

## **LGST 2200: International Business Ethics**

The Wharton School  
Spring Semester 2024  
Monday/Wednesday 3:30-5:00pm

Professor Brian Berkey

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**Office:** 664 Huntsman Hall

**Office Hours:** Tuesday 3:00-4:00 and by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course covers a range of ethical issues and questions of justice related to the practice of business in a global context.

The main aims of the course are: (1) to expose students to debates about a range of issues in international business ethics; (2) to increase students' familiarity with the methods of analysis of moral and political philosophy, and business ethics in particular; (3) to enhance students' critical reasoning skills, particularly as applied to ethical issues; (4) to improve students' ability to engage productively in discussions of difficult and controversial moral questions; (5) to improve students' ability to write effectively about complex issues, including ethical issues.

The course's assignments are structured with these goals in mind. There will be no exams, no pop quizzes, and I won't cold call for the purpose of checking up on whether students have read. Instead, I'll operate on the assumption that students have read and are prepared to discuss the material.

In the first four weeks of the course, we'll cover some central issues regarding corporate human rights obligations and individual and corporate obligations of aid. The material on these issues will also allow us to discuss some important methodological issues in ethics and business ethics.

After the first four weeks, the topics that we cover will be determined by student preferences. At some point in the first few weeks, I'll provide a large list of possible topics, and will survey the class. The topics that receive the most interest from students will occupy us for the remainder of the semester.

### **Course Requirements**

Class Participation: 20%

- Robust class discussions are essential to the success of the course. You'll be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading. This portion of your grade will be determined primarily by the quality rather than the quantity of your participation, although participating regularly is expected.

Group Presentation (leading class discussion): 20%

- After the first five weeks of class, each class discussion will be led by a group of 3 students, who will be required to prepare a handout on the day's reading(s) in the style of those that

will be provided by me during the first five weeks. Students will be in charge of introducing the central arguments made in the reading, suggesting key points for discussion, and guiding the discussion with classmates.

Paper #1 (1400-1600 words): 20% (**due March 1<sup>st</sup>**)

Paper #2 (2300-2700 words): 40% (**due May 6<sup>th</sup>**)

### **Readings**

- *Note:* In addition to the reading on this syllabus, I will sometimes distribute recent news articles that discuss real world cases in which ethical issues in international business are raised.

### **I. Introduction**

Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>: No Reading

### **II. Human Rights**

Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>: Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations' 'Protect, Respect, and Remedy' Framework  
Rashmi Venkatesan, "The UN Framework on Business and Human Rights: A Workers' Rights Critique"

Jan. 29<sup>th</sup>: Florian Wettstein, "Silence as Complicity: Elements of a Corporate Duty to Speak Out against the Violation of Human Rights"

Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>: John Douglas Bishop, "The Limits of Corporate Human Rights Obligations and the Rights of For-Profit Corporations"

### **III. Aid**

Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>: Peter Unger, *Living High and Letting Die*, Ch. 1 (sections 1-3), Ch. 2

Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>: Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Kindness to Strangers"  
Frances Kamm, "Rescue and Harm" (sections I-II)

Feb. 12<sup>th</sup>: Thomas Dunfee, "Do Firms with Unique Competencies for Rescuing Victims of Human Catastrophes have Special Obligations? Corporate Responsibility and the AIDS Catastrophe in Sub-Saharan Africa"

Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>: Manuel Velasquez, "International Business, Morality, and the Common Good"  
Nien-hê Hsieh, "Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Multinational Corporations: Coordinating Duties of Rescue and Justice"

