

## **Business Ethics King's College, Spring 2019**

Instructor: Dr. Jordan Rodgers  
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Office Hours: TR 3:00-4:30 (or by appt.)

Course: MSB 287 C  
Room: McGowan 109  
Time: MWF 1:00-1:50

### **Course Description:**

Examination of the vocation and moral context of business; critical reflection, through engagement with the philosophical and Catholic traditions, on how to make a living *and* live well; and extended consideration of issues and problems that arise in contemporary business settings. Prerequisite: Core 280.

### **Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, students should have:

- developed familiarity with several theories of morality and the basic principles of the Catholic social tradition;
- become more proficient at recognizing, formulating, and addressing moral problems in the business context;
- developed the capacity to implement ethical decisions; and
- begun to develop an answer, for themselves, of what moral and spiritual values they want to live out in making a living.

### **McGowan School of Business Mission Statement:**

This course directly serves the mission of the McGowan School of Business. To quote (emphasis added):

*The William G. McGowan School of Business seeks to develop in its students the professional knowledge and skills needed to function successfully in the dynamic environments of business **with a commitment to exercising their professional responsibilities in an ethical and socially responsible manner** in a global marketplace.*

To achieve its Mission, the William G. McGowan School of Business:

- *Draws primarily traditional undergraduate students from the Mid-Atlantic region and students for the specialized master's degree in Health Care Administration regionally, nationally and globally and supports the educational tradition of the Congregation of Holy Cross in educating both the hearts and minds of students.*
- *Faculty provides a vital component in achieving our student-centered learning goals through teaching, scholarship, and service activities.*
- *Faculty maintains proficiency in their fields and teaching through pedagogical and applied research and by sharing their business expertise in private, public, and philanthropic endeavors.*

## **Learning Goals:**

The delivery of our business education program is guided by the following learning outcomes:

- *A student graduating from the William G. McGowan School of Business should be an effective communicator.*

To this end, **in this course**, students will submit written work (including memos) and make oral presentations.

- *A student graduating from the William G. McGowan School of Business should possess information literacy.*

To this end, **in this course**, students will identify, locate, and evaluate resources needed for required written work.

- *A student graduating from the William G. McGowan School of Business should be ethically and socially responsible.*

To this end, **in this course**, students will develop familiarity with several theories of morality; become more proficient at recognizing, formulating, and addressing moral problems in the business context; develop a well-considered position on the purpose of business within society; and begin to develop an answer, for themselves, of what moral and spiritual values they want to live out in making a living.

- *A student graduating from the William G. McGowan School of Business should be professionally knowledgeable.*

To this end, **in this course**, students will examine case studies and learn best practices in today's business world.

## Texts:

- Ciulla, Martin & Solomon (eds.): *Honest Work: A Business Ethics Reader*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN - 978-0-19-049768-2 (called “HW” in the schedule below)
- All other required reading material will be provided via the course’s Moodle site

## Assessment:

### Grading Elements

- Reading and Event Responses (8) - 20%
- Exams (2) - 20% each (40% total)
- Essay (1) - 20%
- Participation (including attendance, debate participation, and pop quizzes) - 20%

**Reading and Event Responses** – During the course of the semester, you must complete **eight (8) total responses** either to a reading from our class or one of the lecture events put on by the McGowan Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility. (Events are listed in the schedule of classes below.)

**Four (4)** of the responses must be done before midterm, and any remaining responses after midterm. (It is possible to complete all responses before the midterm.) Each response should be **1-2 double-spaced pages long**, and include two elements: (a) an explanation of some *small* part of the reading/lecture (e.g., an example, an argument, a theoretical idea) and (b) a *reflective and personal* response to that part of the reading/lecture. Does the example or argument show what the author or speaker thinks it does? Is the theoretical idea helpful? If not, why not? If so, don’t just state your agreement, but try to develop the author’s thought in some new and different direction (e.g., think of a possible objection to their view and come up with a response).

