Syllabus: GB 441 - BUSINESS IN SOCIETY: ETHICS, RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

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OFFICE HOURS: By appointment and drop-in.
CLASS: Section 001: Monday 9:00 - 11:45 AM, Room MEBB 1209

COURSE DESCRIPTION
As current events regularly indicate, the potential for ethical failures within the business environment is substantial. Perhaps the greatest initial problem with acting in a manner perceived to be ethical by society is the failure to recognize when ethical dilemmas confront us. An ethical dilemma can be defined as any situation where there is a conflict of interests or values. Such conflicts will only be perceived when we are aware of the competing interests or values themselves. One overriding purpose of this course (in large part embodied in the stakeholder approach) is to expose students to and help students learn how to identify and understand the existence of a variety of other interests and values that may be involved in any personal or business decision-making situation. This then facilitates the recognition of situations that involve ethical dimensions as well as the learning of tools to avoid or resolve those conflicts in ways that recognize socially accepted standards of conduct, whether those standards are ensconced in law or not. Addressing ethical issues is best done in an intentional, specific and cohesive way.

The secondary purpose of this course is to understand that corporate management, and specifically senior management, must understand and be the drivers behind creating and sustaining an ethical culture in the workplace, also in an intentional, specific and cohesive way if business is to respond adequately to changing expectations in the social environment.

A third purpose of this course is to understand that business as a whole and individual businesses or industries in particular must be continually aware of precursors to change and changes in the social context within which business operates and is expected to establish and preserve its legitimacy and ultimately survival, often referred to as “sustainability.” Businesses are also beginning to recognize the competitive advantages of taking a multiple, or “triple bottom-line” stakeholder perspective that addresses social and environmental factors as well as financial objectives. Business must understand its changing social responsibilities and be in a position to both influence the definition and recognition of those responsibilities as well as respond to them. Implicit in this is the need to recognize the interests of various internal and external stakeholders and address their legitimate needs and expectations in an ethical fashion. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is about understanding society’s changing expectations and managing their implications for the business environment in order to operate a sustainable enterprise, one which continues to enjoy a competitive advantage in obtaining and retaining the cooperation of its critical stakeholders. In relation to ethical behavior, strategic CSR is about how a firm decides to and does “the right thing” for itself, its stakeholders and society when faced with conflicting interests, values and business choices.

Within this context, this course explores the relationships between business, government, and society in domestic and, critically, global contexts. Business is the dominant social institution in the U.S. and throughout much of the world, and government regulates business for the general welfare.
through law, regulation, and administrative agencies. Society with its various influences and interest groups has a significant voice in how and to what extent business is regulated.

One of the objectives of this course will be to examine the limits of the law's ability to regulate a society, as well as conversely the limits of self-regulation and reliance upon expectations of ethical conduct. We will discuss the concepts of business, government and stakeholders and examine how their overlapping but often competing interests create difficult economic, legal and ethical challenges for managers and policy-makers in a variety of areas. Extensive use will be made of current events and topics.

Finally, through the Group Project, students will explore current businesses and business practices as they relate to the various core areas of CSR.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE**

A. To develop an elementary ability to identify and analyze ethical issues and to solve ethical problems in a business context.

B. To raise awareness of each student’s ethical attitudes and develop communication skills to participate in discussions of ethical issues.

C. To understand the concept of stakeholders and their relationship to business and impact on managerial decision-making.

D. To explore business conduct, social responsibility, the role of government and the interaction of business and society in affecting government action.

E. To examine current issues (domestic and international) in business, government and society by applying a stakeholder analysis.

F. To apply course content to actual business operations and explore how CSR can be applied in a strategic manner to enhance business opportunities and long term sustainability.

