Instructor: Dr. Eric Reitan     E-mail: eric.reitan@okstate.edu
Office: 257 (Judith Sargent) Murray Hall   Office Hrs: MWF 9:30-10:30
Phone#: 744-7753             (and by appt.)

Required Texts: Velasquez, Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases 8th Ed. (Vel.); Allhoff, Sager, & Vaidya, Business in Ethical Focus: An Anthology 2nd Ed. (ASV); Occasional web-based readings and handouts; one issue of a women’s magazine (e.g. Cosmopolitan, Vogue).

Course Objectives: What value assumptions underlie the business system? Is the prevailing business system just? What responsibilities do businesses have to the community? How should we respond when we encounter immoral business practices? In this class we will philosophically investigate these kinds of questions in order to gain a better sense of how we should (morally) relate to business in our own lives.

Major Assignments/Requirements:

- **Attendance:** 30 points. The first 3 absences do not count against your grade. For each subsequent unexcused absence, 5 points are deducted from your attendance grade. Excused absences (documented illness, family emergency, etc.) do not incur this penalty unless total absences exceed 6, in which case a make-up assignment will be needed to preserve attendance points. You must see the instructor for make up assignments within one week of exceeding this attendance limit. Unexcused absences cannot be made up.

- **Readings Journal:** 10 entries, 2 points each. For each reading appearing in **bold** in the course outline, prepare a brief, double-spaced journal entry (max 1 p.) by the indicated due date. Each entry should do each of the following: (1) Offer a one paragraph **overview** of what the essay author seeks to do—**their** thesis and how they defend it. The aim is to digest what you have read and express your understanding in a single clearly-written paragraph, not provide a comprehensive summary. (2) Identify at least one **clarifying question** about a passage, idea, or argument whose meaning is not clear to you. (3) Formulate at least one **discussion question**—an open-ended question about the reading (or inspired by the reading) that you might like to discuss with the class. Entries should be submitted on D2L in the “Journal Entries” dropbox before the start of class on the day the entry is due. Although physical copies will not be collected in class, journal entries may be the springboard for class discussion. On any class day, you can expect to be asked to share aloud your response to (1), (2), or (3), perhaps as an attendance question directed to each student in the class. Hence, you should bring a physical copy to class every time a journal entry is due. For each entry, if it is clear that you have done the reading you will receive full credit.

- **Reflection Essays:** 3 essays, 50 points each. Due 1/30, 3/15, 4/24. Essays should be 3-4 pp each (12 pt font, double-spaced), for a total of 10 pp of written work. The first two essays are to answer and defend the specific question posed in the course outline. The third essay will develop one of your journal entries into a more substantive paper in which you defend a clearly stated thesis in a way that anticipates and responds to significant objections. For the FIRST essay, if you score below 40 points (a “B”) you may raise your grade by meeting with the instructor to discuss the paper, after which you will receive an essay grade of 40 points. If you have not met with the instructor or made arrangements to do so within a week of receiving back the graded essay, you will receive the originally assigned grade. NOTE: Reflection essays are **not** research papers but opportunities to do **your own** critical thinking. If you are indebted to others for ideas, arguments, word choices, etc., you **must** credit those sources properly. Failure to do so is plagiarism and may, depending on severity, result in failure of the course with a grade of “F!” Any standard citation method is acceptable so long as you use it consistently.

- **Exams:** There will be a midterm (March 8 in class) and a final (May 10 @ 10 AM), each worth 100 points. The final will emphasize material covered since the midterm.

- **Discussion Participation:** Worth up to 10 extra credit points. Participation is measured by willingness to share and defend views, answer questions raised by the instructor or other students, ask pertinent questions, etc. Points are awarded only to those with a clear track record of active contribution to class discussions.

- **Other Extra Credit Opportunities:** For appropriate campus events (speakers, etc.), I will announce that the event qualifies for extra credit and students may earn up to 5 extra credit points by attending the event and writing a 1-2 page critical reflection, which should be submitted within a week of the event.
Tentative Course Outline:

Jan. 14  TOPIC: What is Business Ethics?
        READINGS: Vel. 1.1-1.2.3

Jan. 16-18 TOPIC: Challenging Business Ethics: Milton Friedman’s Defense of Profit Maximization
        READINGS: Vel. 1.2.4-1.2.7  ASV#10: Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits” by 1/18

Jan 21  Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan. 23-25 TOPIC: Challenging Business Ethics: A Game with its Own Rules

Jan. 30  TOPIC: Why be Moral in Business? Profit vs. Principles
        READINGS: ASV #8: Glatz, “Aristotelian Virtue Ethics…”; Vel. 2.7; Handout: “Why be Moral?” (Attached to syllabus)

REFLECTION ESSAY 1 (due 1/30): Imagine that Fielding, from the “Why be Moral?” case, asks you for advice. Advise him, supporting your advice with reasons and anticipating objections.