Responses to readings will be due **before class** on the day they are assigned, so that you will come to class more ready than usual to contribute to discussion. Responses to the events will be due **three days** after the event. For each, three grades are possible - Ø (for failing to complete a response), a partial credit score of 75 (if your response either misrepresents your source material or your own response is not sufficiently reflective, e.g., by simply stating agreement with the author/speaker), or a score of 100 (for full credit). If you are not happy with the grade you receive, you can write more than 8 responses, and I will **drop your lowest grade(s)**.

**Exams** – Both exams will include short, objective-style questions and longer essay questions. The final will NOT be cumulative. If you have a documented need for extra time on the exams, please let me know in advance.

**Essay** – There will be two opportunities in the semester to write an essay. The topic of the first is TBA; I’ll announce the topic on 2/13 and it will be due 2/22. The topic of the second will be

whether workplace romance bans are ethically permissible. It will be tied to our **formal classroom debate** and is due 4/3. These dates are marked on the schedule below.

These will be **argumentative essays** in which you defend one side of some debate or disputed philosophical point. In both, you will be asked not just to advance the strongest arguments in favor of your position, but to take into account and respond to the best possible arguments against it as well. Each student must write **at least one essay**, but if you write both I will **drop your lowest score**. I highly suggest that you write on the first topic, so as to allow yourself the possibility of improving your essay score later in case you need to.

You must turn your papers in *on time*, unless you have an approved university excuse. If you do, let me know *as much in advance as possible*. Absent that, late papers will be penalized – 1/3 of a letter grade will be deducted per day late (e.g., a B+ paper turned in one day late will receive a grade of “B,” etc.). I’ll provide more information on the format of the debates and papers, and my expectations for them, as they approach.

**Attendance & Participation (including quizzes, debate)**– 20% of your grade will be determined by your contributions (questions, ideas, arguments) in class. Attendance is expected at all meetings, and missed classes will be penalized, unless you have a reasonable excuse. If you do, again, let me know *in advance*. Please note that, per College policy, I am required to report excessive absences to the Office of Student Success and Retention.

I’ll often start class with **little quizzes**, to see how well you’re retaining material. Your performance on them will be factored into your participation grade. Don’t worry – if you’ve done the assigned reading for the day, they’ll be relatively simple. If your performance on them is consistently unacceptable, it *will* affect your grade, so make sure you’re keeping up. If I notice a series of bad quizzes, I may reach out to you to talk about why you’re struggling, since doing poorly on the quizzes is a good sign you’re going to have a hard time with essays and exams.

Your participation in our **formal classroom debate** will also be factored in here. If you either don’t show up to class that day, or provide no visible contribution to the debate that day, your participation grade will take a hit. If you think you’ll have to miss that class day because of a university approved excuse, please let me know as soon in advance as you can.

This class will be heavy on open classroom discussion. I’m confident that we will be able to create an environment in class in which you can feel comfortable contributing to the discussion, but if you are intimidated by the prospect of speaking in class, please either email me or come to my office and talk sometimes. I want to see that you’re actively engaging with the material, and not just letting the lectures wash over you.

## Academic Dishonesty:

To quote (with a few edits) from the Student Handbook (76-77):

In order for faculty members to perform their duty of fostering and accurately evaluating the individual academic progress of each student, they need to assume that laboratory reports, examinations, essays, themes, term papers, and similar requirements submitted for credit as a part of a course or in fulfillment of a College requirement are the original works of the student. Put simply, a violation of academic integrity is an action where a student tries to violate this assumption of the faculty member. Therefore, students shall not knowingly