Students in this class will learn or practice the following COBE Core Curriculum concepts, methods, and skills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Understand and apply analytical and disciplinary concepts and methods related to business and economics:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑ 1.2. Business Policy and Strategy</td>
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<td>☑ 1.6. International environment of business</td>
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<td>☑ 1.7. Legal environment of business</td>
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<td>☑ 1.8. Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>☑ 2.1. Communicate effectively: Write messages and documents that are clear, concise, and compelling</td>
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<td>☑ 2.2. Communicate effectively: Give oral presentations that use effective content, organization, and delivery</td>
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<td>☑ 3. Solve problems, including unstructured problems, related to business and economics</td>
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<td>☑ 4. Use effective teamwork and collaboration skills</td>
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<td>☑ 5. Resolve ethical issues related to business and economics</td>
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**TEXT and READINGS**

**Required:**
- *Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility: Stakeholders, Globalization and Sustainable Value Creation*, 3rd Ed., Werther & Chandler (Sage 2014)
- The *Wall Street Journal* [student subscriptions: 10 weeks for $10. Go to WSJ.com/quarter and list the instructor of this class as your professor]
- Assigned readings on Blackboard.
**Recommended:** *New York Times, Idaho Statesman* and/or a weekly business newsmagazine, such as *The Economist* or *Business Week.*

**POLICY ON LAPTOPS, I-PADS or TABLETS IN THE CLASSROOM**
You may use laptops during class if you are willing to sit in the front row.

**CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SYSTEM**
This is NOT simply a lecture class. Each class period will focus on building on the assigned readings and any additional news reports or articles that relate to the topic assigned for that particular day, whether provided by the instructor or by students. You are expected to read the assigned materials in advance and be prepared to discuss the concepts and issues they raise. The position is taken that the instructor can presume that students have read and understand the material in the text and other assigned reading unless students themselves raise questions and issues. In this respect, students are responsible for setting the initial agenda for each class by raising such questions and issues for discussion. Students should therefore not expect a regular lecture on the text. As mentioned above, in addition to the assigned reading (textbook and Blackboard articles), there will be regular discussion of news reports and recent articles describing social, ethical and political events or trends affecting business. I expect and encourage honest and intelligent engagement. Class participation is an extremely important part of the learning process in this class. It is not my role or purpose to indoctrinate you into any particular values or ways of thinking. It is my role to challenge you to think for yourself and to willingly address critical issues that pertain to course content.

**IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND AND PREPARE FOR CLASS FAITHFULLY, DO NOT TAKE THIS COURSE.** Each student will be expected to participate in class discussion. There will also be various homework assignments and class exercises during the semester. Class attendance and regular, intelligent participation are essential parts of the course. Both the quality and quantity of a student's class participation can be considered as part of your grade and, more importantly, a substantial contributor to effective learning.

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance will not be taken. Students are expected to be responsible within the context of their own life achievement expectations.

**Curve:** At the end of the semester the total possible points will be added and grade distribution will be determined based upon a class curve with the class mean plus 2 points usually determining the C+/B- cut-off (commonly around 76%). As student makeup, course exams and other assignments vary, there is absolutely no commitment or guarantee that the mean will be the same for this semester.

**ASSIGNMENTS/ASSESSMENT**

The following are more adequately described further below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Value % of final grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection on Postman</td>
<td>2 Points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics in Practice</td>
<td>3 Points</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Corporation Assignment</td>
<td>3 Points</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Current Events Journals</td>
<td>30 Points (6 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter Quizzes (Blackboard)</td>
<td>50 (10 Points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation(s) (case)</td>
<td>10 Points (each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30 Points</td>
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Extra Credit: 0-3+ Points  
Participation: variable  
Total: 128+

There may be additional assignments as well as other extra credit opportunities during the course of the semester. There will be no opportunities for additional or makeup work.

I reserve the right to adjust final grades upward or downward on the basis of attendance, improvement, class participation (including Blackboard Discussion Threads, if utilized) and demeanor. Civility is a minimum requirement for passing the course.

