion prompt. I will award up to 2 points for your participation in each one: 2 points for thoughtful, active participation, 1 point for limited, half-hearted participation, or 0 for no participation or inappropriate participation. I may make finer distinctions, too, perhaps awarding .5 or 1.5 points. The forum will conclude 2 weeks after I release the discussion prompt. So, for example, if there is a discussion prompt for module 2 in week 2 and released Feb 1, then the forum would close Feb 15.

“Thoughtful, active participation” is a little vague. I evaluate your participation for each of the six discussion forum assignments based on the following:

- To what extent did the student’s posts reflect an understanding and application of the concepts, issues, and philosophical challenges focused on in the course?
- To what extent did the student’s posts reflect his or her familiarity with the assigned readings for the course?
- How frequently did the student post?
- How constructive and engaging were the student’s contributions?
- Did the student respond thoughtfully and constructively to the prompt, the posts of others or to the responses others made to her post?
- Are the student’s posts grammatical and well-constructed, satisfying the standards of college level written English?
- Other considerations:
  - Be polite and respectful of your classmates.
  - Don't be, or feed, a troll.
  - Take some time to consider what's correct, helpful, or interesting in other people’s posts.
  - Give reasons and arguments for conclusions you reach. Don't preach.
  - Be prepared to change your mind if there are good grounds for it.

Commentary/response paper expectations

See the information above about plagiarism, Turnitin and Smarthinking. Each commentary/response you write should be about 1000 words (plus or minus 100 words is ok). Each one will be based on an assigned reading of your choosing. It will be due 2 weeks after the reading is released in the “Schedule and learning modules” section of SacCT. So, for example, readings for module 2 in week 2 are released Feb 1. If you choose to write a commentary on one of those readings, it is due Feb 15.

Your commentary/response should identify an argument in the reading. Your task isn’t simply to summarize the author’s position, but to respond to it invoking some criteria of evaluation or interpretation and a set of reasons that lead to a conclusion about the author’s argument you’re responding to.
Keep in mind, you’re writing a commentary, not a simple summary:

- A summary is a brief account giving the main points of something; a commentary is a series of explanations and interpretations.
- A summary stays at surface-level; a commentary provides depth of analysis.
- A summary is simple regurgitation; a commentary is original, insightful.

More suggestions are in the Assignments folder of SacCT.

Schedule (see SacCT’s Schedule and learning modules):

Introduction

1. Jan 25-29, Applying ethics is harder than you think (Learning outcomes a, 1, 3)
   - No reading assignment

Part I: Setting up the problem at a general level: ‘capitalism’ is a system of social organization based on private ownership and voluntary exchange. Is it compatible with a just society?

2. Feb 1-5, What is capitalism?
   - FA Hayek, The use of knowledge in society
   - Ronald Coase, The nature of the firm

3. Feb 8-12, The indictment of big business
   - The corporation (film, to view in class)
   - Frederic Bastiat, What is seen and what is not seen

4. Feb 15-19, Corporations vs. ‘capitalism’
   - Roderick Long, Corporations versus the market; or, whip conflation now
   - Kevin Carson, Economic calculation in the corporate commonwealth

Part II: Capitalism is based on private ownership. In this part of the course we approach some problems related to property rules: property rights can be more or less extensive, both with respect to the sorts of things that can be legitimately owned (e.g., ideas?) and with respect to the bundle of rights the owner enjoys over these things (e.g., the right to exclude all externalities?). What sorts of property schemes can be justified?

5. Feb 22-26, Markets and the environment
   - Garrett Hardin, The tragedy of the commons
   - Elinor Ostrom, Governing the commons (selections)

6. Feb 29-Mar 4, Markets and intellectual property
Part III: Capitalism is based on voluntary exchange. In this part of the course we approach some problems related to the normative significance of agreement. We usually think that a person’s consent is normatively transformative. For example, the moral status of an action performed without someone’s consent, like giving someone a kiss, can be changed from ‘wrong’ to ‘permissible’ by securing consent. But is consent always morally transformative? What has to be true about an agreement in order for it to count as genuinely voluntary?

8. Mar 14-18, Managerial compensation
   • Jeffrey Moriarty, Do CEOs get paid too much?

Spring Break Mar 21-25

9. Mar 28-Apr 1, Globalization
   • Carol Gould, Moral issues in globalization
   • Matt Zwolinski, Sweatshops, choice, and exploitation

10. Apr 4-8, Advertising
    • Tom Beauchamp, Manipulative advertising  IVLE
    • John Kenneth Galbraith, The dependence effect
    • FA Hayek, The non sequitur of the dependence effect

11. Apr 11-15: Product safety
    • John Hasnas, The mirage of product safety

Part IV: Capitalism has generated unprecedented levels of technological innovation. In this part of the course we approach some problems related to the use of technology. Many have concerns about privacy and equity. What should we think about them?

12. Apr 18-22, Net Privacy
    • G. Randolph Mayes, Privacy in a transparent age
    • J. Moor, Towards a Theory of Privacy in the Information Age

13. Apr 25-29, Net neutrality
    • Tim Berners-Lee, A magna carta for the web
      https://www.ted.com/talks/tim_berners_lee_a_magna_carta_for_the_web
    • Eli Dourado, Cable companies are experimenting with metered data. Good!
      http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2015/10/cable_companies_are_experimenting_with_metered_data.html
• Michael Lopato, Net neutrality advocates’ concerns are outdated

14. May 2-6, Cyber crime and internet expression
• Computer crime laws
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/hackers/blame/crimelaws.html
• The state of nature

15. May 9-13, Recap, review, work week