

## **BUS/PHIL 350 Business, Ethics and Politics Spring 2024**

**Course Instructor(s):** Dr Jason Xygkis

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**Class Times (days, hours):** DAY Monday/Wednesday HOURS 11.00am – 12:35pm

**(Office) Hours Available:** M 13:00-14:00 on the 3rd floor

### **Course Description**

In this course, we will explore key topics of Business Ethics and Politics by addressing them in terms of the profound philosophical questions that underlie them. Our main focus will be the form of Corporate Business in contemporary capitalism. Accordingly, we will commence with a concise examination of some of the primary ethical and political issues arising within this socio-economic landscape.

Following this introduction, we will explore the concepts of profit, capital, and labor as developed in Marx's seminal work, "The Capital." Additionally, we will assess key ethical philosophies like Utilitarianism and Kantianism in relation to the moral evaluation of labor conditions in a capitalist context. In the second part of the course, we will examine the dominant political philosophies of neo-liberalism and socialism to question the political dimensions of the human experience within capitalism. In the concluding segment, we will expand our political analysis of capitalism and reflect on the forms of life within this system. We will approach this question from two viewpoints: Foucault's concept of biopolitics and the Aristotelian-Marxist notion of the species being of man.

The primary goal of this course is to equip students with the essential philosophical tools to assess the limitations and opportunities inherent in today's socio-economic context.

### **Course Resources and Activities**

1. Philosophical texts
2. Class Discussions
3. Newspaper clippings and articles on Case Studies (North Dakota Pipeline, Mexico Golf Oil Spill, Sweat shops, etc.)
4. Historical material (particularly related to colonialism, slavery, etc.)
5. Film (e.g. The Corporation)
6. Student Presentations and Symposia

### **Learning Objectives**

It is the aim of this class to enable students to think through the philosophical character of some of the problems we all face and that have to do with the contemporary forms of business and to enable all of us to do philosophy together.

In this class, you will be able to:

1. Familiarize yourselves with fundamental ethical and political philosophical theories.
2. Appreciate how philosophical theories help us frame problems arising from the activity and the nature of contemporary forms of business.
3. Consider alternative solutions to these business problems, and finally,
4. Consider alternative forms of business which attempt to solve these problems.

## Course Requirements

- 1) **Class Participation:** In this class, philosophy is being taught as an activity and not a mere body of doctrine. As a consequence, we will all try to engage in dialogue with each other, starting from what we know and experience and moving on to a philosophical understanding of each of the concepts and problems we will be reading about in class.
- 2) **Student Symposia:** Students will have the chance to talk among themselves in two student symposia.
- 3) **Home assignments:** You will be asked to complete 6 home assignments which you will then present in class. The assignments will not be graded separately. You will be graded just for turning them all in on time. You will get an A+ if you've turned them all in on time and an F if there is more than one assignment unjustifiably missing.
- 4) **Home Assignments Presentations:** You will be asked to present a short version of each one of your home assignments in class. You will get an A+ for this part of the grade for completing all the presentations and an F for this part of the grade for missing more than one home assignment presentation.
- 5) **Papers:**  
You will be asked to write a midterm paper of 3 to 5 pages and a final paper of 5 to 7 pages. Guidelines for writing a paper will be discussed in class. Paper topics will be selected freely by you, after prior consultation with me, and discussed with your peers in class before you start writing.

**There will be no exams for this class.**

## Grading and Evaluation

Assessment Distribution:

Class participation: 10% of the grade. Student

Symposia: 10% of the grade.

Home assignments: 15% of the grade. (Completion Requirement)

Home assignments presentations: 10% of the grade. (Completion Requirement)

Midterm paper: 20% of the grade.

Final paper: 35% of the grade.