1. receive or attempt to receive non-authorized assistance in the preparation of any work (when direct quotations are used, they are to be properly cited, and when the ideas of another are incorporated into a paper or paraphrased, they are to be appropriately acknowledged by citation);
2. sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish, or attempt to sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish unauthorized assistance to another in such preparation of any work;
3. take or attempt to take, steal, or otherwise procure in an unauthorized manner any material pertaining to the conduct of a class, including tests, examinations, grade change forms, grade reports, roll books, or reports, etc.;
4. sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish to any unauthorized person any illicitly obtained material that is known to contain questions or answers to any examination scheduled to be given at some subsequent date or time offered by the College;
5. submit the same work for more than one course unless the faculty member to whom the work is being submitted has given their prior consent;
6. possess or use, without authorization of the instructor, copies of tests, answer sheets, books, notes, calculators, computers, cheat sheets, or similar means that could interfere with the fair, accurate testing or evaluation of a student;
7. obtain, without authorization of the instructor, answers from another student's exam, quiz, computer, or paper; and
8. provide false information to an instructor or College official for the purpose of misrepresenting an activity outside of class (reports on field experiences, internships, etc.), or improperly seeking special consideration or privilege (excused absences, postponement of an exam or due date of papers or project, etc.).

If you have any questions about plagiarism guidelines or the use of outside sources, please contact me. If you feel at all tempted to plagiarize, contact me – whatever we come up with while talking it through will be a better course of action than your failing an assignment (and perhaps the course).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

All students who have a learning or physical disability should schedule an appointment with the instructor during the first week of class to discuss accommodations for the classroom, homework assignments, and examinations.

**Tentative Schedule:**

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS/MEDIA
M - 1/14	Course Introduction	N/A
W - 1/16	Ethics - Looking Good and Being Good	-HW xxi–xxiii, xxvii–xxix (Plato)
F - 1/18	Making the Decision in the Moment - An In-Class Activity	-reading distributed in class
M - 1/21	Is Business Necessarily Unethical? The Case of Bluffing	-HW 36–41 (Carr)
W - 1/23	Ethical Theories I: Utilitarianism	-HW xxiii–xxiv (Audi); “Crash Course” YT video
F - 1/25	Ethical Theories II: Kantian Ethics	-HW xxv (Audi), 4–6 (Bowie); “Crash Course” YT video
M - 1/28	Ethical Theories III: Virtue Ethics	-HW xxv–xxvi (Audi); “Crash Course” YT video
W - 1/30	Catholic Social Teaching	-Byron, “Ten Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching”  -selections from “Economic Justice for All” (US Catholic Bishops)
F - 2/1	Should Everything Be For Sale?	-Sandel, “The Moral Limits of Markets”
M - 2/4	Cont’d	-No new reading

- **EVENT 1, FEB. 4 - BESSETTE LECTURE ON MEDICAL ETHICS: JOEL SHUMAN, “MEDICATING OUR LIVES AWAY: THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND MEDICAL PRACTICE” (7PM, BURKE AUDITORIUM)**

W - 2/6	Theories of the Modern Corporation I - Stockholder Theory	-HW 172–178 (“Introduction” and Friedman)
F - 2/8	Objections to Stockholder Theory	-HW 179–182 (Stone)

M - 2/11	Theories of the Modern Corporation II - Stakeholder Theory	-Freeman, "A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation"
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- **EVENT 2, FEB. 11 - SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES LECTURE: CHRISTOPHER CHABRIS, "COMPARED TO WHAT? THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY IN EVERYDAY DECISIONS" (7PM, BURKE AUDITORIUM)**

W - 2/13	Objections to Stakeholder Theory  <b>*FIRST PAPER ANNOUNCED*</b>	-HW 194–198 (Marcoux)
F - 2/15	Discussion of Corporation Theories, cont'd	-Hoffman, "The Ford Pinto"
M - 2/18	Business and the Environment - The Value of Wild Things	-HW 384–388 ("Introduction" and Leopold), 395–398 (Baxter)

- **EVENT 3, FEB. 18 - GRIMES LECTURE: BISHOP JOSEPH BAMBERA, "THE CHALLENGES TO INTERRELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING POSED BY RISING NATIONALISM" (7PM, BURKE AUDITORIUM)**

