Syllabus and Assignments

Course description
This course asks the student to consider: 1. the role of business in society, on a local, national, and global basis, 2. economic and ethical aspects of acting as a business professional and the responsibilities that these imply, 3. several models or themes of "leadership" and their application to business. Moreover, this course asks the student to see the relationships among these three topics, and between them and a meaningful human life. This is a course in making connections.

Course materials will be drawn simultaneously from two sources: Each week students will analyze current cases from business practice, and points or issues in current law, many of which will be short readings provided by the instructor in class on the class day. These readings will form the "texts" of the course. Each week students will also read all or part of a classic work (usually from outside business) that explores the same theme from the standpoint of philosophy, psychology, religion, law, or the arts. These readings will form the "subtexts" of the course. (Students are encouraged to utilize their own subtexts - in addition to what is officially assigned.)

Students will be asked to opine on the ethical issues implicit in the "textual" readings. It is not sufficient to provide an opinion without some basis. The basis may be logical or - perhaps for our immediate purposes - based on a subtext that provides a basis for taking a certain position. In discussions and analyses, students and the professor will synthesize the subtexts with the texts to arrive at an integrative and analytic point of view.

This is an interdisciplinary capstone course, building on all the student's prior core coursework, both at the Stern School and in the other colleges. Its goal is to help the student develop a personal sense of what a business professional or leader really is and what it means to be one. Consequently, we shall be concerned with how such a person conducts him- or her-self in ambiguous, uncertain situations, and balances self-interests and those of the firm within the larger context of society, ethics, and law.

Class sessions will include discussion, in-class analyses, role-playing, and a guest speaker or two.

Attendance Policies
Attendance is mandatory. An "Attendance Sheet" will be circulated at each session. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that s/he signs it. Excessive absences may result in a penalty to one’s final grade.

Submissions and grading
Each student will keep a journal containing analyses and commentaries. After each
session, the student should complete his/her journal for that morning. The journal should not be a summary of the morning’s discussion. Instead, it should reflect the student’s own ideas about any one or two key items discussed that morning and show that s/he has given it substantial thought. You may choose any item or items to discuss. Just show that you have thought about it a great deal - and in some depth. Do not wait until near the submission deadline to write the journal entries. Again, the entries should be written-up as soon after the session as possible, i.e., when the class discussions are still fresh in one's mind. (The journal "portfolios" will be collected at the end of each of the first two modules - or in about six weeks. The professor will make announce the submission deadline near that time.)

Students are also encouraged to utilize any subtexts, which are not included in the syllabus in order to create their journals and in-class comments. These may include cultural subtexts, such as from the Koran or Gita, etc. There are no rules here, except for cogency and relevance. If you do choose to utilize a source outside any which are assigned in the course, please provide the appropriate reference.

The journals should be succinct and well-written. Journals must be typed and double-spaced. Each daily entry may not exceed one page; start new entries on a fresh page. To quote Shakespeare: “Brevity is the soul of wit.” Your writing should be lucid, succinct, complete, and organized.

As part of your journal portfolio submission requirements, I am asking that you include therewith a photograph. This should be a clear copy so that I may distinguish who you are and award you due credit for classroom participation. In the past, some students were able to scan in photographs or otherwise use some helpful technology. Alternatively, a Xerox of your school ID photo or similar may do – provided this is a clear copy. The photo should be part of your cover page, which will also indicate your name, date, submission number, and any other data, which you deem pertinent. I am letting you know now, so that you have enough “heads up” time prior to the deadline. Of course, if there are any questions, please let me know. I am a real "stickler" about these things, so please observe this request.

There are two modules for the "Professional Responsibility" portion of the course and a third, brief module for "Leadership." There will be a journal "portfolio" collected for both modules one and two, one each after the completion of the relevant module. For clarity sake, the professor will announce the due dates in class. Thus, each portfolio will be a collection of journal entries from each session. Each submission will constitute two grades, one for the written journal (20%) and one for classroom - and D-Board - participation (20%) for that module. Thus there will be four grades pertinent to the modules, each worth 20%, for a total of 80% of the course grade.

Students are requested to bring to class either a name tag or name tent, with both first and last names clearly marked on it. If I do not recognize your name, which may be attached to a face that positively contributed to the class, it may be your loss!

There will be no journals for the third module. Instead, you will be provided with a
question on this module as part of the final exam.

To encourage mastery and integration of course materials and readings, there will also be a take-home, essay question final exam. This will be a comprehensive exam and constitute the balance of the final grade – 20%. Instructions regarding the nature of this exam will be provided at a later date.

**Participation**

You will be assessed on participation, which shall largely be determined by what goes on in the classroom. Therefore, questions and comments are encouraged. Students should not fear articulating their ideas or opinions; assessments will be made based on the cogency of your arguments. Do not fear that you may be in disagreement with your classmates – or with the professor. Additional attention for contributing texts outside the syllabus and for discussion board entries will also be considered for participation.

Some of you may feel that you do not "get the opportunity to get a word in edgewise" during the class sessions. Others may feel that they did not complete their point in class or that the point may need to be amplified or clarified. Your chance to do this is on the "Discussion Board." Quality entries will be recognized grades-wise. All students are strongly urged to participate in the D-Board and to respond to their classmates' comments. If you wish your D-Board participation to be awarded, you should attach any entries about which you are "proud" to the backs of your journal portfolios. Remember that quality - not quantity - counts.

**Time and Place**

Session Days: Mondays or Wednesdays (Two sections)
Hours: 11AM-12:15PM
Room: Tisch UC-59

Office Hours:
Tisch 305
Mondays and Wednesdays, 10-11AM

Module 1; Session 1
Topic: Commerce and Wealth in the World: Economic Agents or People?

