PHIL 2830 – Business Ethics

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Time: MTWRF 1:30-3:30
Office Hours: TBD

Course Description
The purpose of this course is to learn how to think philosophically and ethically about business. To that aim, this course will tackle a number of difficult philosophical questions about the interaction between business practice and ethics. We will begin by addressing the question of whether it is reasonable to require business managers to act ethically, and we will turn to specific ethical questions that arise in the context of thinking about businesses: what, if anything, is wrong with exploitative business practices? What, if anything, is wrong with deceptive advertising? When, if ever, is it legitimate to hire someone on the basis of reasons other than their qualifications? Is it possible to combine sound business practices with an environmentally conscious attitude? We will conclude the course by taking a step back and thinking about market economies in general: are there ethical problems that cannot be solved within the constraints of free markets?

Since this is a philosophy class, special emphasis will be placed on rigorous reconstruction and evaluation of arguments. Students will be required to familiarize themselves with valid argument patterns, and deploy them in both reconstructing and objecting to the arguments presented in class.

Course Materials
The required readings will be a series of papers provided through the course website.

Course Evaluation

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argument Reconstruction</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Due May 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Due May 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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The argument reconstruction is a short essay (500-1000 words), where you take a passage (which will be provided to you), reconstruct it into standard form, and briefly discuss which premise of the argument you think might be challenged. The goal of this assignment is to prepare you for the short paper. These papers will be evaluated on the clarity and accuracy of the reconstruction.

The short paper is a slightly longer paper (1000-2000 words), where you take a passage (which will be provided to you), reconstruct it into standard form, identify a premise to challenge, construct an argument in standard form whose conclusion is the denial of the identified
premise, defend each premise in your argument, and consider an objection to your own argument.

All assignments are to be submitted in class. Information on the exam will be provided closer to the date.

**Late Assignments and Rescheduled Tests**
You will be deducted a half a letter grade per day that your reconstruction or final paper are late. If you have a reason why your assignment must be late, please talk to me about it at least 24 hours prior to the due date of the assignment (the earlier the better). If your assignment is late because of illness, I expect a doctor’s note. If your assignment is late for reasons related to accessibility issues, then you may get in touch either with me or with Accessibility Services, whichever you are more comfortable with.

Tests will not be rescheduled, unless there is a valid reason to do so. If there is such a reason, please get in touch with me (or Accessibility Services, if necessary) as soon as possible, so that we can assist you as quickly as possible.

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is a serious offence. At minimum, it may result in a 0% grade in the assignment in question. Students should familiarize themselves with the regulations regarding cheating plagiarism in the U of M Calendar.

**Accessibility Services**
Over and above the issues related to assignments or tests, you may require the assistance of Accessibility Services for other course-related reasons. Please get in touch with them as soon as possible so that we can ensure that you make the best out of your learning experience.

**Wheaton’s Law**
Don’t be a jerk. A large part of a philosophy class involves arguing with people who disagree with you. The fact that this is an important part of our activity does not warrant anyone in engaging in any of the following behaviours: speaking out of turn, cutting people off in conversation, dominating discussion, talking down to or making fun of someone, or any other jerky behaviour. Other ways of being disrespectful and distracting to the class include: showing up late, having your cellphone go off loudly in class, being on Facebook on your computer, and having side conversations with the person sitting next to you.

**Email and Office Hours**
My office hours are by appointment, but I am often at my office for a few hours before class, so feel welcome to just drop in. I check my email once or twice a day, so if I haven’t responded within 24 hours, please feel free to email me again: this will not bother me, you have a right to having your emails responded to. Email is not the place for deep philosophical discussion, however, so I will not answer substantive philosophical questions via email.