Business Ethics, Spring 2017
ETH:REL 251, Section M7, 3 credits

Meetings: CL 101, Monday, 6:30pm - 9:20pm
(Meeting only: 1/23, 2/6, 2/20, 3/6, 3/27, 4/10, 4/24)
Instructor: Robert Pennington (Ph.D. cand.)
Office Hours: CL 21-C
Mon. 5:00 - 6:30,
Tues. & Thurs. 12:15pm - 1:30pm & 3:00 - 4:00pm
Phone: 513-244-4212
Email: Robert.Pennington@msj.edu

Course Texts: The following books are required for the course. They are at
the bookstore and can also be found on amazon.

*Good Business: Catholic Social Teaching at Work in the Marketplace.* Edited by Thomas O’Brien, Elizabeth W. Collier, and
Patrick Flanagan. Anselm Academic, 2014

*A Catechism for Business: Tough Ethical Questions & Insights
from Catholic Teaching.* Edited by Andrew V. Abela and Joseph
E. Capizzi:

Course Description: This course is designed to offer students an introduction to the study of
business ethics from both a philosophical and theological perspective. We begin by ex-
amining 1) foundational philosophical theories and 2) the principles of Catholic Social Teaching
and demonstrate how each is related to ethical business activity. We then focus on specific chal-
lenes concerning - but not limited to - corporate governance, socially responsible investing,
product safety, truth in advertising, and doing business in an international context. For
each of these challenges, we discuss the underlying moral principles and seek to articulate appro-
riate philosophical and theological responses to them.

Course Content: Think about the last difficult decision you made. Did you face a quandary in
choosing between two different paths? I argue that everyday each one of us, including Busi-
nesses, make decisions based on different ideas of what will make for a good outcome. The con-
tent of this course therefore seeks to empower you to contrast your understanding of contempo-
rary U.S. business practices with the theories and practices associated with Jesus of Nazareth and
Catholic Social Teaching. By learning how to place one’s own personal understanding of U.S.
business practices in dialogue with the wisdom of the Christian intellectual tradition you will
learn how reality can be seen in a way that differs from what would be considered the norm of
U.S. business practice.

Teaching Methodology (Learning Strategies): The course is designed to offer students an in-
troductory to the study of business ethics from an interdisciplinary perspective. Thus, students
will examine 1) methods of ethical analysis; (2) business realities such as corporate governance;
the risks of business to the natural environment and families; the moral responsibilities of corpo-
ations to shareholders, customers, employees, and communities; socially responsible investing;
product safety; truth in advertising; business self-regulation; and doing business in an international context; and 3) sources of practical wisdom from the Christian tradition. Also, because of the nature and mission of Mount St. Joseph, in this course I will present material from the theological perspective of the Roman Catholic Church. I must note that my goal is to simply introduce students to the basic philosophical and theological foundations of a Christian business ethic. In the end, know I am here to lead each of you to new insight into what makes a business “good” from the standpoint of Catholic Social Teaching. I aim to help you develop new insight from reading and writing assignments, lectures, documentaries & films, and group discussion.

**Learning Outcomes:**
Ethical Self-Awareness (Eth 1): Discuss one’s core beliefs and their origins.

Ethical Analysis (Eth 3): Recognize Ethical issues within a complex context.

Application of Ethical Perspectives (Eth 4): Propose and defend a solution to an ethical dilemma.

**Attendance Policy:** As this is an accelerated course, attendance at all class sessions is required. If you miss more than one class session for any reason, you will receive a grade of FA (failure due to attendance) for the course. It is the responsibility of a student who is absent from class to 1) submit assignments via email to the professor prior to the beginning of a class that the student will miss; and 2) obtain class notes and/or future assignments.

**Technology Policy:**
There is a strict policy on hand-held devices and lap top use during class discussion. Many temptations lurk on social media and to abstain is a challenge. However, if a student is determined to be checking her/his phone, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, Stock Portfolio, EPSN, Pintrest, Instagram, etc, they will be asked to leave. This is not only a common courtesy but a crucial habit to embody before entering into professional practice.

**Grading scale and Assignment Value and Description:** Students can earn 1000 points for the semester. Assignments range from 10 - 25 - 50 - 100 - 500 points.

The grading scale is as follows:
A=90-100  
B=80-89  
C=70-79  
D=60-69  
F= 0-59

**Late Policy:** For every 24 hours an essay is late the deduction is one letter grade.

**Assignments and Weight**

1. **From Where Do You Speak** (10%). Type (and bring to the first class) a three page essay (double spaced, New Times Roman, 12pt) that responds to the question: d’ou tu parles? (From Where Do You Speak?). To answer this questions students are **REQUIRED** to describe their
**CORE BELIEFS** (see examples on blackboard). The best way to do this is to describe how people (family, friends, enemies), places (Church [or lack thereof], School, Military, cities), and socio-cultural events (sports, art, music, theater, film, literature, etc) have formed your **CORE BELIEFS**. In other words, your task is to write a biography that shows how various individual agents and sociocultural structures have inscribed meaning on your body and mind. As part of this biography you are REQUIRED to describe your understanding of God (or lack thereof) as well as the **ORIGINS** of this belief. For example, you could describe how you were born into a Catholic, Baptist, Buddhist, Atheist, or Agnostic family. And, that your **CORE BELIEFS** developed out of this **ORIGIN**, including a description of how they’ve stayed the same or changed. I strongly suggest looking at the example documents on blackboard. Finally, since this is the first piece of writing you will submit to me, the essay should represent your absolute best work in grammar, style, format, structure, flow and, above all, creativity. Start to finish the task you should take no longer than two hours.

