

LGST 100 – Ethics and Social Responsibility

Spring 2022

Section 001: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:15–11:45AM JMHH F70

Section 002: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:45–3:15PM JMHH F70

PROFESSOR

Nina Strohminger

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Office hours: By appointment

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Virtual offices for each TA are listed as zoom links below. Office hours start on January 20.

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Hours: Mondays 12–1:30PM

Josh Sewell

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Fridays 1:45–3:15PM

COURSE OVERVIEW

Often ethics classes treat unethical behavior as the result of having the wrong values. In this class, we will explore the idea that ethical lapses are better understood as a *design* problem: a failure to foster the psychological and organizational conditions that allow good behavior to flourish.

Another common misperception about ethical behavior is that it comes at the price of happiness and professional success. We will consider the evidence for the opposite conclusion: that doing well, doing good, and feeling good are all deeply intertwined.

This course provides scientifically-grounded ways of navigating the cognitive biases and blind spots that stand in the way of ethical behavior. We will explore strategies for how to act more in line with our own values, and more generally, live a happier, more fulfilled life.

MATERIALS

I have done my best to minimize the out-of-pocket expenses in this course. If you have trouble affording or accessing any of the source material please let me know and we will figure out a solution.

—**Course website:** The latest course syllabus, readings, announcements, and all relevant course information can be accessed on Canvas: <https://canvas.upenn.edu/>

—**Harvard Business Review:** You can access these articles for free via the links provided on the syllabus. Alternately, you can access *Harvard Business Review* articles for free from the [Business Source Complete database](#). You can use the menu on the right to browse through issues - expand the year, then choose the issue that contains the article you're looking for. Or, click on the Search Within This Publication link to enter keywords of interest to search — e.g. “*The Hidden Costs of Organizational Dishonesty*” to the HBR article by Cialdini, Petrova, & Goldstein.

—**Books:** We are reading two books in their entirety (*Blind Spots* by Max Bazerman & Ann Tenbrunsel, *Bad Blood* by John Carreyrou) and chapters from a few others (*The Righteous Mind* by Jon Haidt, *What Money Can't Buy* by Michael Sandel, *What Price the Moral High Ground?* by Robert Frank, *Bullshit Jobs* by David Graeber). The library has **some** these books in digital form which can be accessed online for free (see below). If you log on to Canvas and click on the “Penn Library Course Reserves” tab, you will find digital copies linked there.

- Books that can be read online, with unlimited access: *Blind Spots* and *What Price the Moral High Ground?*
- Books that can be read online, with limited access (<4 copies accessed at a time): *The Righteous Mind*, *Bullshit Jobs*
- Books not available online: *Bad Blood*, *What Money Can't Buy*

I recommend purchasing *The Righteous Mind*, *Bad Blood*, and *What Money Can't Buy*.

—**Case studies:** The course pack containing case studies can be accessed under the “Study.net Materials” tab in the course Canvas site.

—**Journal articles, movies, etc.:** All other course material is linked to in Canvas under the “Course Materials @ Penn Libraries” tab.

—**Lecture notes:** I will post .pdf versions of the lecture slides on Canvas as quickly as possible **after** the classroom session. I will not distribute them before class for two reasons. First, I will be revising material right up to the beginning of each class. I want to make sure you get the slides I actually present in class. Second, although having my slides during the lecture seems like a good way for you to learn the material, the experimental evidence suggests that it actually impairs learning because students tend to take fewer notes of their own during class. Taking notes in class is a terrific way to encode the course material (or any material, for that matter), and passively watching the lectures because you have the notes is a terrible way to encode the course material. I want to facilitate learning in this course, not impair learning. All of my lecture slides will be numbered in the lower-left corner. My advice is to keep notes during the lecture tagged with these slide numbers, and then match them up with the slides when you download them after class.

STUFF THAT GETS GRADED

Attendance (20% of grade)

Class sessions will be held on Zoom until January 24 or until the school extends this period of virtual learning. Either way, class sessions will be held synchronously at their regularly scheduled times. It will be important for you to attend these sessions, so that you can participate in-class discussions and group activities. Your attendance grade will reflect the proportion of class time in which you are present.

You can make up for missed classes by watching the video of the lecture you missed, and then submitting a ~250-word summary of the lecture/session. These summaries are due by 11:59 pm on the Sunday immediately following the lecture. You can submit those summaries here: <https://tinyurl.com/LGST100-lecture-makeup>. **If you added the class late, you have until January 25 (i.e. the Add deadline) to contact me about making up the lectures you missed.**

Surveys / Small assignments (5% of grade)

During the semester, I will periodically ask you to do online surveys, submit written answers to discussion questions, and collect data out of class. You will receive the maximum grade for an on-time, excellent assignment and a grade of 0 for a late or unsatisfactory assignment. These assignments will be described in more detail throughout in the semester. **If you added the class late, you have until January 25 to contact me about making up the assignments you missed.**

Reading responses (20%)

You will get the most out of this course if you carefully read the assigned readings. To incentivize you to do this, I will require you to answer a discussion question about each reading. Your answers to each question must be no longer than 100 words. Those questions will be posted on Canvas, where you can submit them.