Feb 1-4  TOPIC: Cultural Relativism in the Business Context
        READINGS: Vel. 1.3.2-1.3.3; 2.8.3; ASV #32: Bauer, “Google in China” by 2/4

Feb 6-8  TOPIC: Utilitarianism and the Duty of Business to Consider Consequences
        READINGS: Vel. 2.2; ASV #5: Meeler, “Utilitarianism”

Feb. 11-13 TOPIC: Kant, the Idea of Moral Rights, and the Notion of Justice
        READINGS: Vel. 2.3; ASV #6: Salazar, “Kantian Business Ethics” by 2/11

Feb. 15-18 TOPIC: The Ethics of Care
        READINGS: Vel. 1.4.1; 2.5; ASV #8, Manning, “Caring as an Ethical Perspective”

Feb. 20-22 TOPIC: Perfectly Competitive Free Market Capitalism: An Unattainable Ideal?
        READINGS: Vel. 3.1.1; Ch. 4; ASV #83: Gaus, “The Idea and Ideal of Capitalism”

Feb. 25 TOPIC: The Right to Property and Free Market Capitalism: John Locke
        READINGS: Vel. 3.2; ASV #80: Locke, “Excerpts…Second Treatise…” by 2/25

Feb 27  TOPIC: The Utilitarian Case for Free Market Capitalism: Adam Smith
        READINGS: Vel. 3.3; ASV #81: Smith, “Excerpt…Wealth of Nations”

Mar 1-4  TOPIC: Criticism of Free Market Capitalism
        READINGS: Monbiot, “Neoliberalism—The Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems” (https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot); Vel. Ch. 3.5; ASV #82: Marx, “Estranged Labor”

Mar 6  Overflow and Midterm Review

Mar. 8  MIDTERM EXAM

Mar 11-13 TOPIC: Is Associative Advertising Unethical?
        READINGS: Vel. 6.6; ASV #71: Arrington, “Advertising and Behavior Control”; ASV #72: Crisp, “Persuasive Advertising, Autonomy, and the Creation of Desire”

Mar 15  TOPIC: Social Effects of Advertising (Focus on Women’s Advertising)

REFLECTION ESSAY 2 (due 3/15): Review the advertisements in a magazine targeting women, paying attention to dominant messages that you think are being conveyed by (a) the kinds of products most commonly advertised and (b) the ways in which women are represented or depicted. Cut out one ad that you think is representative of such messages and attach it to your essay. Explain what messages are being conveyed by the ad, and the significance of these messages for how women view themselves.

Mar 18-22  SPRING BREAK

Mar 25-27 TOPIC: Consumer Protection
        READINGS: Vel. 6.1-6.5

Mar 29-Apr 1 TOPIC: Environmental Unsustainability and the Duties of Business
        READINGS: Vel. Ch. 5

Apr 3-5 TOPIC: Global Warming
Apr 8-10  TOPIC: Corporate Farming and Animal Welfare
READINGS: Singer, “Equality for Animals?” (http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/1979----.htm);
          Anomaly, “What’s Wrong With Factory Farming?” (on D2L) by 4/10; “The Problem with Factory Farms” (http://content.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1983981,00.html)

Apr. 12-15 TOPIC: Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
READINGS: Vel. 7.4.5-7.4.6; ASV #61: Superson, “A Feminist Definition of Sexual Harassment” by 4/15

Apr. 17-19 TOPIC: Racism and Discrimination

Apr 22-24 TOPIC: Affirmative Action
READINGS: Vel. 7.5; Appiah, “Group Rights’ and Affirmative Action” (on D2L)
REFLECTION ESSAY 3 (due 4/24): Select a reading for which you have written a journal entry. Write a critical reflection of that reading—which can be either sympathetic (you defend its argument against objections), unsympathetic (you develop key objections in a way that anticipates responses), or corrective (you modify its argument or position in the light of objections).

Apr. 26-29 TOPIC: Whistleblowing and the Limits of Employee Loyalty
READINGS: Vel. 8.2.4; ASV #46: Elegido, “Does It Make Sense to Be a Loyal Employee?”;
          ASV #45: DeGeorge, “Whistleblowing”

May 1  TOPIC: Overflow and Final Exam Review
May 3  (No Class—Instructor at a Conference)
May 10  FINAL EXAM @ 10 AM

Note: This is only a tentative schedule. It is the student’s responsibility to keep up with announced changes.

Grading Scale: A=360 and above; B=320-359; C=280-319; D=240-279; F=239 and below.

Grading Policies: Written assignments are assessed in terms of clarity, organization, fair/accurate explication of others’ views, critical depth (including capacity to anticipate, fairly express, and respond to objections), difficulty of the issues addressed, and originality of thought. Except in documented cases of illness, family emergency, etc., late reflection essays will be docked half a letter grade for each day late. Late journal entries are not accepted except in cases of illness or family emergency. Make-up tests will be given only for documented excused absences (illness, family emergency, conflicting university activity, etc.).