~ **Students will need to upload their essay on Blackboard. No uploads in any format other than Microsoft Word.**

~ **This essay assignment fulfills CORE ETH 1.**

2. **Class Participation Part I: Speaking in Class** (10%): Because the class format will include interactive lecture and seminar-style discussion the instructor expects that students will be prepared to speak about assigned readings. What this means is that you must **READ**! You should carefully read all assigned texts. Reading and summarizing material generates much of your grade. You are not expected to master every detail of every reading fully, but you are expected to bring to class your own summary of the material. I also understand that readings can be challenging but the point is not to skim them quickly before class. Rather, try to think through them and with them. Give yourself enough time to do this. Take notes as you read; try to identify main points, and most importantly, the arguments provided to support those points. Note areas that you don’t understand; write down questions and even your feelings as you read. Try to formulate a response to the arguments that you find—do you agree, disagree? Completely or partly? I also recommend either highlighting your book or underlining in red and writing notes in the margins. **And, always bring your book to class! This is key to student success.** But, make no mistake, the Most important part of class is talking. Talking is thinking; you are encouraged to talk because I want you to think, and it is too easy to not think when we just keep everything inside. Many of you might find talking in class unusual, awkward, difficult, scary, or even embarrassing. One thing to remember is that all of us have the same fears. Everyone should try to challenge themselves to speak at least once per class. I hope that we all will get used to talking with each other in class and will do my best to make talking in class safe for all of us by learning how to express disagreement with respect and tact.

**Class Participation Part II: Reading Reflection Assignments** (20%) I will select readings as HW that will ALWAYS include a one page **precis** writing component. The reflection assignments will require two actions: (1) a Summary aspect; (2) a relational aspect. Students will first write a short summary of the selected reading and place page numbers in parenthesis at the end of their sentence to show where they sourced the material from. Second, students will try to relate something about the belief, practice, figure, and/or event to their personal outlook.
3. **Essays:** You will write two three-page essays (10% each essay). The essays will reflect on material from readings, lectures, and documentaries or films based on real events. Such titles include: The Last Mountain, Gasland, Inside Job, and Food Inc. Students will use the See-Judge-Act method to write a critical analysis of the ethical practices in each documentary/film by integrating material from the Catholic intellectual tradition or Catholic Social Teaching.

4. **Final Essay.** A five to seven page essay (40%). The final paper will be an in-depth critical analysis of one Business practice of your own choice (you must clear the topic with the professor). Students will use the See-Judge-Act method to create a dialogue between contemporary business practices that pose an ethical dilemma (such as mountaintop removal, fracking, food production, stock market, etc) and the fundamental principles of the Catholic intellectual tradition or Catholic Social Teaching. Students will focus on topics such as common good, care for creation, option for the poor, subsidiarity, solidarity, and rights of workers. By attending to these two realities (business practices and CST) students final essay will fulfills CORE curriculum requirement E3 and E4. Except in the case of an emergency, late papers will be penalized a full letter grade for each day they are late.

*Students will need to upload their essay on Blackboard.*
*No uploads in any format other than Microsoft Word.*

*Enrichment Events:* Every Enrichment Event you attend will erase a HW Reading Reflection Assignment or Absence. Full credit for an event is earned by attending a cultural event announced by the prof., taking notes, writing a 1 page reflection precis, and explaining it to the class.

**Academic Honesty:** Students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the Academic Honesty Policy. Be sure you understand the policy in its entirety. This policy is found at [http://registrar.msj.edu/undergraduate-catalog/rights-policies/academic-policies/academic-honesty/](http://registrar.msj.edu/undergraduate-catalog/rights-policies/academic-policies/academic-honesty/)

**Incomplete Grades:** An “I” grade is only assigned by an instructor for a student who has made significant academic progress in the course, but for a serious reason has not fulfilled all requirements. A student must initiate a request for an “I” (incomplete) grade with the instructor by the last week of classes. The completed form must be submitted by the student to the Office of the Registrar prior to exam week. The student’s petition may be approved or denied by the instructor. Please consult the Undergraduate Catalog for complete details. [http://registrar.msj.edu/undergraduate-catalog/rights-policies/academic-policies/incomplete-grades/](http://registrar.msj.edu/undergraduate-catalog/rights-policies/academic-policies/incomplete-grades/)

