



Philosophy 2075F (570)
BUSINESS ETHICS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: D. Proessel
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

The increasing globalization of business activity poses ethical problems arising from the conflicting ethical norms of different cultures. This course uses specific cases to consider a variety of such ethical challenges in pursuit of a critical understanding of ethical corporate decision-making in a global context.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50
Breadth: Category B
Subject Code: PHILOSOP

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

King's University College
Department of Philosophy

Philosophy 2075F

Business Ethics in a Global Context

Instructor: Dean Proessel

Office Hours: Office hours information can be found on OWL Brightspace

Email: dproesse@uwo.ca

Course Description

The context of business activity is increasingly global. This gives rise to ethical problems and challenges outside the scope of traditional business ethics. The central problem facing businesses in a global context is that of conflicting ethical norms: How does a company determine its social responsibilities in a world in which nations, customs and laws differ on matters of right and wrong? Should a company comply with the norms of the host country, even when such norms appear substandard and morally unacceptable from the perspective of the home country? Or should it uphold the norms of its home country? Are there, or should there be, international, cosmopolitan norms guiding the conduct of companies? In the first part of this course, we will examine these sorts of questions, with much attention being placed on human rights as a tool of moral analysis. Following this, our focus will shift to specific themes, including international sweatshops and labor, the environment, global commons and sustainable capitalism, global redistributive justice and poverty, and the practice of bribery. Our aim throughout this course will be to foster a better and more critical understanding of ethical corporate decision-making in a global context.

Text

Available through Brightspace.

Methodology

The course will be divided into 5 units. Each unit focusses on a specific problem or theme and contains readings from seminal philosophers and business ethicists, in-class lectures, and class discussion. It is important that you attend class, as class discussion will be an integral component of the course.

Methods of Evaluation

Students will be expected to complete the following course requirements:

Paper 1 (Oct. 6)	30% (5–6 pages)
Paper 2 (Nov. 20)	35% (5-6 pages)
Final Exam (TBA)	35%

All assignments must be submitted to OWL Brightspace. The penalty for late submissions is 3% a day.

Reading Schedule

Unit 1: The Global Corporation and Social Responsibility

Week 1 (Sept. 8)

Introduction to the course.

Week 2 (Sept. 15)

Andreas Wyller Falkenberg, "When in Rome...Moral Maturity and Ethics for International Economic Organizations"

Thomas Donaldson, "Rights in the Global Marketplace"

Week 3 (Sept. 22)

Denis Arnold, "Libertarian Theories of the Corporation and Global Capitalism"

Onora O'Neill, "Agents of Justice"

Week 4 (Sept 29)

Nien-he-Hsieh, "Does Business Have a Responsibility to Promote Just Institutions?"

Unit 2: International Sweatshops and Labor

Week 5 (Oct. 6)

Alexander Sager, "The Rana Plaza Collapse"

Pietra Rivoli, "Labor Standards in the Global Economy"

Ian Maitland, "The Great Non-Debate over International Sweatshops"

Thanksgiving (Oct. 13)

Week 6 (Oct. 20)

Denis Arnold, "Philosophical Foundations: Moral Reasoning, Human Rights and Global Labor Practices"

Denis Arnold, "Working Conditions: Safety and Sweatshops"

Week 7 (Oct 27)

Matt Zwolinski, "Sweatshops, Choice and Exploitation"

Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Labor Justice"

Reading week: November 3 – 9

Unit 3: The Environment and Sustainable Capitalism

Week 8 (Nov. 10)

Peter Singer, "One Atmosphere"

Norman Bowie, "Morality, Money and Motor Cars"

Week 9 (Nov. 17)

Denis Arnold, "Business Ethics and Global Climate Change"

Joseph DesJardins, "Sustainability: Business's New Environmental Obligations"

Paul Hawkin, Amory Lovins, and Hunter Lovins, "Natural Capitalism: The Next Industrial Revolution"

Unit 4: Global Justice and the Poor

Week 10 (Nov. 24)

Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality"

Thomas Pogge, "Eradicating Systematic Poverty: Brief for a Global Resources Dividend"

Tim Hayward, "Thomas Pogge's Global Resource Dividend: A Critique and Alternative"

Unit 5: Bribery

Week 11 (Dec. 1)

A.W. Cragg, "Business, Globalization and the Logic and Ethics of Corruption"

Dunfee and Donaldson, "Untangling the Corruption Knot: Global Bribery Viewed Through the Lens of Integrative Social Contract Theory"

Week 12: Review (Dec 8)

This reading schedule is subject to change.

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under Special Examinations).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University

College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-supportservices/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:
https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safecampus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammarchecking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.

