

SYLLABUS: MALS 610E

ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE

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Spring Term, 2006

INTRODUCTION

In the world of work we all have a job to do, and most people want to “*do the thing right.*” We also want to “*do the right thing.*” To do otherwise can result in the kind of corporate catastrophes that American business has witnessed over the past few years, of which Enron, Arthur Andersen, Worldcom and Global Crossing have become emblematic. The corporate, economic, political and social cost of not doing the right thing at work can be enormous. And the personal cost can be substantial when conviction and punishment are involved, as in the case of Ms. Martha Stewart.

Even apart from financial loss and public shame, not doing the right thing at work can create unbelievable tension in our private life, since we want to think of ourselves as (and raise our children to be) persons of character and integrity. The picture is further complicated by the fact that doing the right thing in the world of work (like some cases of whistle-blowing) can at times cause significant losses of other sorts, some of which can negatively affect the welfare of people near and dear to us.

This course will explore issues of ethics in our everyday life, especially the challenges we can encounter in the workplace. Topics covered will include major issues that arise in business and corporate life, such as profitability and fiduciary responsibility to shareholders, corporate responsibility for the environment, employee rights and responsibilities, truthfulness in marketing and fraud business deals. But we will also seriously examine the matters of personal integrity and character and their relationship to business and professional ethics; the practical implications of ethical decisions; and conflicts that arise between personal interest and moral, legal or spiritual imperatives. These issues will be tied to self-exploration and an effort to define our own moral stance.

Questions like the following will be addressed: What resources can we bring to bear on the resolution of ethical challenges we meet in business, work and the marketplace? Are there special problems or expectations for the various roles we can assume, such as that of employee, supervisor, attorney, health care professional, teacher, stockbroker, police officer...? What are the foundations of my own ethical decisions, and why do I embrace them? How clear can answers be to ethical questions? How can we foster agreement on, and reduce conflict over, ethical issues?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To acquaint students with some of the major kinds of ethical problems encountered while performing work assignments and some possible ways of responding to them.
2. To enable students to identify and critically assess the principles and values they personally embrace and use in addressing the ethical issues which arise in their working lives.
3. To appreciate the complexity one encounters when trying to think, speak and write about ethical issues, such as subjectivism, relativism, the legal vs. the ethical, as well as those raised by globalization, diversity, sexual harassment and pluralism.
4. To face complex ethical issues with some confidence that the problems can be articulated with clarity, communicated objectively and both appreciated and sometimes solved by people of good will.
5. Ultimately, to formulate one's own "philosophy of work" as sketched in the "Introduction" of this course given above.

TEXTBOOKS

- 1) Donaldson, Thomas and Patricia Werhane, Ethical Issues in Business: A Philosophical Approach, Seventh Edition, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002)
- 2) Mahan, Brian J., Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose: Vocation and the Ethics of Ambition, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002)

Other readings will be assigned but will be available through other sources. See the COURSE OUTLINE below for the main reading assignments. Others will be given as we move along. Hard copy, links to other sites, etc, will be given in those cases. Please watch the ANNOUNCEMENT section of this course **on Blackboard** for this and other information.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1 (January 10): Introduction

1. **Introductions: Students to one another; personal learning objectives; instructor.**
2. **Tour of the course syllabus: *objectives and content, syllabus, expectations and assignments, grading.* etc.**
3. **Use of Blackboard in this course: purpose, access and use (Teaching Learning Center contact number: 334-5078)**
4. **Q & A regarding course content and procedure, including communications, ground rules for discussion, deadlines, etc.**
5. **Exercise/assignment: "Targeting Values"**
 - a. **A CASE STUDY: "Italian Tax Mores," *Donaldson and Werhane, Ethical Issues in Business, 7th ed. pp. 98-100, and "Oil Rig," pp.192-193.* (Small group discussion)**
 - b. **Analysis: Values vs. Beliefs**
 - c. **Targeting Values and Beliefs: Entrenchment. Paradigms and Conceptual Schemes**

Session 2 (January 17): The Controversy over Business Ethics

1. **ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THIS CLASS**
 - a. **Donaldson, pp. 12-14, 20-60, 83 –97.**
 - b. **Mahan, pp. xiii-xx, Ch. I, "Ask Me What I'm Living For," pp. 1-37**
 - c. **Begin Journal (2-4 entries for the week)**
 - d. **Get access to Blackboard**
2. **The Donaldson readings deal with these questions:**
 - a. **Is there any place for ethics in business?**
 - b. **If so, what place does ethics have?**

- c. Werhane's article serves as background for our Targeting work and for Mahan's book, as well as other aspects of ethical theory.
- 3. The Mahan reading begins to raise the issues:
 - a. Is there any place for values and ethics in my life?
 - b. If so, what place do they have?