Overview: Using the case “Monday 9:01AM” we explore the limits of market mechanisms (as described by Adam Smith in Wealth of Nations) in managing a sensitive situation at the office. We will also, in our discussion refer to John Ruskin’s criticisms of economic models of men, as expressed in Unto This Last.

Text:
Monday 9:01AM, by Ronald Smithies

Subtext:
Module 1; Session #2
Topic: Commerce and Wealth in the World: Do Markets Always “Work”? 

Overview: Using the text “The Price of Lobster Thermidor” and the other handouts, we explore the problem of market imperfections or failures in global markets. This case is used to illustrate the problems of monopoly/monopsony, externalities, public goods, and information asymmetry. These conditions are discussed with respect to the ideas of Smith and Ruskin, as introduced earlier, as well as those of Gandhi and Chekhov.

Texts:

"The Price of Lobster Thermidor"
(See also "Lobster Fishing” and "Paralysis" in the "External Links" section)

"In Praise of Cheap Labor"

"Lives Held Cheap in Bangladesh Sweatshops"

"Ghandi Redux" (this may be found on "course assignments" page here on Blackboard)

Subtexts:

"The Economics of Market Failure" (outline)

Gandhi - Wealth

"Gooseberries" – Anton Chekhov

Module 1; Session 3
Topic: Commerce and Wealth in the World: Do Laborers have Rights?

Overview: Using the texts “Lives Held Cheap in Bangladesh Sweatshops” and “Labor Standards Clash with Global Reality” and more, we explore the issue of human rights for laborers around the world. As a subtext, we use some writings from Gandhi (from last week) and selected teachings of Jesus as relayed in the Gospel of Luke. We will also consider some methods of ethical reasoning, their relevance to human rights, and the conduct of society on a global scale.

Texts:
“Lives Held Cheap in Bangladesh Sweatshops” (again)
"For Cruise Workers, Life is no Love Boat"
Phineas Gage website
"Watching How the Brain Works..."

Subtexts:
"Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1: Aristotle - Happiness”
Lochner v New York: Lochner Opinion (Holmes, dissent)
"Meditations on Teleology and Deontology"

Handout:
Ethical Methods
U.N Report on Human development (Statistics)

**Module 1; Session 4**
Topics: Commerce and Wealth in the World: Wealth and Property, Life and Death

Overview: This session sums up the first module. Let's explore the possibility of personal meaning and fulfillment within the economic paradigm. The subtexts show how (some) people transcend property in the pursuit of personal meaning and fulfillment.

Text:
"When good ethics isn't good business"
"Toymaker Faces Dilemma as water-gun spurs violence"

Subtext:
"Crossing Brooklyn Bridge" - Whitman
"Ecclesiastes" - Excerpts
Alfred North Whitehead on Science and Knowledge

**Module 2; Session 5**
Topic: Profession and Personal Identity: Loyalty and Side Deals

Overview: When, if ever, is it OK to take cash gratuities? If it is not OK to take to take cash, is there anything, which may be accepted?

Text:
"Buynow Stores"

Subtext:
Excerpts from the "Analects" - Confucius

**Module 2; Session 6**
Topic: Profession and Personal Identity: Loyalty, Espionage, and Trade Secrets

Overview: What information do companies "own"? What may an employee do with such information? What may one do with information "acquired" from competitors?
Overview: Local hierarchies create local loyalties. These can be good or they can work against the interests of the individuals or the entire firm. In these texts and subtexts, we explore when one should, or should not be, a good soldier. And ask how those at the top should act in order to reduce information asymmetry within the firm.

Texts:
“Travel & Entertainment”
“Ace” Greenberg memos

Subtext:
Grant's Memoir (Excerpt) - Ulysses S. Grant

Overview: We all have our own personal standards of truth and disclosure. Should or do these standards change in a professional context? We compare two recent texts with two subtexts in exploring the answer.

Texts:
“Today’s Analyst Wears Two Hats”
“Alibi Agency”
"Wall Street and Nursery Schools"

Subtexts:
"Callicles Spits it Out" ("The Ring of Gyges") - Plato
Food for thought: "The Ring of Gyges"

Handout: "Restricted Reasons and Permissible Violations" - Applbaum

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Handout: "Restricted Reasons and Permissible Violations" - Applbaum
Overview: What does it mean to be a fiduciary? Here we look at two cases dealing with agency and insider trading, respectively, in the context of excerpts from some judicial opinions on the topic. Earlier ethical readings, by Confucius, Cicero, and Plato will also be referenced.

Texts:
"Quality Department Stores"
Insider Trading Case (from current press - if available)

Subtext:
"The Ethics of Insider Trading" - Werhane
"Is Insider Trading so Bad?" - Paulos
Instructor's Resources: "The Small Investor's Experience of Insider Trading" - Bigel

Module 2; Session 10

Overview: Corporations and professionals face new risks through the implementation of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines. Here we explain the basic working of these guidelines, and examine their implications for “Leadership” in corporate life.

Texts:
“Pollution Case Highlights Trend to Let Employees Take the Rap”
“When the Company Becomes a Cop”
"Success Story: Corporate Sentencing" by Kaplan and Petry

Subtext:
Path of the Law - by Oliver Wendell Holmes
www.ussc.gov

Module 3; Session 11
Topic: Power, Leadership and Humanity: Leadership and Personal Identity

Overview: Part of this course’s mission is to have our senior students encounter some “real voices” from the business world. Each section should plan for two such speakers.

Text:
Guest Speaker

Subtexts:
The Tao Te Ching
The Servant As Leader
Excerpts from "The Prince" - Machiavelli

Alfred North Whitehead on Science and Knowledge