

PHIL\*2600

Business Ethics

Term: Fall 2023

Section(s): 01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

**\*\*Please check Syllabus and Announcements on CourseLink for the most up-to-date information\*\***

# Course Details

## Calendar Description

This course examines ethical and evaluative issues relating to business and professional practices, and is intended for students without a background in philosophy. Topics to be explored include the nature of values and ethical systems, duties and rights, private and public goods, the consumer movement, social marketing, corporate social accounting, private right and professional responsibility.

## Detailed Course Description

In this course, we will study foundational issues such as corporate social responsibility, sustainability in business, and ethical consumerism. We will also explore a wide range of ethical issues that are arising because of rapid improvements in artificial intelligence. We will consider questions about automation, the future of work, and universal basic income, among others.

## Timetable

In-person delivery (no remote option)

T/Th 4:00 PM - 5:20 PM

MCKN 117

## Final Exam

There is no final exam for this course, only a final research paper, due **by 11:59PM on Thursday, Dec 7.**

# Instructional Support

Please see Web Advisor for instructor information.

Office Hours: By appointment, either in-person (MCKN 336) or Teams

### Teaching Assistants:

Name: Evan Knott

Email: knotte@uoguelph.ca

Office Hours: By appointment on Teams

# Resources

All required and recommended readings will be posted on Courselink.

# Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Analyze what characterizes a particular business situation as an ethical situation;
2. Assess the importance of business ethics in a global economy while respecting individual employees and their work-life balance;
3. Correctly apply terminology such as capitalism, globalization, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory, corporate accountability, corporate citizenship, civil society organizations in varied contexts;
4. Outline key normative ethical theories and apply these theories to real-world situations;
5. Evaluate the role that governments should play in regulating businesses;
6. Demonstrate the ability to identify multiple stakeholders in society and the extent to which businesses owe them moral consideration;
7. Explain the concept of corporate social responsibility along with how it can be implemented, measured and reported by businesses

# Teaching and Learning Activities

\*\*SUBJECT TO CHANGE: Always check CourseLink for most up-to-date information on scheduling, readings, assignments, etc.\*\*

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| Date | Content |
| Week 1: Sept 7**INTRODUCTION** | READ: “Larry Fink’s 2022 Letter to CEOs” |
| Week 2: Sept 12, 14**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 1 DUE 11:59PM Monday Sept 11**READ:* Friedman (1970) - The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits
* Hart and Zingales (2017) - Serving Shareholders Doesn’t Mean Putting Profit Above All Else

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| Week 3: Sept 19, 21**CORPORATE CULTURE** | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 2 DUE 11:59PM Monday Sept 18**READ:* Tully (2022) - Situationism and Virtue Ethics
* Pinto Madness (1977) – Mother Jones
* Gladwell (2015) - The Engineer's Lament

WATCH: * Video presentations from Groups 1,2,3
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| Week 4: Sept 26, 28**ETHICAL CONSUMERISM**  | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 3 DUE 11:59PM Monday Sept 26**READ:* Kristoff & Wudunn (2020) -Two Cheers for Sweatshops
* Pape (2018) Why there is no “ethical consumption” under capitalism

WATCH: * Video presentations from Groups 4,5,6
 |
| Week 5: Oct 3, 5**SUSTAINABILITY** | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 4 DUE 11:59PM Monday Oct 3**READ:* Norman & Macdonald (2004) - Getting to the bottom of the triple bottom line
* Patagonia Founder Gives Away the Company to Fight Climate Change

WATCH: * Video presentations from Groups 7,8,9
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| Week 6: FALL BREAK | **NO CLASS, prepare for midterm** |
| Week 7: Oct 17,19**MIDTERM** | **Tuesday, Oct 17: IN-PERSON MIDTERM EXAM**Thursday, October 19, Read: Zuboff (2020) You Are Now Remotely Controlled |
| Week 8: Oct 24, 26**THE ATTENTION ECONOMY** | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 5 DUE 11:59PM Monday Oct 23**READ:* Castro & Pham (2020) Is the attention economy noxious?
* Ad Nauseam, by Tim Hwang
* One Weird Trick for Destroying the Digital Economy

WATCH: * Video presentations from Groups 7,8,9
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| Week 9: Oct 31, Nov 2**MEANINGFUL WORK** | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 6 DUE 11:59PM Monday Oct 30**READ:* Vogt (2005) - Maximizing Human Potential - Capabilities and the work environment
* Veltman – What makes work meaningful?

