

**BCOR 380-001**

**Business Ethics**

Spring 2026

## **SYLLABUS**

**Instructor:** Andrew Allison  
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**Office:** 2106 Reynolds Hall  
**Office Hours:** MW 12:30PM-1:30PM

**Class Time:** MWF 9:30AM-10:20AM

### **Course Overview**

Businesses often have mission statements that describe their purposes (e.g., LinkedIn connects professionals, PayPal makes payment solutions). Our question in this course is this: As a future employee, what should *your* purpose be? And how should that purpose change the way you work?

To help you answer these questions, we'll be learning philosophy—and business ethics in particular—and seeing how they apply to your lives today. In particular, you will regularly complete *Purpose Projects*, experiential learning assignments that ask you to take something from class, apply it to your life, and write about it. In these assignments, you may create value for yourself or others, reflect on your career ambitions, or confront a moral dilemma. The goal of these Purpose Projects—and the course in general—is to deepen your understanding of how you consume and work, your moral motivations, how for-profit and nonprofit activities compare as ways to do good in the world, and more, so that you can ultimately understand your purpose in the business world.

### **Learning Goals**

Successful students in this class will be able to

1. Apply in-class lessons about business ethics to your life.
2. Use critical reasoning to determine how to act ethically in complex business situations.
3. Work with others to solve ethical problems and present your solutions to peers.
4. Define key philosophical terms and legal concepts belonging to the field of business ethics.

## Evaluations

### 1. Participation (15%)

- a. You have four free non-participations (NPs). You get an NP by being absent, not completing an in-class assignment, or failing to work with your peers on in-class activities. For every NP afterward, 7 percentage points will be docked from your participation grade (e.g., 5 NPs = 93%, 6 NPs = 87%, and so on). If you've used your free NPs and face an extreme circumstance (e.g., serious illness, immediate family death, or debilitating injury), you may inform me, and I can decide whether to excuse your NP(s). If you haven't used your free NPs, no need to do this—you get free NPs for these situations!

### 2. Purpose Projects (PP1, PP2...) (30%)

- a. Reflections on how you applied class lessons to your life under the assigned prompt. More instructions to follow. There are seven in total, the lowest grade is dropped.

### 3. Quizzes (Q1, Q2, etc.) (25%)

- a. Multiple-choice quizzes over class content. There are eleven in total, the lowest grade is dropped. These will be administered electronically in class, but I may switch to another medium (e.g., scantrons or paper and pencil) if needed. If you miss any quizzes, you have until the following week to take them during office hours (e.g., if you miss Q1, you have until 1/30 to take the quiz in office hours. You may do this twice.

### 4. Case Presentation #1 (P1) (15%)

- a. Teams will co-write a consultation on a real-world ethical dilemma. They'll then give a short in-class presentation, followed by Q&A from either peers or the professor. More instructions to follow.

### 5. Case Presentation #2 (P2) (15%)

- a. In the last week of class and during the final presentation period, *different* teams will give another Case Presentation in the same format as the first.

## Schedule of Evaluations

Evaluation	Weight	Dates
Participation	15%	Each class day
Purpose Projects	30%	Jan 25; Feb 9; Feb 22; Mar 8; Mar 22; Apr 5; Apr 19

<b>Quizzes</b>	25%	Jan 23; Jan 30; Feb 6; Feb 13; Feb 20; Mar 6; Mar 13; Mar 27; Apr 10; Apr 17; Apr 24
<b>Case Presentation #1</b>	15%	Feb 23-Feb 27
<b>Case Presentation #2</b>	15%	Apr 27-May 1

#### Letter Grade Conversion Table

Percentage	Letter Grade
93-100	A
90-92.9	A-
87-89.9	B+
84-86.9	B
80-83.9	B-
77-79.9	C+
74-76.9	C
70-73.9	C-
67-69.9	D+
64-66.9	D
60-63.9	D-
0-59.9	F

#### General Class Policies

- 1. Readings:** There are no required texts in this course. All the readings we'll cover in class are available on eCampus, sorted by Unit. If there are any issues with the files online, please let me know. Also, while I encourage you to read the assigned texts outside of class, I do not expect you to do so for this course. Any material on your quizzes will be covered in class. However, readings will be beneficial for your purpose projects and case presentations.
- 2. Late Work:** Assignments must be submitted by the due dates listed on the schedule. The reason for not granting unexcused extensions is fairness. An extension is unfair to students who do not receive one and thus have less time to earn their grade. I will deduct 5 percentage points for every day the assignment is late. There is no maximum to this penalty.
- 3. Email:** Please allow for roughly two "business days" for my reply to an email (e.g., if you email me at 5:00PM on Wednesday, allow until 5:00PM on Friday for a reply, if you email me at 10:00AM on Friday, allow until 10:00AM on Tuesday, etc.). Of course, breaks don't count as business days (e.g., if you email me Friday at noon right before Spring Break, I should reply by noon on Tuesday when we return. If I don't, feel free to send me a follow-up email.