Each reading response will be scored on a 2-point scale, where a 2 indicates that you clearly understood the reading and put full effort into your response, a 0 indicates that you clearly did not understand (or read) the assignment or that you

put very little effort into your response, and a 1 indicates partial understanding and/or effort. At the end of the semester, your lowest response grade will be dropped.

Midterm exams (30%)

There will be two midterm exams, each worth 15% of the final grade. They will be comprised of essay-type questions, and they will be cumulative. The exams will be timed and conducted online. They will be open book and open notes. They are checkpoints for your progress in the course. I will give more information about the content and format of the midterms in Week 6.

Final project (25%)

In the final project, you will take the concepts we learned about in class to provide an “ethical audit” of an organization. As part of this assignment, you will be required to describe basic details of the organization, identify likely points of ethical risk in the organization based on course content, describe how the organization currently handles these ethical risks, and describe design solutions that could minimize these risks. Your goal will be to design as “good” an organization as you can. I will distribute further details and grading rubrics for this assignment midway through the semester. Your write-up should be between 2300–2700 words, and will be due **May 2 by 5PM** (i.e. on the first day of final exam period).

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Classroom sessions need to be structured so that you and the other students in the course have as ideal a learning environment as possible. We will therefore establish the following ground rules for in-person classroom sessions:

1. **Masks.** Make sure your mask fits well, and fully covers your mouth and nose while talking. I recommend using an N95 or KF94 mask instead of a cloth mask.
2. **Display name tents.** There is no seating chart, but classroom discussion will be facilitated if your fellow students (and I!) know who we’re talking to. This is especially important with the advent of face masks.
3. **Laptops and tablets are for class-related purposes only.** I discourage the use of laptop computers and tablets during the class period. I have nothing against technology except that it’s so interesting that students sometimes have a hard time paying attention in class when this technology is present. Surfing the web is fun, and reading e-mail the moment it arrives may be tempting, but it does not enable the ideal learning environment for either you or your fellow students who may be distracted by whatever you might be doing. If you’d like to read about the scientific case for a no-laptop classroom, you may do so here: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/students-are-better-off-without-a-laptop-in-the-classroom/>
4. **No cell phones.** Turn off and tuck away all cell phones. Although you may feel that it is discreet to check your phone under the desk, remember that I am looking right at you and wondering why you have such an intense fascination with your thighs. It’s distracting for you and puzzling for me. Class will be unplugged in an effort to help you and others around you focus on the class material.
5. **Arrive on time.** We will start promptly. In return, I will do my absolute best to end the class precisely 90 minutes after we have started. I will be happy to stay late to answer any questions you might have for as long as I am able.

GRADING POLICY

Grading will be at my discretion and in accordance with Wharton policies. With the exception of clerical/coding errors, no change of grades will be issued after final grade sheets are delivered to the University Registrar. No individual extensions are given for class assignments, without documented medical or other emergency reason. Without such documentation, late assignments will be accepted, but will have one letter grade deducted per day past the due date.

There is no curve. I do not believe in the redistribution of grades. It’s socialist.

HONOR CODE VIOLATIONS

Cheating in an ethics course is an irony I don’t think any of us wants to deal with. Let’s not go down that path together.

COURSE OUTLINE

HBR = Harvard Business Review article, available by the link or at [Business Source Complete database](#)

Case studies available through <https://www.study.net/>; links to all other course materials can be found on Canvas.

Readings and schedule are subject to change.

