Description

This course asks the student to reflect on several themes: (i) the role of business in society, on a local, national, and global basis, (ii) economic and ethical aspects of acting as a business professional and the responsibilities that these imply, (iii) several models or approaches to "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. In other words, this is a short 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 day of class. 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. Different instructors may choose different subtexts to give the course their own personal emphasis. In discussions and analyses, students and instructors will synthesize the subtexts with the texts to arrive at an integrative point of view.

This is an interdisciplinary capstone course, building on all 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 business professionalism and leadership, and of how such a person should behave in ambiguous, uncertain situations, balancing self-interests and those of the firm within the larger context of society, ethics, and law.

Class sessions will be include discussion, in-class analyses, role-playing, and one or two guest speakers.

Grading

Each student will keep a journal, containing analyses, commentaries, ideas and handouts from the instructors. (1/3 of final grade)

Each student will hand in a final integrative essay. (1/3 of final grade)

To foster critical thinking and analysis, students will routinely present ideas and arguments in class. This class participation will also be graded. (1/3 of final grade)
Topics, Texts & Subtexts

*Important Note: Except for the first class, you are expected to read subtexts prior to the class for which they are assigned. The professor will indicate when you should read additional texts and other materials that may be distributed in class or electronically.*

*This syllabus will be updated periodically to reflect any changes, along with deadlines and expectations for Parts II and III.*

I. Markets, Wealth, Rights, and Meaning

Topics

- Human Rights vs. Rights of Property & Right to Contract
- Ethics and Contracts
- Global Wealth Distribution
- Ethics of International Business

Texts

- Various selections from media sources to be distributed in class or electronically.

Class schedule and subtexts

September 7
  - Subtext(s): Whitman, Crossing Brooklyn Ferry

September 14
  - Subtext(s): Plato, Euthyphro; Gospel of Luke (selections)

September 21
  - Subtext(s): Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics (selection on friendship); Dalai Lama, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

September 28
  - Subtext(s): Smith, Wealth of Nations (selection); Gandhi, Notes on Economics and Ethics (selection)

October 5
  - Subtext(s): Margolis and Walsh, Misery Loves Companies (selections); Chekhov, Gooseberries; Bible, Book of Ecclesiastes
II. Profession and Personhood

Topics

Standards of Truth and Disclosure
Loyalty and Side Deals
Loyalty and Whistleblowing
Industrial Espionage & Trade Secrets
Fiduciary Agency to Investors
Professionalism and Human Life

Texts

Cases and stories from current business press concerning whistleblowing, bribery, employee v employer rights to trade secrets and intellectual property, employee privacy rights, fiduciary duties of agents, officers, and directors, relationships with customers, communities, and other members of profession.

Class schedule and possible subtexts (reading schedule TBA)

October 12, October 19, October 26, November 2, November 9

Gorgias (portions) – Plato
Duties (portions) – Cicero
Ethics (portions) – Aristotle
Memoirs (portions) – Ulysses S. Grant
The Analects (portions) – Confucius

III. Power, Leadership and Humanity

Topics

Entrepreneurial Leadership
Leadership in Words and Deed
Leadership & Social Responsibility

Texts

Cases taken from current press, and discussions with guest speakers

Class schedule and possible subtexts (reading and speaker schedule TBA)

November 16, (no class November 23), November 30, December 7, December 14

The Prince (portions) - Machiavelli
Tao-te Ching - Lao Tzu
Rhetoric (portions) – Aristotle
Henry V (portions) – William Shakespeare