## Class Schedule

1 <sup>st</sup> part		
1	M 29 JA	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>Overview of the class</p> <p><u>In Class Assignment:</u> Separate your life in spheres and list the companies that enter into each of these spheres.</p>
2	W 31 JA	<p><b>Watch excerpts from <i>The Corporation</i></b></p> <p>Focus topic: Business ethics, politics and profit.</p> <p><u>1<sup>st</sup> home assignment:</u> Take one of the ethical/social/political problems that the documentary brings up, discuss how this problem is connected with the aim of business to make profit and how it could be addressed.</p>
3	F 2 FE	<p><b>The Social Responsibility of Business and Profit</b></p> <p><u>Read</u></p> <p>Friedman, Milton. "A Friedman Doctrine - The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits." <i>The New York Times</i>, September, 1970.</p> <p><u>Present</u> a short summary of your 1<sup>st</sup> home assignment in class.</p> <p>Focus topic: on the constitution of business as a profit-making machine.</p>
4	M 5 FE	<p><b>Capitalism – Commodity</b></p> <p>Albert Dragstedt, <i>Value: Studies By Karl Marx</i>, New Park Publications, London, 1976, pp. 7-40. (Marx_ "Commodities" from Marx's <i>The Capital</i>)</p> <p>Focus topic: On the difference between use value and exchange value</p>
5	W 7 FE	<p><b>Capitalism – Profit</b></p> <p>Marx, Karl. "Capital: The General Formula for Capital." <i>Economic Manuscripts: Capital Vol. I</i> - chapter four. <a href="https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch04.htm">https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch04.htm</a>.</p> <p>Focus topic: On the difference between making money and making profit</p> <p><u>2<sup>nd</sup> Home assignment:</u> Think of a case from standard business practice in which there is a clash between a human/animal/social/political value and the capitalist value of profit making. Be ready to present and discuss your case in class.</p>
6	M 12 FE	<p>Presentation of home assignments in class</p>
	<b>FE 13-16</b>	<b>FT   Peloponnese Field Trip</b>
7	M 19 FE	<p><b>A consequentialist view of the capitalist value of profit making</b></p> <p>Read passages from Mill's Utilitarianism</p> <p>Mill, John Stuart. "Utilitarianism ." <i>Early Modern Texts</i>. Accessed November 7, 2023. <a href="https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/mill1863.pdf">https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/mill1863.pdf</a></p> <p>Focus topic: What makes an action morally right according to the utilitarian view and whether the destruction of life by the corporate drive for profit is morally justified by the consequences.</p>
8	W 21 FE	<p><b>A deontological view of the capitalist value of profit making</b></p> <p>Read passages from Kant's <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i></p> <p>Kant, Immanuel. "Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals." <i>Early Modern Texts</i>. Accessed November 7, 2023. <a href="https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/kant1785.pdf">https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/kant1785.pdf</a>.</p> <p>Focus point: What makes an action morally right according to the Kantian view and whether the destruction of life can ever be morally justified.</p>
9	M 26 FE	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> student symposium: Can the capitalist value of profit making be morally justified?</b></p>

		3 <sup>rd</sup> Home assignment for next class: Think of an idea or two for a paper topic and email me about it by Tuesday the 27 <sup>th</sup> of February at midnight.
10	W 28 FE	<b>Reflection Day</b> Focus topic: What ground we've covered so far. Where we still need to be.

2 <sup>nd</sup> part		
11	M 04 MA	<b>The social responsibility of the individual</b>  Arendt, Hannah. "Eichmann in Jerusalem." <i>The New Yorker</i> , February 9, 1963. <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1963/02/16/eichmann-in-jerusalem-i">https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1963/02/16/eichmann-in-jerusalem-i</a> .  Focus topic: The moral and the political flaw in Eichman
12	W 06 MA	<b>Neoliberal Justice</b> Nozick, Robert. <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> . Malden: Blackwell, 2017.  Focus topic: Justice and Liberty 4 <sup>th</sup> Home assignment for next class: Write a one page draft of your midterm paper idea and be ready to present it in class.
13	M 11 MA	<b>Present your paper topic idea in class. Everyone should be ready to contribute to each of the topics discussed.</b>
14	W 13 MA	<b>Continuation of discussion of paper topic ideas in class</b>
	<b>MON 18 MA @midnight</b>	<b>Midterm papers Due</b>
15	W 20 MA	<b>Kantian Justice</b> Rawls, J. <i>A Theory of Justice</i> . Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1971.  Focus Topic: Justice and Equality
16	W 27 MA	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Student Symposium: Can the capitalist value of profit making be politically justified?</b>
17	M 1 APR	Focus Topic: Ground we've covered so far. Where we need to be
	<b>APR 02-06</b>	<b>FT   Northern Greece Field Trip</b>

