



## **Business Ethics (BUSI-2070)**

Course Syllabus / Fall 2025-26, F 1-2.15 PM in room **D290**

*Materials will be posted at [agoraacademy.io](http://agoraacademy.io)*

**Instructor:** James Magnus-Johnston (PhD ABD, McGill University; MPhil, Cambridge University)  
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**Summary:** Business professionals must not only discover the vision of justice that underlies their business practices, but they also must submit this vision to critical scrutiny. The purpose of this course is to pursue both these aims. We will search for the moral ideals embedded in modern capitalist business practices and we will submit these moral ideals to critical evaluation. The goal is to discover the moral frameworks that can motivate and inform good business today.

**Objectives:** Demonstrate reasoned judgment when analyzing problems and making decisions, critically evaluate ethical dilemmas in decision-making scenarios and develop solutions, and integrate an understanding of economic, legal, political, and social structures.

**Deadline for withdrawal** without academic penalty: November 5, 2024

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## **Reading List**

### **REQUIRED TEXTS (ONLINE)**

Shapiro et al. [Business Ethics](#). Openstax, 2018.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS ON WEBSITE**

### **REQUIRED SOFTWARE**

In order to improve the quality of feedback and volume of engagement in this course, each student will be required to sign up to use kitik.io, an innovative software to facilitate peer and group activities in class.

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## Assignments and Grades

Class participation	10%
Learning statements (and attendance)	10%
Chapter presentations	20%
Midterm test	10%
Case studies (ongoing)	20%
Final paper	20%
Final test	10%

Letter	Percentage	GPA	Descriptor
A+	90-100	4.5	Exceptional
A	80-89	4	Excellent
B+	75-79	3.5	Very Good
B	70-74	3	Good
C+	65-69	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-64	2	Adequate
D	50-59	1	Marginal
F	0-49	0	Failure

### An “excellent” assignment (A) would display:

1. Original thinking and a superior grasp of the subject matter
2. A highly developed capacity for critical evaluation, synthesis, and creativity
3. Appropriate descriptions and quotations
4. Organizing and subordinating information well; writing and/or speaking clearly
5. The use of research sources using *any* recognized style format. For reference, see:

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. Eighth edition. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018

**Participation in discussions:** To foster more active discussions on class readings, your participation will be graded and the instructor will maintain a record of your contributions. You will be graded on the quality and quantity of interaction – that is, not only the volume of interaction, but its quality and consistency. Someone who interacts often but attempts to monopolize the conversation, for instance, may receive a lower grade than someone who contributes regularly and is respectful of the contributions of others. Regular contributions, however, are required. Your participation grades will be posted at the middle and the end of the semester.

**Learning statements:** Periodically during class, students will respond to a prompt by writing and sharing their understanding of a topic as a means of catalyzing conversation about the reading or topic. The response will also be a benchmark of your attendance. They will be submitted via a web-based form (see course website).

**Chapter presentations:** For each chapter, students will prepare a presentation that summarizes the main argument of the reading in order to catalyze in-class discussion. Presentations are intended to be substantive, yet conversational. Those performing the summary will be asked to consider and summarize: the main argument/point; the sub-sections supporting the main argument/point; the implications and conclusion. Please also provide a critical analysis, including a series of questions to engage discussion. We will be asking for you to consider whether there was a problem with the author’s argument. Is there something that wasn't considered? Questions should lead the class to defend/critique the reading and may be posed throughout the presentation or at the end of it. You will be graded by your peers, who recommend a grade to the instructor.

**Peer grading:** Presentations will be peer-reviewed using a web-based form; grades and feedback will be “crowdsourced” and recommended to the instructor (the instructor reserves the right to adjust grades up or down).

**Case studies:** Each week, we will conduct an in-class activity using a scenario posed by your text. The scenario will catalyze group conversation, written reflection, and peer review using kritik. Some of these activities may be assigned as homework.

**Midterm test:** You will be given a series of short-answer questions related to the core introductory concepts. The test will be conducted in class.