Date	Topic	Readings and assignments due
Introduction		
Thursday 1/13	Ethics as a design problem	
Sunday 1/16		**Fill out Background Survey by 5PM**
Tuesday 1/18	Does ethics pay?	Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, <i>Blind Spots</i> , Chapters 1–2 Cialdini, Petrova, & Goldstein, <i>The Hidden Costs of Organizational Dishonesty</i>
Ethical Awareness		
Thursday 1/20	Myths about morality	Haidt, <i>The Righteous Mind</i> , Part I (Chapters 1–4) Cohn et al., <i>Civic honesty around the globe</i>
Tuesday 1/25	Ethical awareness	Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, <i>Blind Spots</i> , Chapter 3
Thursday 1/27	Ethical awareness, pt. 2	Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, <i>Blind Spots</i> , Chapter 4 Mazar et al., <i>The Dishonesty of Honest People: A Theory of Self-Concept Maintenance</i>
Incentives		
Tuesday 2/1	Incentives	A. Fiske, <i>The Four Elementary Forms of Sociality</i> (pp. 689–700; 706–708) Sandel, <i>What Money Can't Buy</i> , Introduction and Chapter 1
Thursday 2/3	Incentives (design solutions)	Sandel, <i>What Money Can't Buy</i> , Chapters 2–3 Graeber, <i>On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs</i> (available here: https://www.atlasofplaces.com/essays/on-the-phenomenon-of-bullshit-jobs/)
Moral Motives in Conflict		
Tuesday 2/8	Conflicts of interest	Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, <i>Blind Spots</i> , Chapter 5 Carlat, <i>Dr. Drug Rep</i> Bazerman et al., <i>Why Good Accountants Do Bad Audits</i> (HBR) (available here: https://hbsp.harvard.edu/tu/941f7be6)
Thursday 2/10	Moral courage & whistleblowing	Dungan, Waytz, & Young, <i>The psychology of whistleblowing</i>
Tuesday 2/15	Moral courage & whistleblowing (design solutions)	Eichenwald, <i>He told. He suffered. Now he's a hero</i> Higgins & Summers, <i>If only they had listened...</i> Waytz & Kilbarda, <i>Through the Eyes of a Whistleblower</i>
Ethical cultures		
Thursday 2/17	The design of an unethical culture: Enron	<i>Enron: Smartest Guys in the Room</i> (video) Extra credit: <i>FYRE: The Greatest Party That Never Happened</i> (Netflix)
Tuesday 2/22	Ethical cultures	Gino et al., <i>Contagion and differentiation in unethical behavior: The effect of one bad apple on the barrel</i> Goldstein et al., <i>A room with a viewpoint: Using social norms to motivate environmental conservation in hotels</i>
Thursday 2/24	Ethical cultures (design solutions)	Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, <i>Blind Spots</i> , Chapters 6–7
Tuesday 3/1	In-class midterm #1	
Leadership		
Thursday 3/3	Status & power	DeCelles et al., <i>Does power corrupt or enable?</i> Piff et al., <i>Higher social class predicts increased unethical behavior</i> Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 1–4
Tuesday	Reputation	Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, <i>Universal Dimensions of Social Cognition</i>

3/15		John et al., <i>Hiding personal information reveals the worst</i>
Thursday 3/17	Reputation, pt. 2	Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 5–8 Cohn, Fehr, Marechal, <i>Business culture and dishonesty in the banking industry</i>
Tuesday 3/22	Reputation in crisis	Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, <i>Blind Spots</i> , Chapter 8 Schweitzer et al., <i>The Organizational Apology</i> (HBR) (available here: https://hbsp.harvard.edu/tu/6j0d498d)
Corporate social responsibility		
Thursday 3/24	The responsibilities of business	Frank, <i>What Price the Moral High Ground?: How to Succeed without Selling Your Soul</i> , Chapter 4 Bower & Paine, <i>The Error at the Heart of Corporate Leadership</i> (HBR) (available here: https://hbsp.harvard.edu/tu/5aa3c09b)
Tuesday 3/29	The responsibilities of business, pt. 2	Bonnefon et al., <i>The social dilemma of autonomous vehicles</i> Merck & Co, Inc. (A): The Business Enterprise Trust (case study) Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 9–12
Thursday 3/31	Cross-cultural ethics	Haidt, <i>The Righteous Mind</i> , Chapters 5 & 6
Justice		
Tuesday 4/5	Social justice	Kunstman & Maner, <i>Sexual overperception: Power, mating motives, and biases in social judgment</i> Bertrand & Mullainathan, <i>Are Greg and Emily More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination</i> Monin & Miller, <i>Moral Credentials and the Expression of Prejudice</i>
Thursday 4/7	Economic justice	Norton & Ariely, <i>Building a better America—One wealth quintile at a time</i> Kolbert, <i>Feeling Low</i> Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 13–16
Doing good and feeling good		
Tuesday 4/12	Happiness, by design	Kahneman & Deaton, <i>High income improves evaluation of life but not emotional well-being</i> Dunn et al., <i>If money doesn't make you happy, then you probably aren't spending it right</i>
Thursday 4/14	Happiness and morality	Graeber, <i>Bullshit Jobs</i> , Chapter 3 Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 17–20
Tuesday 4/19	Values, habits, and character	Sachdeva, Iliev, & Medin, <i>Sinning Saints and Saintly Sinners: The Paradox of Moral Self-Regulation</i> Griffin et al., <i>Personal Infidelity and Professional Conduct in Four Settings</i>
Thursday 4/21	Wrap-up	Christensen, <i>How Will You Measure Your Life?</i> (HBR) (available here: https://hbsp.harvard.edu/tu/f796d869) Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 21–24
Tuesday 4/26	In-class midterm #2	
Tuesday 5/2		**Final project due by 5PM**