



Philosophy 2074G (570)
BUSINESS ETHICS
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: D. Proessel
Email: dproesse@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

Ethical analysis of issues arising in contemporary business life. Sample topics: ethical codes in business; fair and unfair competition, advertising and consumer needs and wants; responsibilities to investors, employees and society; conflicts of interest and obligation; business and the regulatory environment.

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 College
Department of Philosophy

Philosophy 2074G: Business Ethics

Instructor: Dr. Dean Proessel

E-Mail: dproesse@uwo.ca

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

Course Syllabus

This course is an examination of some of the many moral issues to which the practice of business gives rise. Topics include: What is the nature of moral reasoning? What is the relation between business and free market capitalism? Do corporations have social responsibilities and, if so, how far do these responsibilities extend? What are the social responsibilities of corporations operating in a global context? What constitutes a just distribution of the goods and services produced by society? When is advertising ethically questionable? How much information about a product is a corporation morally obligated to disclose to consumers, and how and to whom should this information be disclosed? What rights and obligations do employees and employers have in the workplace? Do employees have the right to occupational safety and are regulations designed to protect such a right a violation of employee and employer liberty?

Learning Outcomes

In examining the questions and themes mentioned above, students will develop skills of critical reasoning and a way of thinking that can be applied to all walks of life. Specifically, they will learn to identify arguments and to assess their plausibility. They will learn to see issues from a variety of perspectives and to critically respond to claims by others by formulating their own arguments. And they will learn about some of the many ethical issues to which the practice of business gives rise. The overall aim is to develop the ability to reflect on the practice of business from a critical, moral point of view.

Methodology

The course will be divided into 8 units. Each unit focusses on a specific question or theme and includes a) readings from philosophers, economists and social critics, and b) in-class lectures and class discussion.

Required Text

Business in Ethical Focus, Second Edition, Broadview Press, 2016. (Cost: 67:00)

Requirements

Paper 1 (Due February 12)	30% (5-6 pages)
Paper 2 (Due March 27)	35% (5-6 pages)
Final Exam (TBA)	35%

The penalty for late papers is 3% a day. No papers will be accepted after the last day of classes.

Reading Schedule

Unit 1: What is the relation between business and free market capitalism?

Anand Vaidya, "Ill Founded Criticisms of Business Ethics"

Adam Smith, "Excerpts from an Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations"

Amartya Sen, "Does Business Ethics Make Economic Sense?"

Unit 2: What is the nature of moral reasoning?

Heather Salazar, "Kantian Business Ethics"

David Meeler, "Utilitarianism"

Unit 3: Do corporations have social responsibilities?

Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profit"

Edward Freeman, "Managing for Stakeholders"

Joseph Heath, "Business Ethics without Stakeholders"

Unit 4: What obligations do corporations have when operating in a global context?

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

Thomas Donaldson, "Values in Tension: Ethics Away from Home"

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

Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Labor Justice"

Unit 5: What constitutes a just distribution of wealth?

John Locke, "Excerpts from *The Second Treatise of Government*"

Robert Nozick, "The Entitlement Theory"

John Rawls, "An Egalitarian Theory of Justice"

Adam Smith, "Excerpts from an Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations"

Karl Marx, "Estranged Labor"

Unit 6: How much information is a salesperson obligated to give to a potential customer?

Albert Carr, "Is Business Bluffing Ethical?"

Tibor Machan, "Advertising: The Whole Truth or Only Some of the Truth"

Robert Arrington, "Advertising and Behavior Control"

Jean Kilbourne, "Jesus is a Brand of Jeans"

Unit 7: What rights and obligations do employees and employers have in the workplace?

Patricia Werhane and Tara Radin, "Employment at Will and Due Process"

Richard Epstein, "In Defense of Contract at Will"

Unit 8: Do employees have the right to know of work-related safety hazards?

Tibor Machan, "Human Rights, Worker Rights, and the Right to Occupational Safety"

Earl Spurgin, "Occupational Safety and Paternalism: Machan Revisited"

Alexandra Sager. "The Rana Plaza Collapse"

This syllabus 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.

Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

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.