3 <sup>rd</sup> part		
18	M 08 APR	<b>Foucault vs. Ideal Justice Theories</b> Watch clip in class.
19	W 10 APR	<b>Life in Capitalism</b> Foucault, M. <i>The Birth of Biopolitics</i> . Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
20	M 15 APR	<b>Human Life in Capitalism</b> <i>Alienated Labor</i> from Marx's <i>Grundrisse</i> Marx, Karl. "Grundrisse." Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed November 7, 2023. <a href="https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/">https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/</a> .  5 <sup>th</sup> Home assignment: Discuss one of the ways in which your own life is alienated or is the object of biopower and be ready to present it in class.
21	W 17 APR	<b>Presentation of home assignments</b> Home assignment: Think of a paper idea or two and email me by Tuesday the 23 <sup>rd</sup> of April at midnight.
22	M 22 APR	STUDENT CONFERENCE
23	W 24 APR	<b>Continuation of presentation of home assignment</b>

# CYA Syllabus

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		6 <sup>th</sup> Home assignment: write up an one page draft of your final paper topic idea and be ready to present it in our last class
	<b>APR 26 – MAY 6</b>	<b>SPRING RECESS</b>
24	<b>W 8 MAY</b>	<b>Presentation of drafts of final papers.</b>
	<b>MAY 17</b>	<b>final paper deadline</b>

## Rubrics

Below you will find the rubric I use for papers.

	<b>Fails Completely</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b>Thesis</b>	No identifiable thesis or thesis shows lack of effort or comprehension of assignment.	Difficult to identify, inconsistently maintained, or provides little around which to structure paper.	Unclear, buried, poorly articulated, lacking in insight and originality.	Promising, but may be unclear or lacking insight or originality.	Easily identifiable, interesting, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, clear.
<b>Structure and style</b>	No evident structure or organization. No transitions between major points.	Unclear, unfocused, disorganized, lacking in unity, transitions abrupt or confusing, context unclear.	Generally unclear, unfocused, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions. Does not provide sufficient information, explanation, and context for readers.	Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have some unclear transitions or lack of coherence. Does not fully appreciate reader's need for information, explanation, and context.	Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Essay is focused and unified. Words chosen effectively. Excellent transitions between points. Anticipates reader's need for information, explanation, and context.
<b>Use of sources (when applicable)</b>	No attempt made to incorporate information from primary and secondary sources.	Very little information from sources. Poor handling of sources.	Moderate amount of source information incorporated. Some key points supported by sources. Quotations may be poorly integrated into paragraphs. Some possible problems with source citations.	Draws upon sources to support most points. Some evidence may not support thesis or may appear where inappropriate. Quotations integrated well into paragraphs. Sources cited correctly.	Draws upon primary and secondary source information in useful and illuminating ways to support key points. Excellent integration of quoted material into paragraphs. Sources cited correctly.