4. **In-Class Technology** There are no restrictions on the use of technology for note-taking in class. For class, please come prepared with a Wi-Fi-connected device. However, if this technology is distracting to you or others, you may be asked to use a different method of note taking or be asked to leave.
5. **AI Policy:** The use of artificial intelligence writing software for in-class quizzes is strictly prohibited in this course. However, artificial intelligence writing software can be used for written portions of purpose projects as well as written portions of case presentations. Students are still responsible for all written material that is submitted, even if it is produced by artificial intelligence.
6. **Office Hours:** Office hours are 12:30PM-1:30PM, Mondays and Wednesdays. If you cannot make this time because of a schedule conflict, please email me and we will find another way to meet.

### Schedule

Information contained in this syllabus and on our eCampus course site may be subject to change. When substantial changes must be made, I will communicate these via email and in class. Because this is an in-person course, our meetings may be disrupted. If we cannot meet in person, I will announce a detailed plan as quickly as possible.

#### *Unit 1: Why Business? A Purpose Framework for Business Ethics*

##### **Week 1**

- **1/12 (M):** Course Outline What Business Ethics Is Not (Brennan et al., 2021, Ch. 6)
- **1/14 (W):** The Purpose of Business (Otteson 2019, Ch. 1; Brennan et al, Ch. 2)
- **1/16 (F):** No class, Instructor travel

##### **Week 2**

- **1/19 (M):** No class — MLK Day
- **1/21 (W):** A Code of Ethics for Business (Otteson 2019, Ch. 2; Otteson 2019, Ch.3)
- **1/23 (F):** Flex Friday **Q1**

#### *Unit 2: What Should We Sell? The Purpose of Markets, Pt. 1*

##### **Week 3**

- **1/26 (M):** Unsafe Commodities (Hasnas 2010) **PP1 due 1/25 midnight**

- **1/28 (W):** Ineffective Commodities (Moriarty 2024)
- **1/30 (F):** Flex Friday **Q2**

#### Week 4

- **2/2 (M):** Is the Attention Economy Noxious? (Castro and Pham 2020, Satz 2010, Ch. 4)
- **2/4 (W):** Contested Commodities (Brennan and Jaworski 2015)
- **2/6 (F):** Flex Friday **Q3**

#### *Unit 3: How Should We Sell? The Purpose of Markets, Pt. 2*

#### Week 5

- **2/9 (M):** Price Gouging (Zwolinski 2008) **PP2 due 2/9 midnight**
- **2/11 (W):** Advertising: Dependence Effect (Galbraith 1958, Ch. XI)
- **2/13 (F):** Flex Friday **Q4**

#### Week 6

- **2/16 (M):** Advertising: Vulnerable Consumers (Palmer and Hedberg 2013)
- **2/18 (W):** Sales: Deception and Withholding Information in Sales (Carson 2010, Ch. 8; Carr 1968)
- **2/20 (F):** Flex Friday **Q5**

#### *Presentation Session #1*

#### Week 7

- **2/23 (M):** **P1-1-2** **PP3 due 2/22 midnight**
- **2/25 (W):** **P1-3-4**
- **2/27 (F):** **P1-5-6**

#### *Unit 4: How Should We Compete? Business and Politics*

#### Week 8

- **3/2 (M):** Corporate Free Speech (Stoll 2005)
- **3/4 (W):** Employee Free Speech (Brennan 2025)
- **3/6 (F):** Flex Friday **Q6**

#### **Week 9**

- **3/9 (M):** Lobbying (Hamilton & Hoch 1997) **PP4 due 3/8 midnight**
- **3/11 (W):** Market Failure Approach (Heath 2004)
- **3/13 (F):** Flex Friday **Q7**

#### **Week 10**

- **3/16-20 (MWF):** No class — Spring Recess

### *Unit 5: How Should We Work Together? The Purpose of the Employer-Employee Relationship*

#### **Week 11**

- **3/23 (M):** Sweatshops (Zwolinski 2007) **PP5 due 3/22 midnight**
- **3/25 (W):** Privacy (Anderson 2019, Ch.2)
- **3/27 (F):** Flex Friday **Q8**

#### **Week 12**

- **3/30 (M):** Safety (Moriarty 2022 ch. 7)
- **4/1 (W):** Meaningful Work (Schwartz 1987)
- **4/3 (F):** No class — Spring Holiday

### *Unit 6: What is Your Purpose as a Manager? Fiduciary Duty and CSR*

#### **Week 13**

- **4/6 (M):** Why the firm? (Coase 1937; Jensen & Meckling 1976) **PP6 due 4/5 midnight**
- **4/8 (W):** Stockholder Theory (Friedman 1970)
- **4/10 (F):** Flex Friday **Q9**