Session 3 (January 24): Ethical Theory and how it works

1. **ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THIS CLASS:**
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 1-10, 16-19, 61-83, 100-130
 - b. "Targeting" assignment
 - c. Continue Journal
 - d. Start writing your "Distraction Diary"
 - e. Participate in online discussion
2. The Donaldson readings examine types of ethical theories which offer differing accounts of what is really at the basis of ethical decision-making. Try to figure out where your position might fall in the discussion.
3. In pp. 61-83, the focus is on truth telling as an application/illustration of some of the theoretical writing on ethics.
4. Does truth telling really matter? What would Kant or Aristotle say?
5. In the light of the disagreements exemplified in these writings, what can you conclude about how much we know about ethics? Specifically, do we know anything for certain about honesty and trust?
6. Can you begin to see any pattern in the basic terminology used in these discussions?

Session 4 (January 31): More on Ethical Theory

1. **ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THIS CLASS**
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 1-10 (reread), pp. 100-130, review pp. 83-97:
 - I. Bowie's Kantian approach is "deontological"
 - II. Solomon's Aristotelian approach involves "virtue ethics"
 - III. Werhane's article will tie in with our class exercise in "Targeting My Values"—the key idea has to do with the existence and role of "conceptual schemes" in our lives.
 - b. John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism," handout.
 - c. Young's handout
 - d. Another Targeting exploration: use the worksheets provided in the last class
 - e. Journal
 - f. Check out the online discussion

2. Do you think you are a deontologist or a virtue-ethics person? Or both? Or neither? Just what are you?
3. What are you living for?

Session 5 (February 7): Is All Private Property Theft? And what about profits?

1. **ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THIS CLASS:**
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 131—136, 140--168
 - b. Keep doing your Distraction Diary
 - c. Journal
 - d. Participate in online discussion
2. Property and wealth: are they sources of pride, fulfillment and security or obstacles to integrity and happiness?
3. How does the growth of technology present special challenges to our ideas of ownership and sharing?

Session 6 (February 14): Speaking of profits: “What does it profit a person if s/he gain the whole world (or market)....” And some shifts in the meaning of ownership and property

1. **ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THIS CLASS:**
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 136—139, 192--227
 - b. Mahan, Ch. II, “Failing at Success,” pp. 38-65
 - c. Do Mahan’s “Practices” on pp. 56--61, 62--63, 63--64, and 65. (Be sure to write them out and bring them to class.)
 - d. William James, handout.
 - e. Abraham Maslow, handout.
2. What do you think of “The Judgment of Thamus”?
3. Given the change in emphasis brought about by technology and “knowledge workers” (exemplified, perhaps by Microsoft—see Thurow, especially, pp. 182—192, what should we be trying to own? What, if anything, do we need to own? (Related issues will arise in Cantor’s article later.)
4. Compare the view of Maslow with what you take Mahan’s position to be.

Session 7 (February 21): Justice—what is it? And can it ever exist?

1. **ASSIGNMENT:**
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 136—139, 192--227
 - b. Journal

- c. Participate in online discussion
2. Is justice more important than truthfulness?
3. What would a just person act like?
4. Where does justice lie on your “target”?

Session 8 (February 28): Back to Values—in Organizations and Individuals

1. **ASSIGNMENT:**
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 228-268
 - b. Mahan, “Ivan Ilyich, John Dean and I: How We Deceive Ourselves,” pp. 66-88
 - c. Do Mahan’s “Practices” on p. 82, 84 and 87. (Do them in writing and bring to class; they will be part of a classroom activity.)
 - d. Journal
 - e. Review your “Target”
 - f. Participate in online discussion
2. What are the values of the organizations I belong to?
3. What are the values I embrace as a manager, supervisor?
4. Can we apply the parable of the Sadhu (pp. 262 ff.) to John Dean’s case?