<b>Logic and argumentation</b>	No effort made to construct a logical argument. Failure to support thesis.	Little attempt to offer support for key claims or to relate evidence to thesis. Reasons offered may be irrelevant. Little to no effort to address alternative views.	Arguments of poor quality. Weak, undeveloped reasons offered in support of key claims. Counter-arguments mentioned without rebuttal.	Argument is clear and usually flows logically and makes sense. Some counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed fully.	Arguments are identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Clear reasons are offered in support of key claims. Author anticipates and successfully grapples with counter-arguments.
<b>Mechanics</b>	Difficult to understand because of significant problems with sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Several problems with sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Some problems with sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling strong despite occasional lapses.	Correct sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

**Rubric I shall use to assess class participation (both in symposia and in regular class discussions)**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Sophisticated</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Not Yet Competent</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
<b>Conduct</b>	Student shows respect for members of the class, both in speech and manner, and for the method of shared inquiry and peer discussion. Does not dominate discussion. Student challenges ideas respectfully, encourages and supports others to do the same.	Student shows respect for members of the class and for the method of shared inquiry and peer discussion. Participates regularly in the discussion but occasionally has difficulty accepting challenges to his/her ideas or maintaining respectful attitude when challenging others' ideas.	Student shows little respect for the class or the process as evidenced by speech and manner. Sometimes resorts to ad hominem attacks when in disagreement with others.	Student shows a lack of respect for members of the group and the discussion process. Often dominates the discussion or disengages from the process. When contributing, can be argumentative or dismissive of others' ideas, or resorts to ad hominem attacks.

Ownership/Leadership	Takes responsibility for maintaining the flow and quality of the discussion whenever needed. Helps to redirect or refocus discussion when it becomes sidetracked or unproductive. Makes efforts to engage reluctant participants. Provides constructive feedback and support to others.	Will take on responsibility for maintaining flow and quality of discussion, and encouraging others to participate but either is not always effective or is effective but does not regularly take on the responsibility.	Rarely takes an active role in maintaining the flow or direction of the discussion. When put in a leadership role, often acts as a guard rather than a facilitator: constrains or biases the content and flow of the discussion.	Does not play an active role in maintaining the flow of discussion or undermines the efforts of others who are trying to facilitate discussion.
Reasoning	Arguments or positions are reasonable and supported with evidence from the readings. Often deepens the conversation by going beyond the text, recognizing implications and extensions of the text. Provides analysis of complex ideas that help deepen the inquiry and further the conversation.	Arguments or positions are reasonable and mostly supported by evidence from the readings. In general, the comments and ideas contribute to the group's understanding of the material and concepts.	Contributions to the discussion are more often based on opinion or unclear views than on reasoned arguments or positions based on the readings. Comments or questions suggest a difficulty in following complex lines of argument or student's arguments are convoluted and difficult to follow.	Comments are frequently so illogical or without substantiation that others are unable to critique or even follow them. Rather than critique the text the student may resort to ad hominem attacks on the author instead.
Listening	Always actively attends to what others say as evidenced by regularly building on, clarifying, or responding to their comments. Often reminds group of comments made by someone earlier that are pertinent.	Usually listens well and takes steps to check comprehension by asking clarifying and probing questions, and making connections to earlier comments. Responds to ideas and questions offered by other participants.	Does not regularly listen well as indicated by the repetition of comments or questions presented earlier, or frequent non sequiturs.	Behavior frequently reflects a failure to listen or attend to the discussion as indicated by repetition of comments and questions, non sequiturs, off-task activities.



Reading	<p>Student has carefully read and understood the readings as evidenced by oral contributions; familiarity with main ideas, supporting evidence and secondary points. Comes to class prepared with questions and critiques of the readings.</p>	<p>Student has read and understood the readings as evidenced by oral contributions. The work demonstrates a grasp of the main ideas and evidence but sometimes interpretations are questionable. Comes prepared with questions.</p>	<p>Student has read the material, but comments often indicate that he/she didn't read or think carefully about it, or misunderstood or forgot many points. Class conduct suggests inconsistent commitment to preparation.</p>	<p>Student either is unable to adequately understand and interpret the material or has frequently come to class unprepared, as indicated by serious errors or an inability to answer basic questions or contribute to discussion.</p>
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