Electronics Policy: Electronic devices—including laptops and cell phones—may not be used during course time unless specific permission is granted in advance for specific purposes. For notetaking, students should rely on handwritten notes (which have been shown to be more effective in promoting learning than notes typed into a computer).

Academic Integrity Policy: Oklahoma State University is committed to the maintenance of the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct of its members. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, fabricating information, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and fraudulently altering academic records) will result in your being sanctioned. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript (F!), and being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal the charge. Contact the Office of Academic Affairs, 101 Whitehurst 405-744-5627, academicintegrity.okstate.edu.

Special Accommodations for Students: Students with a qualified disability requiring special accommodations should notify me at the start of the semester and request verification of eligibility for accommodations through the Office of Student Disability Services, 315 Student Union, 744-7116, http://sds.okstate.edu/

OSU Syllabus Attachment: https://academicaffairs.okstate.edu/sites/default/files/Spring%202019%20Syllabus%20Attachment.pdf
Case Study: Why Be Moral?

Sarah Fielding is the owner and operator of a construction company. Her chief competitor in town is Johnson Construction, owned by Michael Johnson, a man highly regarded for his integrity and honesty. Fielding and Johnson are currently in the running for a contract to build the new police station in town. This is a lucrative opportunity, and it’s likely that whoever wins the contract will be poised to become the dominant construction company in the community. Fielding suspects that the town is leaning towards hiring Johnson, and that Johnson’s reputation for honesty is a major factor at play in the decision. While Fielding’s own reputation is by no means bad, she doesn’t command the same level of public confidence that Johnson—often called a “pillar of the community”—seems to enjoy. Fielding feels some resentment about this, since she was born and raised in this community, while Johnson moved here from another state only seven years ago.

Fielding doesn’t know much about Johnson, but from what she does know it seems that Johnson’s reputation for honesty is well deserved: He is hard working, competent, and a bit of a perfectionist. Fielding has almost resigned herself to losing the police station contract when, by chance, she learns something about Johnson that could—if revealed—sway public favor Fielding’s way and probably give her the contract. One evening at a cocktail party Fielding meets a woman who grew up in the same community as Johnson and learns from her that Johnson was not always such an upstanding citizen. When he was a teenager Johnson was quite the delinquent, and spent time in and out of juvenile hall for a variety of offenses. “Then he found Jesus,” the woman tells Fielding, rolling her eyes.

Fielding tells what she learned to her assistant manager, Joe Smith, who takes it upon himself to investigate the matter further. A week later Smith shows up in the office with the results of his investigation. It seems that Michael Johnson was involved in drugs and petty theft through most of his teenage years, although most of the official record is under seal because he was a minor. His adult record is clean except for one conviction for drug possession when he was eighteen. Smith has acquired the relevant documentation for that conviction. “Say the word,” Smith tells Fielding, “and I’ll send what I have—anon—of course—to Jerry at the local paper. Jerry loves this kind of journalism: dig up dirt on prominent citizens, topple the mighty. I can see the headline now: ‘Will Our Police Station Be Built by a Convicted Criminal?’ Johnson will be history.”

As Fielding listens to Smith, her immediate intuition is that leaking this information in order to win the police station contract would be morally wrong. After all, Johnson’s crimes, whatever they were, were committed more than twenty years ago. Every indication is that Johnson has been thoroughly reformed in the intervening years, and that today he is exactly what he appears to be: a good and honest man who places a premium on hard work and personal integrity. Even so, given what Fielding knows about the city’s decision-makers, it seems likely that the information about Johnson’s past, if made public, would cause them enough worry that they would be inclined to “play it safe” and give the contract to Fielding. And if the information were revealed anonymously, there is no reason to think that the action would reflect badly on Fielding. In fact, it seems likely, from what Fielding knows about Jerry, that the journalist would take credit for digging up the dirt on Johnson. The only one who would know otherwise is Smith—who is intensely loyal to Fielding and who knows how to keep a secret. As Fielding thinks about her options, the following thought runs through her mind: “If I were to smear Johnson’s reputation for the sake of personal gain, I might well succeed in damaging Johnson’s reputation for moral integrity, but it would be my moral integrity that was really compromised.”

But why be moral? Business profits are increased not by really being moral, but by having a reputation for being moral. If Fielding were to do the immoral thing in this case, her own reputation for being moral might actually improve by comparison with her competitor. She would almost certainly increase her chance of winning the police station contract, as well as future business she might otherwise have lost to Johnson. This one immoral act might significantly improve her chances of future success. And what is waiting for her if she does the right thing and keeps this information under her hat? She’ll probably lose the police station contract. And with the added prestige of earning this contract, Johnson may become even more successful in the future. It seems that if Fielding acts morally in this case, her business success will be jeopardized. If she does the wrong thing, she can only profit. It seems, in short, that the personal benefits of doing the wrong thing outweigh those of acting ethically—or do they? Fielding remembers something her mother used to say: “Virtue is its own reward.” But what does that mean? Is there really any good reason to do the right thing even when it is likely to decrease her professional success?