

MBA 527: Ethics and Business Decisions Syllabus

See also: [Short Papers/Case Analyses](#) | [Final Paper](#) | [Decision Table](#)

Course Description and Objectives:

This course will examine the nature of morality and how it relates to decisions made every day by managers in the course of business. Various moral perspectives will be examined and used as grounding for case discussions.

At the end of the course you will be expected to demonstrate:

- An understanding of how ethical theory in general and specific notions of morality affect decisions made in business settings;
- An ability to apply these understandings to specific business decisions; and
- An appreciation of the importance of ethics in business decisions.

Required Readings:

- Readings manual available at the bookstore
- Supplemental readings and cases as assigned

Papers:

Two types of papers will be required in this course. The first type is a short paper related to topics discussed on a given day. These papers are intended to focus thoughts on important elements of the discussion topics. They will be graded on how well you demonstrate your understanding of the specific knowledge areas contained in the objectives (as listed above) that relate to the assignment, your ability to apply those areas of knowledge to the specific situation in the assignment, and your appreciation of the importance of the ethical issues involved in the assignment.

The second type of paper is a personal ethical code. You will be required to submit three drafts of this code: one in the second week of class, one halfway through the quarter, and the third as part of the final paper. These codes will be no more than two pages in length and are statements of belief regarding situations that arise in life in general and business in particular. The first two drafts will not be graded as such, but feedback will be provided. The final draft will be graded on consistency between statements, correct modes of expression, and completeness of coverage.

The final paper will require an analysis of moral perspectives and how they relate to business, and an application of them to a case study. As with the short papers, the final paper will be graded on your demonstration of your knowledge of the course material as described by the objectives listed on the first page, your ability to apply that knowledge to the final case assignment, and your appreciation of the importance of the ethical issues involved in the assignment and raised during the course. Writing and grammar will also be evaluated as part of the grade. Drafts may be turned in early; the final grade will reflect in part the improvement made between the first and final drafts. Grades will be lowered for repeated or major grammatical mistakes. Late final papers will be lowered one letter grade. If a valid excuse is given, this grade will be restored. Plagiarism is the most serious offense in writing papers, and it will be cause for a failing grade in any paper.

Participation:

This will be a seminar course, so class participation will be an integral part. Many questions will be asked during class sessions, and students will be called upon to give initial answers to those questions. Discussion is expected to follow these initial answers, and all students are expected to participate. Credit for participation can be earned in the following ways:

1. Give reasoned responses to questions posed in class.
2. Ask questions that help clarify or extend the concepts under discussion.
3. Enter into discussions to make a valid point, give a different perspective, or respond to other students' questions and comments.

Successful performance in the participation component of the grade will reflect an appreciation of the importance of ethical issues in your future business career.

Attendance:

Given the size of this class, failure to attend will be both noticeable and harmful, both to the class and to your grade. I do understand, however, that attendance is not always possible. Please let me know if you cannot attend a class session.

Grading:

The following percentages will be used in figuring final grades.

Short papers (2.5% each)	30%
Personal ethical code	5%
One final paper	50%
Participation	15%

Grading Standards:

Final grades will be computed based upon a 4-point scale. The following cutoffs will be used:

A	3.85 +
A-	3.50-3.849
B+	3.15-3.49
B	2.85-3.149
B-	2.50-2.849
C+	2.15-2.49

For any other questions regarding class policies, etc., see the appropriate section of the general university catalog.

Course Schedule:**Week 1:** Introduction

an introduction of the course, instructor, and students

Week 2: A review of subjectivism, cultural relativism, and egoism

Week 3: Consequentialism

an examination of an important moral consideration—net benefits to society

assignment: pp. 230-248

Week 4: Kantian deontology

an examination of a second important moral consideration—absolute principles

assignment: pp. 175-185, 205-218

Week 5: Rights

an examination of an important modern consideration

assignment: 259-269

Week 6: Duties

an examination of a pluralistic idea of morality

assignment: 219-229

Week 7: Virtue and character

an examination of an inward-looking moral consideration

assignment: 249-258

Week 8: The social contract

an examination of an outward-looking moral consideration—social convention

assignment: 186-196

Week 9: Relationships

an examination of a consideration based on strengthening bonds with those close to us

assignment: "Nel Noddings' Relational Ethics"

Week 10: case discussions

in all case discussions students will be asked to consider the business issues and ethical issues

involved in the case, how the ethical issues may be different from social, legal, and regulatory issues, and (when appropriate) how diversity affects the ethical and business issues

assignment: case studies

Week 11: final discussion
final paper due at 5:30 p.m.