

LGST 1000 – Ethics and Social Responsibility

Spring 2023

Section 003: Mondays & Wednesdays 1:45–3:15PM Vance Hall B10

Section 004: Mondays & Wednesdays 3:30–5:00PM Vance Hall B10

PROFESSOR

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TEACHING ASSISTANTS

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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 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 these articles from the [Business Source Complete database](#). 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*” for 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, *Bullshit Jobs* by David Graeber, *When McKinsey Comes to Town* by Walt Bogdanich & Michael Forsythe). 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*, *Bullshit Jobs*
- Books that can be read online, with limited access (1 copy accessed at a time): *The Righteous Mind*
- Book chapters that will be accessible on Canvas for free: *When McKinsey Comes to Town*
- 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*.

—**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

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 (i.e. two days after the Add deadline) to make up the assignments you missed.**

Quizzes (40%)

Every class for which readings (or other media) are assigned, there will be a 45% chance of having to take a short quiz that tests your knowledge of what was assigned for that day. Whether or not you have a quiz will be determined by a random number generator. Thus, having a quiz one day is not predictive of whether you will have a quiz the next day (i.e. don't fall prey to the gambler's fallacy!). These quizzes are designed to ensure that you have carefully read and understood what you have been assigned. Most of the quizzes will require you to summarize one (or more) of the readings, but other quiz formats (e.g., multiple choice; short answer) are possible. Each quiz will be graded on a scale from 0 to 2. You will receive a score of zero if you are absent or late for a quiz. At the end of the semester, your lowest quiz score will be dropped.

Occasionally you may need to miss class for entirely legitimate reasons (e.g. sickness or an interview). You can erase that day's quiz from your record if, prior to the start of class, you submit a well-written summary and analysis of that day's readings. You can submit those responses here: <https://tinyurl.com/LGST1000-quiz-makeup>. This response should include ~250 words of summary and ~250 words of thoughtful analysis (500 words total). To make up for the missed quiz, you must show us that you have carefully read and understood the assigned readings and that you put time, thought, and effort into your summary. An obviously slipshod, last-minute effort will not be accepted, and neither will a summary submitted after the start of class. There is, of course, a 55% chance there will not be a quiz that day, in which case the summary will not impact your grade. You may avail yourself of this option as often as you need to each semester. **If you added the class late, you have until January 25 to make up the quizzes you missed.**

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 90-minute midterms will be held in class March 1 and April 26. 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 1 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. **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.
2. **No laptops or tablets.** Laptop computers and tablets are to be turned off and put away 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. I know that many students prefer to take notes on a laptop, but you can always transcribe your handwritten notes later. Doing so will provide additional engagement with the course material and will help you learn it even better. If you’d like to read about the scientific case for a no-laptop classroom policy, you may do so here: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/students-are-better-off-without-a-laptop-in-the-classroom/>
3. **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.
4. **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 only at my discretion and may incur a grade deduction.

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](#)

Links to all other course materials can be found on Canvas (except the books as noted above)

Readings and schedule are subject to change.

Date	Topic	Readings and assignments due
Introduction		
Wednesday 1/11	Ethics as a design problem	
Sunday 1/13		**Fill out Background Survey by 5PM**
Wednesday 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> (HBR) (available here: https://bbsp.harvard.edu/tu/941f7be6)
Ethical Awareness		
Monday 1/23	Myths about morality	Haidt, <i>The Righteous Mind</i> , Part I (Chapters 1–4)
Wednesday 1/25	Ethical awareness	Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, <i>Blind Spots</i> , Chapter 3
Monday 1/30	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		
Wednesday 2/1	Incentives	Fiske, <i>Relational Models Theory</i> Sandel, <i>What Money Can't Buy</i> , Introduction and Chapter 1
Monday 2/6	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		
Wednesday 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://bbsp.harvard.edu/tu/8ad9f0ee)
Monday 2/13	Moral courage & whistleblowing	Dungan, Waytz, & Young, <i>The Psychology of Whistleblowing</i>
Wednesday 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		
Monday 2/20	The design of an unethical culture: Enron	<i>Enron: Smartest Guys in the Room</i> (video) Extra credit assignment due
Wednesday 2/22	Ethical cultures	Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, <i>Blind Spots</i> , Chapters 6–7
Monday 2/24	Ethical cultures (design solutions)	Goldstein et al., <i>A Room with a Viewpoint: Using Social Norms to Motivate Environmental Conservation in Hotels</i> Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, <i>Blind Spots</i> , Chapter 8
Wednesday 3/1	In-class midterm #1	

Leadership		
Monday 3/13	Status & power	Piff et al., <i>Higher Social Class Predicts Increased Unethical Behavior</i> Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 1–4
Wednesday 3/15	Reputation	Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, <i>Universal Dimensions of Social Cognition</i>
Monday 3/20	Reputation, pt. 2	Bogdanich & Forsythe, <i>When McKinsey Comes to Town</i> , Chapters 1 & 6
Wednesday 3/22	Reputation in crisis	Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 5–8 Schweitzer et al., <i>The Organizational Apology</i> (HBR) (available here: https://hbsp.harvard.edu/tu/jfdecb26)
Corporate Social Responsibility		
Monday 3/27	The responsibilities of business	Bower & Paine, <i>The Error at the Heart of Corporate Leadership</i> (HBR) (available here: https://hbsp.harvard.edu/tu/b5278a61) Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 9–12
Wednesday 3/29	The responsibilities of business, pt. 2	Lewis-Kraus, <i>The Reluctant Prophet of Effective Altruism</i> Lewis-Kraus, <i>Sam Bankman-Fried, Effective Altruism, and the Question of Complicity</i>
Monday 4/3	Cross-cultural ethics	Haidt, <i>The Righteous Mind</i> , Chapters 5 & 6
Justice		
Wednesday 4/5	Social justice	Bertrand & Mullainathan, <i>Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination</i> Leslie, <i>Expectations of Brilliance Underlie Gender Distributions Across Academic Disciplines</i>
Monday 4/10	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		
Wednesday 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>
Monday 4/17	Happiness and morality	Graeber, <i>Bullshit Jobs</i> , Chapter 3 Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 17–20
Wednesday 4/19	Values, habits, and character	Sachdeva, Iliev, & Medin, <i>Sinning Saints and Sainly Sinners: The Paradox of Moral Self-Regulation</i> Griffin et al., <i>Personal Infidelity and Professional Conduct in Four Settings</i>
Monday 4/24	Wrap-up	Christensen, <i>How Will You Measure Your Life?</i> (HBR) (available here: https://hbsp.harvard.edu/tu/a2jc5326) Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i> , Chapters 21–24
Wednesday 4/26	In-class midterm #2	
Monday 5/1		**Final project due by 5PM**