**Contact with Instructor:** Students are strongly encouraged to raise questions on course material in class for everyone’s benefit. Students needing further assistance on course material or other matters are strongly encouraged to communicate with the instructor either personally or by email. All student difficulties affecting class performance should be raised with the instructor as soon as they become apparent to the student. Careful consideration and confidentiality can be expected. Students are also welcome to stop in anytime for any purpose whatsoever.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**
All students are expected to adhere to the [Student Code of Conduct](http://deanofstudents.boisestate.edu/scp-codeofconduct/) which includes information on academic dishonesty and which can be found at http://deanofstudents.boisestate.edu/scp-codeofconduct/. Sanctions for academic dishonesty range from no credit given for the assignment, a grade of failure in or dismissal from the course to expulsion from the university.

**ASSIGNMENTS/ OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT (further described)**

Instructions for all written work downloaded to Blackboard: Word document, margins 1” all around, New Times Roman 12 point font, 350-500 words, double spaced. Use the word count wisely.

1. **Postman Reflection:** (Due for 1st class. Instructions in Introduction folder in Course Documents).
2. **Ethics in Practice:**
Due for the second class (January 25) an “Ethics in Practice” scenario will be due. Examples of prior “Ethics in Practice” cases are provided on Blackboard and will be used in class. Students are to create an Ethics in Practice of their own, based either upon their own experience or a credible scenario created by them. They should be written in either the first or third person with fictitious names and places to preserve anonymity. The format required is the same as those examples used in class including the presentation of a factual scenario. In addition, create 3-5 pertinent questions at the end of your factual scenario that would guide an ethical analysis. So, these questions should go beyond simply leading one to identifying the issue(s) and be structured in order to guide resolution of the issue(s), in other words, the ethical analysis of the issues. Make sure that the factual information you give is sufficient to begin to answer the questions and for ethical analysis. Grading will be based on the usefulness of the scenario and questions in an actual class discussion as well as how well it is presented (writing style, grammar, etc.). Realistic scenarios that raise important ethical (as opposed to legal) questions and would spark serious response will receive higher marks.

3. **Current Events Journals**
Each student will be responsible for 5 journals. Each journal is worth 6 points. The “Common Journal” article, Week 5 will count as the first one. Starting with the Monday of Week (February 15) through Week 13 (April 11) and excluding Spring Break, nine weeks total, students may submit an analysis of a newspaper/magazine article published during the prior week (the week is measured...
from Monday to Sunday). Submission is on Blackboard under Assignments. No more than one journal may be handed in for any given week. Additional guidelines for analysis are posted separately on Blackboard in the Course Information section under “Weekly Journal Guidelines.” The article itself or a link/url must also be submitted along with the analysis with the newspaper’s name and date of publication. Articles from the internet may be used as long as they are of the same nature as a current newspaper article and published within the specified time frame. As the course progresses, increasing emphasis, and therefore grading results, will be placed upon choosing an article that lends itself to a greater application of course principles and analysis or relates to specific course content. At all times, inattention to grammar, spelling and obvious lack of proofreading will result in grade reduction. Out of a total (initial) graded value of 6 points, 1.0 points may be subtracted for spelling or grammatical errors. After the window for journals is completed, I will post on Blackboard whether any are missing for each individual. I suggest you save your returned journals in case you later feel there is a discrepancy between our records.

Journals for the week are due before 9:00 AM on Mondays. Journals submitted after that will not be graded.

As an aside, poor writing skills is one of the most common complaints of employers and can most certainly diminish your career opportunities. Students realizing the need to improve in this area are encouraged to take advantage of the free services offered at the BSU Writing Center. The Center works with writers from any discipline, at any stage of the writing process: brainstorming, revising, editing. All consultations are done by appointment, and writers can make an appointment through the web page (http://writingcenter.boisestate.edu/), in person (Liberal Arts Building, Room 200), or over the phone (426-1298). The weekly journal assignment is an excellent vehicle for working with the Writing Center to improve your writing.