## Week 14

- **4/13 (M):** Stakeholder Theory (Freeman 1998, Donaldson & Preston 1995)
- **4/15 (W):** ) How to Discharge Obligations to Stakeholders: CSR (Carroll 1991, Carroll 2015)
- **4/17 (F):** Flex Friday **Q10**

*Unit 7: TBD: Student choice*

## Week 15

- **4/20 (M):** TBD **PP7 due 4/19 midnight**
- **4/22 (W):** TBD
- **4/24 (F):** Flex Friday **Q11**

*Presentation Session #2*

## Week 16

- **4/27 (M):** **P2-1-2**
- **4/29 (W):** **P2-3-4**
- **5/1 (F):** **P2-5-6**

## List of Readings

- Anderson, Elizabeth. 2019. "Private Government." In *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk about It)*, by Elizabeth Anderson, First paperback printing, 37–71. Princeton Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Brennan, Jason. 2025. "Bad Judges: Why Companies Should Not Police Employees' Extramural Speech." *Philosophy of Management* 24 (1): 37–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40926-024-00329-9>.
- Brennan, Jason, William English, John Hasnas, and Peter Jaworski. 2021a. "Addressing Moral Confusion: Ethics Isn't Law." In *Business Ethics for Better Behavior*, by Jason Brennan, William English, John Hasnas, and Peter Jaworski, 1st ed., 81–98. Oxford University Press New York. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190076559.003.0006>.
- . 2021b. "The Business of Business Is Business: How Businesses Serve Society." In *Business Ethics for Better Behavior*, by Jason Brennan, William English, John Hasnas, and Peter Jaworski, 1st ed., 13–29. Oxford University Press New York. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190076559.003.0002>.
- Brennan, Jason, and Peter Jaworski. 2015. "Markets without Symbolic Limits." *Ethics* 125 (4): 1053–77. <https://doi.org/10.1086/680907>.
- Carr, Albert Z. 1968. "Is Business Bluffing Ethical?" *Harvard Business Review* 46 (1): 143–46.
- Carroll, Archie B. 1991. "The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders." *Business Horizons* 34 (4): 39–48. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0007-6813\(91\)90005-G](https://doi.org/10.1016/0007-6813(91)90005-G).
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- Carson, Thomas L. 2010. "Deception and Withholding Information in Sales." In *Lying and Deception: Theory and Practice*, by Thomas L. Carson, 1st ed., 169–81. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199577415.001.0001>.
- Castro, Clinton, and Adam K Pham. n.d. "Is the Attention Economy Noxious."
- Coase, R. H. 1937. "The Nature of the Firm." *Economica* 4 (16): 386–405. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0335.1937.tb00002.x>.
- Donaldson, Thomas, and Lee E. Preston. 1995. "The Stakeholder Theory of the Corporation: Concepts, Evidence, and Implications." *Academy of Management Review* 20 (1): 65–91.
- Freeman, R. Edward. 1998. "A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation." In *The Corporation and Its Stakeholders*, edited by Max Clarkson, 125–38. University of Toronto Press. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442673496-009>.
- Friedman, Milton. 1970. "A Friedman Doctrine-- The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits." *New York Times*, September 13, 1970, sec. SM.
- Galbraith, John Kenneth. 1958. "The Dependence Effect." In *The Affluent Society*, by John Kenneth Galbraith, 124–30. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hamilton, J. Brooke, and David Hoch. 1997. "Ethical Standards for Business Lobbying: Some Practical Suggestions." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 7 (3): 117–29. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3857317>.
- Hasnas, John. 2010. "The Mirage of Product Safety." In *The Oxford Handbook of Business Ethics*, edited by George G. Brenkert, 1st ed., 677–98. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195307955.003.0024>.
- Heath, Joseph. 2004. "A Market Failures Approach to Business Ethics." In *The Invisible Hand and the Common Good*, edited by Bernard Hodgson, 69–89. Studies in Economic Ethics and Philosophy. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-10347-0\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-10347-0_5).
- Jensen, Michael C., and William H. Meckling. 1976. "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Ownership Structure." *Journal of Financial Economics* 3:305–60.



- Moriarty, Jeffrey. 2022. "Ethics at Work, Part I." In *Business Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction*, by Jeffrey Moriarty, 1st ed., 134–56. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351016872>.
- . 2025. "Against the Sale of Homeopathy (and Other Ineffective Medicines)." *Journal of Business Ethics* 198 (1): 143–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-024-05792-y>.
- Otteson, James R. 2019a. "A Code of Business Ethics." In *Honorable Business*, by James R. Otteson, 1st ed., 67–82. Oxford University PressNew York. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190914202.003.0004>.
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- Zwolinski, Matt. 2007. "Sweatshops, Choice, and Exploitation." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 17 (4): 689–727. <https://doi.org/10.5840/beq20071745>.
- . 2008. "The Ethics of Price Gouging." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 18 (3): 347–78. <https://doi.org/10.5840/beq200818327>.