(March 7—no class; spring break)

Session 9 (March 14)

1. **ASSIGNMENT FOR THIS CLASS:**
 - a. **TURN IN FIRST PAPER AT BEGINNING OF THIS CLASS**
 - b. Donaldson, pp. 269-322.
 - c. Was your Distraction Diary interesting while you were writing your paper for this class? How so (or not)?
2. Can we draw on the Kantian deontology or Aristotelian virtue ethics to describe a virtuous manager?
3. Would any of the corporate scandals of late have any lessons about virtuous managers?

Session 10 (March 21): Our rights and responsibilities in the workplace

1. **ASSIGNMENT:**
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 323-363, 364-390
 - b. Journal
 - c. Distraction Diary
 - d. Online Discussion

2. Have you ever wanted to or needed to “blow the whistle”? Did you? What happened—either way?
3. What is the current situation for women, people of color and gay people?

Session 11 (March 28): Ethical relativism and absolute values; and my values

1. ASSIGNMENT:
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 391—428
 - b. Mahan, Ch. IV, “ If I’m Really Something, You Must be Nothing Much.”
 - c. Do the Practices on spiritual indirection on pp. 109 and 115; and on mirroring ambition on pp. 120, 121, 122—124, 124—125.
 - d. Journal
 - e. Online Discussion
2. Does Mahan’s position rest on a purely subjective basis? If so, why should we keep doing his exercises? If not, what does it rest on?
3. Are there any universal human rights? If so, what does that mean for international business?

Session 12 (April 4): Marketing—Are the Sophists still with us?

1. ASSIGNMENT
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 482—521
 - b. Journal
 - c. Distraction Diary
 - d. Online Discussion
2. Are we not back to the issue of telling the truth?
3. What would you do as a marketer?

Session 13 (April 11): Love your mother: the Environment?

1. ASSIGNMENT:
 - a. Donaldson 522—564
 - b. Mahan, Ch. VI, “Meritocracy Machine,” pp. 156—182
 - c. Do the Practices on p. 165, 176, 180. (Please write them out and bring to class) Note:
2. What are the three most important issues you see regarding business and the environment?
3. Do ethical theories help give us guidance on this matter?
4. What is your position?

Session 14 (April 18): Leadership and the right stuff—where does ethics fit? Should I pursue a leadership position?

1. **ASSIGNMENT:**
 - a. Donaldson, pp. 565—613
 - b. Journal
 - c. Online discussion
2. Can pursuing leadership be seen as a “calling” or is it just a form of ambition? (Also, what would Mahan say about this?)
3. Exactly what is leadership? And can it be acquired or are leaders “just born”?

Session 15 (April 25): Getting it all together

1. **ASSIGNMENT:**
 - a. **TURN IN FINAL PAPER AT BEGINNING OF CLASS**
 - b. Leo Tolstoi, “The Death of Ivan Ilych”
 - c. Mahan, “Afterword: Occupations and Preoccupations,” pp. 183-187
2. What value does work have and how do I value it?
3. What, if any, is the moral dimension of “balance” in my life?
4. Where is my heart? What did my Distraction Diary teach me?

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. All the assignments should be done in advance of the class meeting (e.g., the Donaldson and Mahan assignments should be read prior to coming to class on January 17, etc). When exercises (“Practices”) from Mahan are requested, please be sure to do them in writing and bring them to class, as they will form the basis for small group discussions. The lectures and seminar discussions will all proceed on the assumption that you are familiar with the material. Please do not hamper the class by not being prepared. The texts should also be brought to the class in which they will be discussed so that we can make ready reference to relevant passages. Some materials other than those in the texts will also be assigned.
2. It is essential to use the editions of the texts ordered for the course, since class discussions often end up referring to pages and paragraphs, which are difficult to locate if you have a different edition.
3. The personal **JOURNAL** needs to be kept up weekly and not let fall into disuse. The journal is an integral part of the course and should track your thinking on the course as we proceed. Write about the issues dealt with in our readings, and

especially what you are thinking about the topics we are dealing with, such as Mahan's "practices" or related topics we have not been able to cover, but are important and/or relevant to your interests. **The journals will be collected several times during the term:**

