

## BUS/PHIL 350 | Business, Ethics and Politics Fall 2026

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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) **Midterm Paper:** You will be asked to write a midterm paper of 3 to 5 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.
- 6) **Final Project:** For their final project students will critically engage with the course material by choosing one of three formats: a recorded debate of a case or a simulation of a negotiation between stakeholders, a conceptual podcast,

or the production of a political manifesto, constitution, or corporate charter accompanied by an academic poster. Projects may be completed individually or in groups. The recorded debate of a case or negotiation simulation requires crafting a scripted exchange between stakeholders (e.g., executives, regulators, employees) addressing a business-ethics dilemma, exploring key arguments and resolutions, and must be submitted as a 15-20 minute audio recording. The conceptual podcast involves producing a 15-20 minute audio discussion that examines a question at the nexus of business, ethics, and politics through course theories, real-world examples, and optional guest perspectives. The political manifesto, constitution, or corporate charter entails drafting an original document outlining principles or policies for a business or political entity, paired with an academic poster that provides the reasoning and theoretical justification for its design, to be presented during the final exam week. Topics and detailed guidelines will be discussed in class.

**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 project:** 35% of the grade.

## CYA Regulations and Accommodations

### Attendance Policy

Consistent attendance is essential for success in this course, as it is built around learning through discussions, in-class activities and debates. For any absence (excused or unexcused), you are responsible for contacting me promptly to arrange for make-up work. Please note that the authority to excuse an absence lies with the CYA administration, not the instructor, and requires proper documentation as specified in the student handbook.

**Per CYA policy, 2 unexcused absences** are allowed without penalty. **Beginning with your third unexcused absence, your course grade will be reduced.** Grade reduction escalates as follows:

- 3rd unexcused absence: Reduces the participation component of your grade (10% of the final grade) by 2 points.
- 4th unexcused absence: Reduces your class participation grade by an additional 2 points.
- 5th unexcused absence: Reduces your participation grade by an additional 3 points.
- 6th unexcused absence: Results in an F (0/10) for the participation component.
- **A 7th unexcused absence constitutes a failure to meet course requirements and will result in an F grade,** except in extraordinary circumstances approved by the Academic Director.

### ePolicy on Original Work and Use of Artificial Intelligence

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.

The use of generative AI tools is a new, undeniable reality. In this course, the guiding principle for their productive use is that you must always remain the primary author and critical thinker behind all submitted work. AI may be used ethically as a tool for development, but never as a substitute for your own intellectual effort.

**Permitted Uses:** You may use AI for brainstorming, clarifying concepts and passages, editing your original prose, debating ideas, formatting (not generating from scratch) citations and bibliography sections, or reviewing a completed draft. You may also request a generic outline to organize initial thoughts, provided you substantially modify and expand it into your own work. *In all cases, you are required to review, verify and take full responsibility for the final output.*

**Prohibited Uses:** It is academic dishonesty to use AI to generate drafts, paragraphs, or answers to assignments, to complete in-class or reflective work, or to submit AI-generated content without your significant intellectual transformation and synthesis.

To ensure the integrity of submitted work, I reserve the right to ask students to orally explain or defend the content and reasoning behind any submission. Such a request comprises a standard check, not an accusation. If a student is unable to do so, I may require the work to be revised and resubmitted. A persistent inability to adequately explain the work may be treated as a violation of academic integrity.

It is imperative to understand that AI can produce incorrect or biased information. Your critical judgment is essential. You are responsible for fact-checking all content and ensuring your final work reflects your own understanding. Specific applications and citation practices will be further discussed in class. When in doubt, ask for clarification!

### 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

**Fall 2026 Schedule**

Day #	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)
1	<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	<b>Watch excerpts from <i>The Corporation</i></b> Focus topic: Business ethics, politics and profit. <b>1<sup>st</sup> home assignment for next class</b> : 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.
3	<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> <u>Present</u> 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	<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
<b>FS Crete</b>	
5	<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 <b>2<sup>nd</sup> home assignment for next class</b> : 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.
6	<b>Presentation of home assignments in class</b>
7	<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.
8	<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	<b>1<sup>st</sup> student symposium: Can the capitalist value of profit making be morally justified?</b>
<b>FS Peloponnese</b>	
10	<b>Reflection day</b> Focus topic: What ground we’ve covered so far. Where we still need to be. <b>3<sup>rd</sup> home assignment</b> : Think of an idea for a paper topic and email me about it by Oct 14 @Midnight.
11	<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 <b>4<sup>th</sup> home assignment for next class</b> : Write a one page draft of your midterm paper idea and be ready to present it in class.
12	<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>
13	<b>Midterm Week</b> <b>Continuation of presentation of paper topics in class.</b> <b>Midterm papers due by Oct 23 @midnight</b>
<b>Fall Break</b>	
14	<b>Neoliberal Justice</b> <u>Read</u> Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy State and Utopia</i> Focus topic: Justice and Liberty <b>The social responsibility of the individual</b>
15	<b>Kantian Justice</b> Rawls, <i>Theories of Justice</i> Focus Topic: Justice and Equality
16	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Student Symposium: Can the capitalist value of profit making be politically justified?</b>
<b>FS Abroad</b>	
17	<b>Reflection Day</b> Focus topic: What ground we’ve covered so far. Where we still need to be.
18	<b>Foucault vs. Ideal Justice Theories</b>

Day #	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)
	Watch clip in class.
19	<b>Life in Capitalism</b> Read Foucault, <i>The birth of biopolitics</i> .
20	<b>Human Life in Capitalism</b> Read <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.
	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>
21	<b>Presentation of home assignments</b> Think of a final project idea and email me by Dec 6 at midnight.
22	<b>Continuation of presentation of home assignments</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> Home assignment: write up a one-page draft of your final project topic idea and be ready to present it in our last classes.
23	<b>Presentation of drafts of final projects</b>
24	<b>Continuation of Presentation of drafts of final projects and final discussion</b>
<b>FEW</b>	<b>Final Exam Week</b> <b>Final Projects due by Dec 17 @ Midnight</b>

### Course Bibliography

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