4. The Corporation Assignment
Just before we start with the text, Week 7: (February 22) you will view “The Corporation” video on your own time and hand in a writing assignment fulfilling requirements which will be provided separately on Blackboard in Course Documents. You must watch at least Chapters 1-4 and 22-23 and 2-3 more of your own choosing. The video may be accessed at several sites on youtube including: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pin8fbdGV9Y and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pin8fbdGV9Y&list=PLCDF6B02DFD948794 (divided unto chapters), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4ou9rOssPg (full film).

5. Quizzes and Exam(s)
The purpose of quizzes and the final exam is to examine comprehension of materials presented in the text, readings, videos and class discussion. Quizzes will be taken on Blackboard at designated times on a chapter basis (through Chapters 1-5). The quiz will be taken prior to coverage of the chapter in class and will cover the assigned reading(s), both the chapter and Blackboard articles. Note that the final exam will additionally cover material included in class discussions. For Chapters 1-5, the quizzes will be available on Blackboard from Fridays at 8:00 AM until Mondays at 9:00 AM.

A comprehensive final exam will cover the Ethics portion of the course and text material (including any cases presented from Chapters 6-8) and will be predominantly True/False and Multiple Choice, possibly with one or two short essay questions. A Study List for the final exam will be provided. The Final Exam will be given in class on Monday, May 2 at 10:00-12:00 AM.

6. Participation
Participation in class is one of the most conducive activities to learning and is therefore encouraged for its intrinsic benefits rather than for its role in grading. However, at the end of the semester when all other sources of points are cumulated and grade distribution cutoffs are established, students with a superior record of quality participation and who are within a short reach from the next grade level may on that basis receive a higher grade. This is of course a subjective evaluation, as is grading of written work and it is fully within the discretion of the instructor as to whether participation warrants grade advancement.

7. Extra Credit Opportunities:
As an extra credit opportunity, you can submit at any time up through April 18th (Monday, Week 14), in a similar format to the Ethics in Practice assignment, actual ethical situations that you encounter during the course of the semester. Please include 1) a description of the factual situation, 2) your analysis of it (perhaps similar to the ethical analysis we have used), 3) your actual decision(s) and action(s) and 4) your reasons/justification for doing so. As you are providing these answers, you do not need to include the questions that you would have posed if you were setting up the scenario as in the prior exercise. Due to the potentially personal nature of these, they will be held in strict confidence and will be returned to the student prior to the end of the course.

During the semester, specific opportunities for additional extra credit may be provided in the form of attendance at special lectures (e.g. University Distinguished Speakers or Brandt Lectures). Notice of these opportunities will be given in class.

You may engage in up to three extra credit opportunities (combined possible total of up to three points) during the course of the semester. Total extra credit can boost a grade up to one third of a mark, e.g. from D to C-, C to C+, or B+ to A-.

Planned Schedule

Week 1: (January 11): The End of Education; Why are we here? [Postman Reflection due]
Week 2: (January 15): No class MLK Day
Week 3: January 25): Ethics [Ethics in Practice due]
Week 4: (February 1): Ethics
Week 5: (February 8): Ethics [Common Journal due, Monday 9:00 AM]
Week 6: (February 15): No class, President’s Day [Journals may be submitted.]
Week 7: (February 22): Ethics [Corporation paper due, 9:00 AM Monday]
Week 8: (February 29): Chapter 1
Week 9: (March 7): Chapter 2
Week 10: (March 14): Chapter 3 [Last day for getting Journal #2 in.]
Spring Break (March 21-27)
Week 11: (March 28) Chapter 4 [Last day for getting Journal #3 in.]
Week 12: (April 4) Chapter 5 [Last day for getting Journal #4 in.]
Week 13: (April 11) [Last day for getting Journal #5 in.]
Week 14 (April 18)
Week 15 (April 25) Regroup and Wrap:
Final Exam: May 2, 10:00-12:00 AM