



## **Course Syllabus**

### **MBA580: Business Ethics**

**Language of instruction:** English

**Prerequisites:** None

#### **Course description**

The goal of this course is to change the way you think about yourself and your relationship to others. We will attempt to find answers to one of the most vexing ethical questions: why do good people sometimes do bad things?

Finding an answer to this question requires a synthesis of cutting-edge research in psychology and decision making as much as an understanding of philosophy and ethics. Learning about the psychological processes underlying ethical decision making will give you insights into how to achieve personal and organizational success. Business scandals and ethical dilemmas happen in every society, and an individual choosing the right thing to do must often select between conflicting values. Business ethics is the study of how businesses and organizations select and pursue their values and an evaluation of the consequences of those decisions for society at large.

There are two basic parts to this course:

Part I of the course aims to help students improve their ability to analyze and make ethical decisions. Various ethical theories and aspects of human psychology that may predispose an individual to certain frames of thinking or unethical behavior are discussed. The goal is not to prescribe what is right or wrong, but rather to help you better apply your own values in a clear and consistent manner to ethical challenges.

Part II of the course looks at conflicts between personal values and organizational goals. Issues such as conflicts between personal values and organizational goals; the role of ethics as a sustainable business strategy; and the importance of managing relationships in an ethical manner with various stakeholders will be discussed. The process of developing, auditing and correcting an ethical culture within organizations will also be explored. We will finish this course by looking at what scientists have discovered about the components of a good life: wellbeing, happiness, meaning, and purpose.

#### **Course outcomes**

After finishing this course, you should feel confident doing the following:

1. Assessing organizational challenges for implementing ethical values (and how to overcome these obstacles)
2. Discuss the concept of values (individual, organizational, cultural), and how values relate to decision making, leadership, and organizational well being
3. Understanding psychological antecedents leading to malfeasance or the ignorance of misdeeds by oneself and others
4. Evaluating, understanding and incorporating your core values into your work and life
5. Deepening an understanding of what it means to live a good and successful life

Each of these areas entails ethical issues that are the hallmark of decision making for modern managers and entrepreneurs. The course will offer plenty of opportunities for students to critically assess diverse perspectives and experiences in light of our course material, analyze complex ethical problems and build on the knowledge acquired in previous functional courses.

### **Teaching Format**

Though I will present lectures on certain topics at various stages throughout the course, this is largely a discussion-based seminar. Please come to class having read and thought carefully about all the readings and cases. The quality of the seminar depends in large part on how prepared you are. The goal of the seminar is to provide you with exposure to a wide range of ethical considerations you might encounter in your professional and personal lives.

### **Academic Policies:**

Academic Policies are not course specific and therefore are created and maintained separately from this syllabus. One may examine AUCA Academic Policies in the AUCA Catalog.

## **Course Materials**

There are three primary texts we will use in this course:

Fredrich, J. & L. Ferrell (2011, 8th ed.). *Business Ethics: Ethical decision making and cases*.

Bazerman, M.H., & Tenbrunsel, A.E. (2011). *Blind spots: Why we fail to do what's right and what to do about it*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ.

Ariely, Dan. (2010). *Predictably irrational*. Harper Collins: New York, New York.

Supplementary articles and texts will be drawn from media, HBR, academic journals and other relevant sources.

## **Course Policies**

### **Changes to the syllabus**

Additional *assessments* will not be added to the syllabus; however the right is reserved to alter reading or/and topics to meet the needs of the students taking the course. Additional *readings* may be scheduled if they relate to current developments. Similarly, it may be that some classes may have to be rescheduled although all possible advance notice will of course be given.

### **Plagiarism**

Students are expected to think for themselves and to express themselves in their own words. In that limited sense their work should be original. It must not be plagiarised. Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's thoughts or words *without attribution*. Plagiarism is an offence against AUCA's rules and leads to failure.

### **Attendance**

All students enrolled for the course are required to attend all lessons and seminars.

### **Practicalities**

All usual elements of academic courtesy – turning up on time, handing in work on time, refraining from disturbing to those who conduct a lecture or deliver a presentation – apply. Students absent without good reason, constantly late in person or with their work, or exhibiting negative participation in class will fail the course.

### **Special needs**

Students with special needs are encouraged to bring this information to the attention (in confidence) to the instructor. I will make every effort to cater to individual learning needs.

## Grade Component Percent

Total 100%

## Overall Course Grading

The grading scale, which is standard in the Business Administration department, is as follows:

A 100 - 93	C 76 - 73
A- 92 - 90	C- 72 - 70
B+ 89 - 87	D+ 69 - 67
B 86 - 83	D 66 - 63
B- 82 - 80	D- 62 - 60
C+ 79 - 77	F 59 - 0

The grade of C implies a student's performance is "satisfactory." This represents a student that has understood the subject material, shows reasonable competence, and conforms to the minimum requirements.

