Professional Responsibility and Leadership

Dr. Peter V. Rajsingh    Spring, 2005
Pr9@nyu.edu    Wednesday 4:55-6:10pm, Room LC10

Description
This course asks the student to consider (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 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 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. Different instructors may choose different subtexts (though there will usually be substantial overlap among instructors) 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 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, and consequently of how such a person conducts him- or her-self 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 perhaps a guest speaker or two.

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. Commerce and Wealth in Society (2-5 Sessions)

Topics
Human Rights v Rights of Property & Right to Contract
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
Ecclesiastes - Bible
Gospel of Luke (portions) – Jesus
Crossing Brooklyn Ferry – Walt Whitman
Gooseberries – Anton Chekhov
Judicial Opinions: *Lochner v New York* (dissent), etc.
Topics, Texts, & Subtexts Cont’d

II. Profession and Personhood  (5-8 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
Professionalism and the Law

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
Utopia (portions) – Thomas More
III. Power, Leadership and Humanity (4-6 sessions)

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

Subtexts
The Prince (portions) - Machiavelli
Tao-te Ching - Lao Tzu
Selected taped telephone conversations of LBJ in White House related to the passage of the 1964 Civil Right Act & Viet Nam (from Taking Charge, edited by Michael Beschloss)
Rhetoric (portions) – Aristotle
Henry V (portions) – William Shakespeare