January 31
February 28
April 11

so that I can see where you are at and offer suggestions if appropriate. I will occasionally give you comments on how to strengthen or improve it, as well as kudos when you do really good work. **Please turn in a stapled hard copy of your journal at the beginning of class on the above dates with your name and the dates covered clearly indicated in capital letters at the top of the first page (e.g., "JOHN DOE, JAN. 10—JAN. 31," or "JEAN DOE, FEB 1—FEB. 28," etc.) clearly appearing on the cover. They can be hand-written on 8x11 in. paper so long as they are legible, but I would prefer printed copy if you can do it. Do not use a bound journal/diary book, since you will not get it back for a week.** Clarity, focus and the assessment of reasons for holding or rejecting a position (whether it is your position or that of someone else, e.g., on of the authors we are reading) are needed.

At least three entries a week are expected. Be sure to date each entry. You may be entirely candid in your writing. Your journal is totally **confidential** and will be seen by no one else except me, unless you chose to share it with others.

4. The **DISCUSSION BOARD on Blackboard**: Please check in on the Discussion Board at least once a week and be sure to make a contribution if you have one. Initially I will post the topics, but you are also free to put up a topic for discussion. I read ALL the entries and will consider myself one of the discussants on occasion. Entries should be reasonable: as short as the response can be, no fluff, rambling, etc. None of the comments made should ever be taken personally, and all participants must observe all of the rules of courtesy, discretion and propriety. It is important to remember that use of this medium involves the time of an entire group of people who will read the entries and respond. The discussions should be a model of graciousness even when there is disagreement. Please give reasons for a position that is adopted. Do not forward the entries to anyone outside the class. It is important to have a sense of safety, care and confidentiality about what is said in this "electronic classroom," just as there is in the "real" classroom. **What people say on this electronic discussion board should also be considered confidential and should not be shared with persons outside of our class without the explicit permission of the author.**
5. **Two papers will be written**, one earlier in the term and due after spring break on March 14, so that you can get appropriate feed-back and guidance about the final paper, the other at the end of the course. Both papers are to be submitted in typed

hardcopy to me on the date assigned with your name clearly appearing on the first page. The nature of the paper will be reflective and critical, not merely descriptive or narrative of something you have read. These are not research papers, but be sure to cite all references or sources used. An issue must be clearly identified and critically assessed for strengths, weaknesses, merits, drawbacks, etc. This will be relatively easy to do in a course on this topic, especially if your journaling has been good.

Further information on the nature of the papers will be provided.

1st Paper: 4pp max. (1000 words) due March 14.

2nd Paper: 6pp. max (1500 words) due April 25.

6. **Discussion in the classroom is required.** The usual rules of courtesy and helpfulness to others are expected, as well as self-restraint (so as to give others a chance to speak and not to dominate the discussion).
7. **Attendance at all classes is expected** unless your absence is due to circumstances such as health, family or work. Please notify me prior to the class when possible by phone or e-mail if you cannot come so that we can make arrangements that will be helpful to you. Non-traditional or "adult" students working inside or outside of the home often have responsibilities that make attendance at every class impossible. The key to handling this is communication with me and identifying a fellow student "buddy" who can share with you what happened in the session missed. I will help anyway that is reasonable. Even if you miss a class please be sure to read the materials that were assigned, since some of this material is cumulative or inter-related and we will be cross referencing it. The main issue is mastering the material.
8. **The UNCG honor policy applies to all work done for this course. Please be aware of this policy (see Student Handbook and UNCG Catalog for details). Failure to abide by this policy will result in an automatic grade of "F" for this course.**

GRADING

1. **Class preparation and participation in class discussion/activities: ...30%**
2. **Participation in Discussion Board:.....15%**
3. **Journal:.....20%**
4. **Papers:**

1st paper.....15%
2nd paper.....20%

The first paper is weighted less so that it can serve as a "pilot" for the second one.

The papers can grow out of your journal or any other source (e.g., a problem you are facing at work) that interests you and is relevant to our course.

Clearly, ongoing participation in thinking about, writing about and discussing the materials and issues covered is the major part of the work.

JJY,sr.: 11/28/05