



Responsibility in Business
LGST 612

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Class Meetings: Mondays, 3:00pm – 6:00pm, JMHH ____
Office Hours: Mondays, 1:00pm – 2:30pm, JMHH 647

Course Description:

In this course, we will wrestle with the hard problems of business responsibility. You each come to this course with strong senses of what is right, wrong, possible, or impossible in your approaches to business management. This course is designed to force you to speak to each other about what to do when your sense of right and wrong differs from your employers, employees, shareholders, political representatives, customers, and other stakeholders invested in the way you behave as business leaders.

I am a lawyer and a historian, and the course will reflect that disciplinary perspective. We'll be putting a lot of 20th century (and earlier) history in conversation with the events of the day, and will be discussing the questions of how legal responsibility is similar to (or departs from) moral responsibility.

Grading:

Your grade is divided into three parts: 25% class participation, 25% in-class quiz administered in the last session, and 50% for the final paper, as summarized below.

Class participation. Punctuality, attendance, and class participation are all mandatory. I will take attendance and start precisely on time each session—I will make a note of any latecomers or missing students each session. For class participation, I will alternate between soliciting volunteer comments on the reading material/class discussion and “cold calling” students, and will take notes after each session on classroom participation.

I can't stress class punctuality and attendance enough. We meet only 6 times, and the

pedagogical value of straight lecture is virtually zero—rattling on and on to you in person is much worse for you than simply assigning the same lecture in written form. By design, then, our sessions are structured as a combined lecture/discussion/interactive seminar. We will break into groups, debate issues, hold mock trials, argue with each other, etc. This approach will be fun, interesting, and successful only if there are students in place to participate in it.

Also, given that we will be discussing some of the most cherished values you hold—who you are, what motivates you, who you hope to become—the need for us to foster a frank but respectful atmosphere is also essential. To that end, I will assign you each a daily participation grade from 0 to 2. No-shows and disrespectful interlocutors will get a 0; those who come, demonstrate a command of the reading assignments, and contribute to the course will receive a 2. Warm bodies who make marginal contributions will get a 1.

In-class quiz. In the sixth and final class session, we will spend 45 minutes on a quiz meant to assess your knowledge of key themes in the readings. The quiz will consist of twenty multiple choice questions.

Final Paper. The largest component of your grade consists of a 2,000 word paper, which asks you to draw on your unique life experiences, professional ambitions, course readings and discussions, **plus your own original research** to offer your own definition of “business responsibility.” You will identify a challenge in your professional life that required your navigation of a hard problem of business responsibility, and relate it to the cases and stories we studied in class. Papers will be graded based on quality of writing, organization, original research, integration of your life story, course readings, and thoughtfulness/originality/appropriateness of your role model.

Note: I will be running each report through anti-plagiarism software. Plagiarized work will result in severe consequences for the student, consistent with the University of Pennsylvania’s rules.

Required Texts:

1. There will be a course pack available for purchase at the usual time before the beginning of the semester.
2. I will also supplement material through Canvas, usually with stories from the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, or *The Economist* that illustrate something we are discussing that day.

Session Overview:

Session 1 Ethics and Culture

Cases: Ford Pinto, Uber, Wells Fargo

Session 2: Securities Fraud and Insider Trading

Cases: National City (1929), Enron (2001), Galleon, Salman, Theranos

Session 3: Global Supply Chain

Cases: Abolitionists (1840s), Belgian Congo (1900s), Starbucks, Nike, Apple

Session 4: Politics and Government

Cases: JP Morgan (1895), Intuit, Citizens United, Goldman Sachs, Shkreli

Session 5: Competition

Cases: Rockefeller/Standard Oil, American Sugar, Microsoft/Netscape, Amazon

Session 6: Final Quiz and Discrimination

Cases: Russian anti-Semitism, Uber, Mozilla, Masterpiece Cakeshop, Affirmative Action