

## BUS / PHIL 350 | Business, Ethics and Politics Spring 2025

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### 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 Approach

This course takes an interactive approach, combining independent study with collaborative activities to cultivate a nuanced understanding of business ethics and political philosophy. While primarily discussion-based, it also incorporates essential lecture sessions to ensure that students become well-acquainted with complex philosophical ideas and political theories in an accessible, yet rigorous way. Students will develop key analytical skills through close readings, written assignments, and group projects, each designed to deepen critical thinking and enhance communication abilities. To foster intellectual flexibility, students will engage in structured debates and dialogues, where they may be asked to defend views they don't personally hold or critique theories they favor. This method encourages an open-minded approach and respectful exchanges, providing a dynamic space for examining complex ethical and political frameworks from multiple perspectives.

### Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- **Reflect** on and critically assess ethical and political dimensions of contemporary capitalism.
- **Explain** and contextualize key philosophical theories related to business ethics and politics.
- **Analyze** and interpret philosophical texts, applying them to real-world case studies.
- **Compare and contrast** ethical frameworks within business contexts.
- **Evaluate** capitalist practices using ethical and political theory, identifying assumptions and implications.
- **Create** well-supported arguments and critiques, synthesizing insights from texts, discussions, and case studies.

### Course Requirements

1. **Class Participation:** In this class, philosophy is 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:** The student symposia are a key course requirement, where students will participate in structured debates within groups assigned with specific philosophical perspectives. This activity aims to develop critical thinking, articulate defense of complex ideas, and engage in collaborative, respectful debate.
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.

**CYA Regulations and Accommodations**

**Attendance Policy**

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences.

**Policy on Original Work**

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided.

**Use of Laptops**

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

**Spring 2025 Schedule**

Day #	Date/Day	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)
1	Jan 27	<b>Introduction</b> Overview of the class <u>In Class Assignment:</u> Separate your life in spheres and list the companies that enter into each of these spheres.
2	Jan 29	<b>Watch excerpts from <i>The Corporation</i></b> Focus topic: Business ethics, politics and profit. <i>1<sup>st</sup> home assignment for next class: 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. Due on Feb 3rd.</i>
3	Feb 03	<b>The Social Responsibility of Business and Profit</b> <u>Read</u> Friedman, <i>The social responsibility of Business is to increase its profit</i> Present a short summary of your 1 <sup>st</sup> home assignment in class. Focus topic: on the constitution of business as a profit-making machine.
4	Feb 5	<b>Capitalism – Commodity</b> <u>Read</u> Marx “Commodities” from Marx’s <i>The Capital</i> Focus topic: On the difference between use value and exchange value
5	Feb 10	<b>Capitalism – Profit</b> <u>Read</u> Marx “The General Formula for Capital” from Marx’s <i>The Capital</i> Focus topic: On the difference between making money and making profit <i>2<sup>nd</sup> home assignment for next class: 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.</i>
6	Feb 12	<b>Presentation of home assignments in class</b>
7	Feb 17	<b>A consequentialist view of the capitalist value of profit making</b> <u>Read</u> passages from Mill’s Utilitarianism 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.
<b>Feb 18-21</b>		<b>Peloponnese Trip</b>
8	Feb 24	<b>A deontological view of the capitalist value of profit making</b> <u>Read</u> passages from Kant’s <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> Focus point: What makes an action morally right according to Kant.
9	Feb 26	<b>1<sup>st</sup> student symposium: Can the capitalist value of profit making be morally justified?</b> <i>3<sup>rd</sup> home assignment: Think of an idea or two for a paper topic and email me about it by March 4th @Midnight.</i>

Day #	Date/Day	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)
10	Mar 05	<b>Reflection day</b> Focus topic: What ground we've covered so far. Where we still need to be.
11	Mar 10	<b>Midterm Week</b> <b>Present your paper topic idea in class.</b> <b>Everyone should be ready to contribute to each of the topics discussed.</b>
12	Mar 12	<b>Midterm Week</b> <b>Continuation of presentation of paper topics in class.</b> <b>Midterm papers due by Mar. 14 @midnight</b>
13	Mar 17	<b>The social responsibility of the individual</b> <u>Read</u> Hannah Arendt's <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> Focus topic: The moral and the political flaw in Eichman 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.
	<b>Mar 18-22</b>	<b>Northern Greece Trip</b>
14	Mar 24	<b>Neoliberal Justice</b> <u>Read</u> Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy State and Utopia</i> Focus topic: Justice and Liberty
15	Mar 26	<b>Kantian Justice</b> Rawls, <i>Theories of Justice</i> Focus Topic: Justice and Equality
16	Mar 31	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Student Symposium: Can the capitalist value of profit making be politically justified?</b>
17	Apr 02	<b>Reflection Day</b> Focus topic: What ground we've covered so far. Where we still need to be.
18	Apr 07	<b>Foucault vs. Ideal Justice Theories</b> Watch clip in class.
19	Apr 09	<b>Life in Capitalism</b> <u>Read</u> Foucault, The birth of biopolitics.
	<b>Apr 11-21</b>	<b>Spring Recess</b>
20	Apr 23	<b>Human Life in Capitalism</b> <u>Read</u> <i>Alienated Labor</i> from Marx's <i>Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844</i> 5 <sup>th</sup> Home assignment for next class: 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	Apr 28	<b>Presentation of home assignments</b> Home assignment: Think of a paper idea and email me by Tuesday the 29th of April at midnight.
22	Apr 30	<b>Continuation of presentation of home assignments</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> Home assignment: write up a one-page draft of your final paper topic idea and be ready to present it in our last class.
23	May 05	<b>Presentation of drafts of final papers</b>
24	May 07	<b>Continuation of presentation of drafts of final papers. Final discussion.</b>
<b>FEW</b>	<b>May 12-16</b>	<b>Final Exam Week</b> <b>Final Essays due by May 17 @ Midnight</b>

## Course Bibliography

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