WATCH: * Video presentations from Groups 10,11,12
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| Week 10: Nov 7 ONLY**BULLSHIT JOBS** | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 7 DUE 11:59PM Monday Nov 6**READ:* On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs by David Graeber
* Why the world is full of bullshit jobs

WATCH: * Video presentations from Groups 13,14,15

NO CLASS on Thursday Nov 9 |
| Week 11: Nov 14,16**AI AND THE FUTURE OF WORK** | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 8 DUE 11:59PM Monday Nov 13**READ:* Acemoglu - AI’s Future Doesn’t Have to Be Dystopian
* Responses: https://www.bostonreview.net/forum/ais-future-doesnt-have-to-be-dystopian/

WATCH: * Video presentations from Groups 16,17,18
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| Week 12: Nov 21, 23**UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME** | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 9 DUE 11:59PM Monday Nov 20**READ: * Van Parijs - A basic income for all
* Responses: https://www.bostonreview.net/forum/ubi-van-parijs/

WATCH: * Video presentations from Groups 19,20,21
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| Week 13: Nov 28, 30**REGULATING WORK** | **WEEKLY RESPONSE 10 DUE 11:59PM Monday Nov 27**READ:* Estlund - Regulating Work in an Age of Fissuring and Automation
* Kondo and Singer - Labor Without Employment

WATCH: * Video presentations from Groups 22, 23, 24
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| **FINAL PAPER** | **DUE 11:59PM Thursday, Dec 7** |

# Assessments

1. **Weekly Writing Responses (10%)**
	1. Due most weeks (see syllabus above for specific dates). You will submit a Weekly Response **about the readings for the upcoming week (NOT the readings previously discussed in class)**. The content of the response is up to you, but all responses should deal directly with the reading assigned for that week. You may want to choose a sentence or paragraph you found especially provocative, difficult, or remarkable, then explain why you found it provocative, difficult, or remarkable. Alternatively, you may want to argue that one of the authors is right or wrong in making some particular claim. Or you may wish to connect two passages in the reading that illuminate each other. You might relate a central concept from the reading to recent or current events. You may even just pick a passage and ask detailed questions about it. Your responses will *directly* guide what we address in class, and I will sometimes quote from them, so please take them seriously. In general, the responses should demonstrate that you have made a good effort to engage with the readings, and that you have raised a question worthy of consideration and discussion with your peers. In other words, they should go above and beyond the kind of thing that could be generated by ChatGPT. While there is no strict requirement for length, the responses should be at least a paragraph long but shorter than a full page. I will drop your lowest score.
2. **Group Video Presentation (25%)**
	1. At the beginning of the term, you will be assigned to a group and your group will be responsible for producing one video presentation. The presentations should summarize the assigned readings for the week to which your group is assigned. Like the Weekly Responses, you presentation should also raise question(s) for consideration and discussion. The idea is that we will have group presentations most weeks so that you can watch videos made by your classmates as a supplement to the readings. The format of the video presentation is up to your group. You might record group members having a discussion about the readings. You might stage a “debate” between group members where half of the group argues for one side of an issue from the reading, and the other half of the group defends the opposite side of the issue. Be creative! You could even make music, or a dance, or a skit, or anything else, so long as everyone in the group contributes in some in way, and helps your classmates to understand and think more deeply about the topic for the week. How long should the videos be? Think about the length of the videos that you usually find fun and engaging and calibrate from there. Probably they should be longer than 2 minutes, and probably they should be less than 10. Please note that your group need not coordinate with other groups presenting on the same day. It’s okay if there is a bit of overlap between the different presentations. Your video presentations must be uploaded by 11:59PM on the Monday of the week your team is assigned to.
3. **In-Person Midterm Exam (30%)**
	1. On **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17** you will take an in-person midterm essay exam, during the scheduled class time. You will be required to write the exam on your computer. The exam will consist a few short-answer/essay questions. The exam will be closed-note and closed-book, with no outside material permitted.
4. **Final Research Paper (25%) and In-Person Peer Review (10%)**
	1. The Final Research Paper has two components. The first is a peer-review of your classmate’s draft. The second is the final research paper itself.
	2. First, you will submit a draft of your research paper before the last week of class. Then, during the last week of class, we will have peer-review sessions where you will review and provide comments on one of your classmates papers, and vice versa. You will then be graded on the quality of your feedback to your classmate. Strategies for providing helpful feedback will be discussed in class.
	3. Second, your final research paper should incorporate the feedback from the peer-review process and demonstrate high-level engagement with themes from the course. The paper should not be a mere summary of other people’s writing, but should also reflect your unique contribution to debates about an ethical issue. In other words, it needs to go above and beyond what could be written by ChatGPT. The paper should be around five pages (~1,000 words). You final research paper is due **DECEMBER 7.**

