C40.0012 Professional Responsibility and Leadership
Syllabus – Spring, 2006

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Section: C C40.0012.006
Tisch LC 10
Wednesday 4:55-6:10pm

“…An ethic is, as it were, a lightning conductor for human passions, to enable them within a deterministic world, to work in a way that produces a minimum of disaster.” Bertrand Russell Spinoza’s Ethics (1942)

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. 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.

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, and a final integrative essay. (70% 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. (30% of final grade)
Topics, Texts & Subtexts

I. Markets, Wealth, Rights, and Meaning (5-6 Sessions)

Topics
Human Rights v Rights of Property & Right to Contract
Ethics and Contracts
Global Wealth Distribution
Ethics of International Business

Texts
U.N Report on Human development (Statistics)
Current Press Readings

Possible Subtexts
Wealth of Nations (portions) - Adam Smith
Notes on Economics and Ethics (portions) – Gandhi
Unto This Last (portions) - John Ruskin
Book of Ecclesiastes Excerpt
Gospel of Luke
Crossing Brooklyn Ferry – Walt Whitman
Gooseberries – Anton Chekhov
On Money – John Wesley
Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech – Dalai Lama

II. Profession and Personhood (5-6 sessions)

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.

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

III. Power, Leadership and Humanity  (4-6 sessions)

Topics
Entrepreneurial Leadership
Leadership in Words and Deed
Leadership & Social Responsibility

Texts
Cases taken from current press, and discussions with guest speakers

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