W - 2/20	Do Businesses Have a Special Obligation to Protect the Environment?	-HW 399–404 (Bowie)
F - 2/22	The Value of Nonhumans  <b>*FIRST PAPER DUE*</b>	-HW 405–410 (Singer)
M - 2/25	Case Study - Coal Mining	-Friedman & Plumer, "Coal Mining Health Study is Halted By Interior"  -Berry, "Not a Vision of Our Future, But of Ourselves"
W - 2/27	Review	-No new reading
F - 3/1	<b>*MIDTERM EXAM*</b>	
3/4 - 3/8	<b>*NO CLASS - WINTER RECESS*</b>	
M - 3/11	Working for Amazon I: The Warehouse	-Soper, "Inside Amazon's Warehouse"  -recommended: HW 169–171 (Shaw & Berry)

W - 3/13	Working for Amazon II: Corporate	-Kantor & Stretfield, "Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace"  -Amazon's "Leadership Principles"
F - 3/15	Working for Amazon, cont'd	-No new reading
M - 3/18	Sex and the Workplace I: Sexual Harassment	-Cooper, "The Three Things that Make Organizations More Prone to Workplace Harassment"  -HW 30 ("Sexual Harassment Guidelines")
W - 3/20	Sex and the Workplace II: Workplace Romances	-Boyd, "The Debate Over the Prohibition of Romance in the Workplace"
F - 3/22	<b>*FORMAL DEBATE - SHOULD WORKPLACE ROMANCES BE BANNED?*</b>	-No new reading
M - 3/25	Are Bosses Dictators?	-Anderson, "How Bosses are (Literally) Like Dictators"

- **EVENT 4, MARCH 26 - MOREAU LECTURES: KATHLEEN SPROWS CUMMINGS, "POPE FRANCIS AND THE AMERICAN SAINTS: WITNESS FROM THE PAST, WISDOM FOR THE FUTURE" (3:30 & 7:30PM, BURKE AUD.)**

W - 3/27	Are Bosses Dictators? Cont'd	-No new reading
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- **EVENT 5, MARCH 28-29 - BUSINESS SCHOOL CONFERENCE, "THE HORIZONS OF BUSINESS EDUCATION: NON-PROFIT LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP" (MULTIPLE TALKS; SCHEDULE TBA)**

F - 3/29	Workers' Rights I: Free Speech	-HW 11-14 (Barry)  -Lewis, "The NFL and the First Amendment: A Guide to the Debate"
M - 4/1	Workers' Rights II: Trade Unions	-Nocera & Strauss, "Fate of the Union: How the



		Northwestern Football Union Nearly Came to Be”
W - 4/3	Advertising Ethics  <b>*SECOND PAPER DUE*</b>	-HW 241–242 (“Introduction”)  -Mad Men - <i>It’s Toasted</i> (VIDEO)
F - 4/5	The Dependence Effect	-HW 251–255 (Galbraith)
M - 4/8	The Dependence Effect, Cont’d	-HW 256–258 (Hayek)
W - 4/10	The Threat of Automation	-Miller, “The Long-Term Jobs Killer Isn’t China. It’s Automation”  -Quart, “Automation is a Real Threat. How Can We Slow Down the March of the Cyborgs?”
F - 4/12	Cont’d	-HW 233–237
M - 4/15	Work & Leisure I: What Do We Do When We Don’t Have to Work Anymore?	-HW 544–549 (Keynes)
W - 4/17	<b>*NO CLASS - EASTER BREAK*</b>	
F - 4/19	<b>*NO CLASS - EASTER BREAK*</b>	
M - 4/22	Work & Leisure II: The Overwhelm	-Kolbert, “No Time”
W - 4/24	Work & Leisure III: Rich and Poor	-Thompson, “The Free Time Paradox in America”
F - 4/26	The Good Life I	-HW 575–577, 583–586 (“Introduction” and Ciulla)
M - 4/29	The Good Life II	-HW 577–579 (Solomon)
W - 5/1	Review	-No new reading
5/3 - 5/13	<b>*FINAL EXAM WEEK - EXAM TIME TBA*</b>	