The grade of B represents "good scholarship." This identifies a student that has performed at a higher than satisfactory level, exhibits proficient use of course related terminology, and deals with challenging topics.

The grade of A represents "outstanding scholarship." This is reserved for those students that have shown distinction in their performance, advance the general understanding of the material, and apply both terminology and principles in completing course related assignments.

In order to receive full credit, assigned work must be submitted before the scheduled submission deadline. Therefore, students keeping up with the course work and submitting assignments on time is essential. Late assignments will not be accepted for grading. If commitments make submitting assignments on schedule impossible, students must consult with the professor at least ten days in advance to make other arrangements. Failure to plan on your part does not constitute an emergency on our part.

## Student Requirements & Assessment of the Course

Participation in class discussion and engagement with course materials.....20%

Three ethical dilemma memos (10% each).....	30%
Two short concept quizzes (10% each).....	20%
Ethical audit final paper and presentation.....	30%
Max.....	100%

*Participation and engagement with course material (20%):* This is a discussion-based seminar. Please come to class having read and thought carefully about all the readings and case. Case discussion will use the Socratic method. Be expected and prepared to be called upon randomly.

I will pass around a sign in sheet during each session. You may be absent or seriously late only once without penalty. Students’ final grades will be lowered by three percentage points (e.g., a 90% final grade will drop to 87%) for each class absence (or serious tardiness) after the first. More than three absences or having another person sign your name for you will result in automatic failure of the course. Cell phone use is not allowed in class and will adversely affect your course grade.

*Ethical dilemma memos (30%, 10% each):* In preparation for class discussion each week, you are advised to prepare a short memo stating your position and justifications for an ethical dilemma posed the week before. The memos should demonstrate careful reflection and thoughtful engagement of the issues and course materials. You will be required to submit at least three of these memos for a grade. If you submit more than three, I will use the best three when computing your grade. Try to keep the length of the memos to approximately two pages (double-spaced).

*Short concept quizzes (20%):* We will have two short concept quizzes (multiple-choice and short answer) on readings and topics discussed in class.

*Ethical audit final paper & presentation (30%; 2,000 word limit):* You will conduct an ethical audit of an organization you know well (one you work for currently or have worked for in the past) and write an essay describing your conclusions as the final paper for this course. Your final paper cannot be longer than 2,000 words, and will be due one week after the final class session. Late papers WILL NOT be accepted. I will happily accept papers early, but cannot accept any late. In your paper, you are to describe basic details of the organization, identify likely points of ethical risk in the organization based on course content, describe how the organization currently handles these ethical risks, and describe design solutions that could minimize these risks. Your goal will be to design as “good” an organization as you can out of one you are familiar with. I will give more details about this final paper as the course proceeds.

**Tentative Schedule with due dates for assignments**

Note: Exact reading schedule will be updated as the course proceeds.

**Course Outline**

## **Week 1 (October 30) - Introduction to ethics and their impact on global business**

Key questions to consider: What are business ethics (and ethics in general)? How do ethical considerations differ around the world and among individuals? How can we know if an action is right or wrong?

Readings & Cases:

"In life & business, learning to be ethical." *New York Times*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/11/your-money/in-life-and-business-learning-to-be-ethical.html? r=0>

Sant, Geoffrey. "Driven to kill: Why drivers in China intentionally kill the pedestrians they hit." *Slate*

[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/foreigners/2015/09/why\\_drivers\\_in\\_china\\_intentionally\\_kill\\_the\\_pedestrians\\_they\\_hit\\_china\\_s.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2015/09/why_drivers_in_china_intentionally_kill_the_pedestrians_they_hit_china_s.html)

MEMO TOPIC: What are your core values in life and at work? Why are these your core values?

## **Week 2 (November 6) - The importance of business ethics**

Readings & Cases:

Smith, Greg. "Why I am leaving Goldman Sachs." *New York Times*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/opinion/why-i-am-leaving-goldman-sachs.html>

MEMO TOPIC: Think of an ethical dilemma your or someone you know has faced in business. How did/would you deal with it and why?

## **Week 3 (November 13) - Emerging business ethics issues**

## **Week 4 (November 20) - The institutionalization of business ethics**

CONCEPT QUIZ 1 WILL BE HELD IN CLASS

## **Week 5 (November 27) - Ethical decision making and leadership**

## **Week 6 (December 4) - Organizational factors: the role of ethical culture**

## **Week 7 (December 11) - Developing & implementing an ethics programme**

CONCEPT QUIZ 2 WILL BE HELD IN CLASS

## **Week 8 (December 18) - The future of business ethics in a global economy**

ALL STUDENTS WILL GIVE A BRIEF PRESENTATION (~10 MINUTES) ON THEIR ETHICAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

ETHICAL AUDIT FINAL DRAFT DUE A WEEK AFTER THE FINAL CLASS SESSION (DECEMBER 25).