**Final paper (1500+ words):** For this project, students need to choose a topic that they have not presented on before. They need to write a summary of the main ideas in that topic and provide a case study, report, or example that relates to the topic. The report should integrate thorough research and include proper citations.

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## Policies

**Final grades:** Grades submitted by instructors become final only after they are vetted by the Dean’s Council. That process occurs early in January for fall semester grades and early in May for winter semester grades.

**Academic integrity:** *Academic Integrity*—All material referred to in any assignment MUST be appropriately referenced. Plagiarism is a serious matter. Students should be aware of CMU Academic Policies, particularly those regarding academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating), which apply to all University courses. These are detailed on CMU’s [website](#) and in the CMU Calendar. If you still have questions about appropriate referencing and what plagiarism is, a useful tutorial can be found [here](#). For more information on CMU policies regarding grades, academic misconduct, appeals, and other matters, please see CMU’s *Academic Calendar*.

**Accessibility:** CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loeppky, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs at [sloeppky@cmu.ca](mailto:sloeppky@cmu.ca) or 204.487.3300 x.340. In recognition of individuals with asthma, allergies and severe environmental/chemical sensitivities, CMU is striving to become a scent-free campus. Students, staff and guests are asked to refrain from wearing fragrances and scented personal care products at CMU. This includes perfumes, colognes, aftershave and scented hair products. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by those affected.

**Academic support services:** Student studying, tutoring, and the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) program are offered to CMU students free of charge in the Marpeck Mezzanine.

**Counselling:** University students face many challenges and at times may benefit from having a trained professional to talk to. There are qualified counsellors at CMU who volunteer their services free of charge to students on the CMU campus. Students wishing to book an appointment with a counsellor are asked to

contact the North Side Receptionist at 204.487.3300 or [info@cmu.ca](mailto:info@cmu.ca). Confidentiality is maintained at all times. The counselling office is located at C365 (north side) and is free for CMU students.

**Continuity Plan:** Faculty and students should plan to stay home when ill and follow public health requirements for respiratory illness. When students cannot come to class, please seek notes from the designated note-taker. If the instructors cannot be in class, an announcement will be made in Moodle, and we'll use the video platform to communicate via videoconference.

## Schedule

<b>Business Ethics</b>			
	Ch.	Main textbook - Tuesdays*	Date
			Supplementary texts - Thursdays
Sept	1		4 *Why Ethics Matter
	9	2 Ethics from Antiquity to Present	11 Failure of DEI-Industrial Complex (Zheng)
			Business Ethics and Philosophy (Bowie)
	16	3 Defining and Prioritizing Stakeholders	18 Social Categories and Ethics (Messick)
			Superior Stakeholder Theory (Agle et al)
	23	4 Society, Environment, Government	25 Altruism, Ingroups, Fairness (Hartman)
			BE and (as) Political Philosophy (Heath et al)
	30	(no class)	
Oct			2 <b>Test</b>
	7	5 The Impact of Culture and Time	9 Kantian Theory of Capitalism (Bowie)
			Can we Teach Character (Hartman)
	14	6 What Employers Owe Employees	16 Humanizing Business: Virtue Ethics (Moore)
			The Possibility of Virtue (Azola)
	21	7 What Employees Owe Employers	23 The Commons and The Moral Organization (Hartman)
			Organizational influences on behaviour (Trevino)
	28	8 Rights for All?	30 What, After All, is Leadership (Kurt)
			Moral Awareness and Ethical Predispositions (Kurt)
Nov	4	9 Professions Under the Microscope	6 Constructive and Destructive Deviance (Warren)
		Reading break	
	18	10 Changing Environments / Future Trends	20 Affect, Culture, Morality (Haidt et al)
			The Ethics of AI - Bostrom and Yudkowsky
	25	11 Ethics Still Matter	27 Employee Theft as Reaction to Underpay (Greenberg)
Dec	2	Test prep	4 <b>Test</b>