#### **IV. Student-Chosen Topics**

Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>: TBD

Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>: TBD

Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>: TBD

Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>: TBD

March 11<sup>th</sup>: TBD

March 13<sup>th</sup>: TBD

March 18<sup>th</sup>: TBD

March 20<sup>th</sup>: TBD

March 25<sup>th</sup>: TBD

March 27<sup>th</sup>: TBD

April 1<sup>st</sup>: TBD

April 3<sup>rd</sup>: TBD

April 8<sup>th</sup>: TBD

April 10<sup>th</sup>: TBD

April 15<sup>th</sup>: TBD

April 17<sup>th</sup>: TBD

April 22<sup>nd</sup>: TBD

April 24<sup>th</sup>: TBD

April 29<sup>th</sup>: TBD

May 1<sup>st</sup>: TBD

## Course Policies and Information

1. *Class Discussion*: Philosophical inquiry is a cooperative enterprise. We can best arrive at well-justified views by working together to think through the arguments that might be made for different, competing views. The ethical issues that we'll discuss are difficult and complex, and there will be disagreements. That's a good thing, since it will help all of us think more carefully about the range of plausible views about the complex questions that we'll be grappling with. For discussion to be productive in this way, it's essential that we all participate in a spirit of mutual respect. Respecting others is consistent with vigorously challenging their views and the arguments that they offer for them. What matters is that criticisms are presented in a way that interprets the arguments being challenged charitably, and that properly appreciates the status of those being challenged as cooperators in a joint intellectual endeavor.

2. *No Bullshit*: You'll need to do the readings in order to participate productively in class discussions. Philosophy is often challenging to read, and you may need to read things more than once in order to understand them. And sometimes there will be things that you don't understand even after multiple readings. That's OK – part of the purpose of discussion is to clarify issues that may be unclear in the readings, and I'll always be happy to answer questions about aspects of the reading that you found difficult. But if you haven't done the reading, attempting to participate will be counterproductive, and I'll probably be able to tell.

3. *Laptops/Tablets/etc.*: Electronic devices are not permitted in class. Your attention should be focused on the discussion, and devices offer too many distractions. Remember that there are no exams in the course, so there's no need to take extensive notes. It's much more important to be engaged in the discussion than to take down everything that I say. That said, I recommend having a pen and paper so that you can write down anything that strikes you as particularly important.

4. *Don't Plagiarize!*: Punishment for plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will be severe. Any time you draw on someone else's work, you need to cite it, even if you're not quoting directly.

4b. *Don't Use Chat-GPT! (or similar programs)*: Philosophical reflection on the difficult topics that we'll cover requires independent thought and engagement. It's not the kind of work that programs like Chat-GPT can help you do well. In addition, while Chat-GPT can now write short Philosophy papers that might get a B or B-, it absolutely can't produce A-level work in Philosophy. So if you want an A, you have to do your own work!

5. *Late Papers and Extensions*: Late papers will be penalized 1/3 grade for each day late (so an A-paper turned in one day late would get a B+), with weekends counting for one day. Extensions will be granted for medical or other emergencies, and in some cases for other *serious* conflicts. If you need to request an extension, you should do so as early as possible.

6. *Office Hours*: I strongly encourage you to come to office hours. Discussing philosophical issues one-on-one or in a small group setting is an extremely valuable supplement to in-class discussion, and should help you to write better papers. You don't need to have specific questions prepared in order to come, and you're welcome to come in a group. If you can't make it during scheduled office hour times, I'll be happy to arrange to meet at another time.

7. *Dinners*: I also encourage you to sign up on Canvas for a dinner sponsored by the Wharton Meals Program. Dinners are free for students.

8. *Grading*: I don't grade on a curve. If everyone does A-quality work, then everyone gets an A. Course grades will be calculated using a 4-point scale. For example, an A for participation would count for  $4 \times .2 = .8$ ; an A- for discussion forum postings would count for  $3.7 \times .1 = .37$ ; a B+ for the first paper would count for  $3.3 \times .25 = .825$ ; and an A- for the second paper would count for  $3.7 \times .45 = 1.665$ . The total for those grades would be 3.66 (A-). Here are the ranges for each letter grade in the A-C range:

$3.85 - 4 =$	A	$3.15 - 3.5 =$	B+	$2.5 - 2.85 =$	B-	$1.85 - 2.15 =$	C
$3.5 - 3.85 =$	A-	$2.85 - 3.15 =$	B	$2.15 - 2.5 =$	C+	$1.5 - 1.85 =$	C-

*Note*: I may give a grade of A+ for *truly exceptional performance*. This requires more than getting A's for all components of the course grade. Primarily, it will require writing papers that are of significantly higher quality than even typical A papers in an undergraduate course. This is extremely difficult to do, so it's very unusual for an A+ to be awarded.