# Late Policy

**Late work will not be accepted**. All of your assignments must be submitted through CourseLink. Assignments will not be accepted via e-mail. Assignment submissions will close at the deadline specified in the syllabus. When uploading assignments, you should leave yourself time to account for technical difficulties (e.g., don’t wait to submit your assignment two minutes before the deadline). “There was a problem with my internet” or “Courselink wasn’t working” are (almost never) acceptable excuses. That said, if you foresee a potential issue with turning in an assignment on time (such as an interview, wedding, funeral, etc.), let me know **in advance** and we can work out a mutually agreeable solution.

# AI Policy

A significant portion of this course is dedicated to understanding the impacts of AI and other emerging technologies. In order to do this, we need to understand the strengths and limitations of Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT. This, in turn, requires that we need to use these tools and collectively and critically evaluate them. When it comes to AI and education, it is difficult to formulate a one-size-fits-all policy. But in general, the use of AI tools is permitted in this course to ASSIST you with tasks such as: brainstorming, forming an outline, refining a research question or thesis statement, generating counterarguments/objections and checking spelling/grammar. In general, the use of AI tools is NOT permitted to be a SUBSTITUTE for you writing your Weekly Responses, Midterm, Peer Review, or Final Paper. Like all worthwhile things in life, you have to put in the work yourself.

CITATION: The general practice is that you cite anything that isn't your original thought or common knowledge, whether it is a peer-reviewed article, a news story, the lecture slides, or a conversation with a chatbot. As with the use of any other external sources used in your writing, you should cite the use of Generative AI tools like ChatGPT. There are no consensus standards on this yet, but I like the suggestion from the MLA that at the very least you should include the text of the prompt. For example, if you are writing about confirmation bias in your paper, and you used ChatGPT, then you would cite it like this:

“Tell me about confirmation bias” prompt. *ChatGPT*, 12 Apr. version.

Additional strategies for citing and engaging with LLMs will be discussed in class.

All written assignments will be submitted through the TurnItIn plagiarism and AI detector.

# University Standard Statements

## Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e- mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

## When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

## Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the last day of classes; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of classes in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses [https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08- drop.shtml](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-%20drop.shtml)

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes [https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg- regchg.shtml](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-%20regchg.shtml)

## Copies of Out-Of-Class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

## Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required, however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway. Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability. Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 14 days in advance, and no later than November 1 (fall), March 1 (winter) or July 1 (summer).Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. More information: [www.uoguelph.ca/sas](http://www.uoguelph.ca/sas)

## Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct [https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08- amisconduct.shtml](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-%20amisconduct.shtml)

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

## Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

## Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph’s procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

## Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings, changes in classroom protocols, and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via Courselink and/or class email. This includes on-campus scheduling during the semester, mid-terms and final examination schedules. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/) and circulated by email.

## Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

## COVID-19 Safety Protocols

For information on current safety protocols, follow these links:

* [https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-your- safe-return/](https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-your-%20safe-return/)
* <https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/spaces/#ClassroomSpaces>

Please note, that these guidelines may be updated as required in response to evolving University, Public Health or government directives.