Course description: This course asks the question: what is the morally right thing to do in business? Among topics we consider: sweatshops and outsourcing; corporate responsibility to shareholders and others; ethics across borders; workplace ethics; normative moral theory; skepticism about morality in business; honesty; effective altruism; ESG. Readings will be available on CANVAS in "course materials @ penn libraries," unless noted below.

The aims of this course are 1) to survey a range of important ethical and legal issues that arise for business leaders; 2) to analyze the ways in which these issues ought to figure in decision-making by responsible business leaders; 3) to aid in the critical understanding of your own values and the values of others; 4) to refine your ability to engage in reasonable discussion with people whose moral views differ from your own.

Requirements:

Quizzes (40%): There will be two midterm quizzes.

Final paper proposal, including outline: (10%): Due 11-10.

Final paper (50%): 6-8 page paper. You choose a topic from a list in consultation with your TA. (Fabulous work on final paper may lessen the weight of deficient quiz scores.) Due 12-1.
Plagiarism is a violation of the honor code and will be treated accordingly. Please provide appropriate citations in your final paper, whether for quotes or paraphrases. Also, if you use material generated by an AI program in writing your paper, cite it as reference material, providing in an appendix relevant screen shots of material that you get from the AI program. Departure from these policies on AI will be regarded as plagiarism.

Discussion/Participation may improve your grade and is expected from everybody.

Attendance is required, except for medical issues, family emergencies, or religious holidays. Arriving to class 10 minutes late or leaving 10 minutes early will be regarded as an absence. Unexcused absence beyond three classes will affect your grade. For exceptions, see me.

No use of electronics in class.

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SCHEDULE (subject to change)

1 8/29 Intro.
No reading.

2 8/31. Egoism
Feinberg, Psychological egoism

3 9/5 Basic ethics
Nagel, Right and wrong
Sandbu, Dicing with death
Hill, Kantian normative ethics (optional)

4 9/7 Exercise

5 9/12 TBA

6 9/14 Corporate social responsibility,
Friedman, The social responsibility of business is to increase profits
Stout, The problem of corporate purpose

7 9/19 Corporate social responsibility, ESG
Case, Merck & Co. (in-class video)
Freeman, Stakeholder theory of the modern corporation
Kirk, ESG must be split in two (TBD)

8 9/21 Social justice
Rawls, A theory of justice (pp. 52-58: the rest is optional)
Shelby, Justice, deviance and the dark ghetto

9 9/26 Work
Graber, What is a bullshit job?
Danaher, Will life be worth living in a world without work?

10 9/28 Exploitation
Zwolinski, Sweatshops, choice and exploitation

11 10/3 Utilitarianism
https://www.utilitarianism.net

12 10/5 The future
Macaskill, The case for longtermism
Setiya, The new moral mathematics

13 10/10 Environmental policy
McKibben, Money is the oxygen on which the fire of global warming burns

Fall Break 10-12 to 10-15

14 10/17 Review session

15 10/19 Midterm

16 10/24 TBA

17 10/26 Exercise

18 10/31 Debrief exercise

19 11/2 Insider trading
Texas Gulf Sulphur
Bodreaux, Learning to love insider trading

20 11/7 International obligations
Donaldson, Moral minimums for multinationals

21 11/9 Rights and the corporation
Anderson, Liberty, equality, and private government

22 11/14 An Asian perspective on rights
Ihara, Are individual rights necessary? A Confucian response

23 11/16 High tech manipulation
Bhargava and Velasquez, Ethics of the attention economy

24 11/21 TBA

11/23 Thanksgiving break

25 11/28 Review

26 11/30 Midterm #2

27 12/5 TBA

28 12/11 You
Macaskill, Replaceability, career choice, and making a difference
Srinivasan, Stop the robot apocalypse