**Disability Policy:** Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to speak to me at the beginning of the semester. In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Mount St. Joseph University provides academic adjustments and auxiliary aids for students with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit or restrict one or more of such major life activities as walking, seeing, hearing, or learning. Students with disabilities should contact Meghan Littrell, Director of Academic Support, to present documentation and develop individualized accommodation plans. **(244-4524; meghan.littrell@msj.edu)**, The Learning Center, Room
Resourceful Business Ethics Links on the Web

Cases and resources: Santa Clara University Markkula Center of Applied Ethics
https://www.scu.edu/ethics/

https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/what-is-ethics/

https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/

https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/can-ethics-be-taught/

https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethics-cases/?fam=BUSI

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: “Vocation of the Business Leader – A Reflection” (VBL) Co-Publisher: John A. Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought of the Center for Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas, Minnesota. [download PDF @:]

http://www.whistleblowers.org

Explore these links on **Deontology and duties and on virtue ethics**

http://www.iep.utm.edu/virtue/

Explore these links on Religious ethics and Justice Ethics


Explore these links:


Explore some of the following websites until you feel you have a good sense for the issues:


**Schedule by Topic and Assignment**
PRE-ASSIGNMENT

Your tasks before the first class:

1. **From Where Do You Speak** (10%). Type (and bring to the first class) a three page essay (double spaced, New Times Roman, 12pt) that responds to the question: *d’ou tu parles?* (From Where Do you Speak?). To answer this question students are **REQUIRED** to describe their **CORE BELIEFS** (see examples on blackboard). The best way to do this is to describe how people (family, friends, enemies), places (Church [or lack thereof], School, Military, cities), and socio-cultural events (sports, art, music, theater, film, literature, etc) have formed your **CORE BELIEFS**. In other words, your task is to write a biography that shows how various individual agents and sociocultural structures have inscribed meaning on your body and mind. As part of this biography you are **REQUIRED** to describe your understanding of God (or lack thereof) as well as the **ORIGINS** of this belief. For example, you could describe how you were born into a Catholic, Baptist, Buddhist, Atheist, or Agnostic family. And, that your **CORE BELIEFS** developed out of this **ORIGIN**, including a description of how they’ve stayed the same or changed. I strongly suggest looking at the example documents (2) on blackboard. Finally, since this is the first piece of writing you will submit to me, the essay should represent your absolute best work in grammar, style, format, structure, flow and, above all, creativity. Start to finish the task you should take no longer than two hours.

   ~ Students will need to upload their essay on Blackboard. *No uploads in any format other than Microsoft Word.*

   ~ This essay assignment fulfills **CORE ETH 1**.

2. Read the “Conclusion” in *Good Business: Catholic Social Teaching at Work in the Marketplace*, p. 260-268. Type a reflection (and bring to class) of 1 single-spaced page that discusses material from the text. You are required to conclude your essay with one question that emerged from your reading of the text.

January 23:
Pre-Assignment Essays do now! 1 page Reading Reflection do now!

Syllabus Review...

Opening Lecture on Bias...*d’ou tu parles?* From where do you speak?
   From where do I speak?
   What is Ethics? Praxis? Theory and Practice?
   How to make Ethical decisions? Methodological Tools?
   SJA Handouts
       Discuss Conclusion of Business Ethics in the Marketplace?

**HW:** Read Introduction (11-32) - Write a 1 page precis.
**HW:** Read and write a 1 page precis on either: Ch. 4 “Option for the Poor in Capitalism” or Ch. “Justice for all, Not just the 1 Percent”
** HW:** Read and write a 1 page precis on George Enderle: “The Option for the Poor and Business Ethics”
** HW:** Study for SJA quiz at our next session.

**February 6:**
Quiz on SJA method.

Lecture/Class Discussion of: Introduction: Types of Ethical and Moral Reasoning;
Ch. 4 “Option for the Poor in Capitalism” and Ch. 5 “Justice for all, Not just the 1 Percent”; USCCB document *Economic Justice for All* and Preferential Option for the Poor

Watch *Inside Job*. A documentary about the global economic crisis of 2008. Notions of justice, and relationships between the poor and rich will be discussed in class following documentary.

** Assign Critical Thinking Essay #1.** Use SJA method to place in dialogue the business practices seen in Inside Job with the wisdom of teachings from the Christian Intellectual Tradition to suggest strategies for change. Discuss Chicago Style Footnoting. Rough Draft due to me via email by February 13. Final Draft due on blackboard by 11:59pm February 19.

** HW:** Read/Write a 1 page precise on a *Laudato Si* document. (Choose from Turkson, Pennington, Francis, USCCB on BB).

**February 20:**
Watch *The Last Mountain*, a documentary that shows business practices in Appalachia. The film integrates themes such as the environmental impact of business practices, the common good, corporate governance, and stewardship.

Discuss *Laudato Si*.

**YOUR CHOICE:**
** HW:** Read/write one page precis on one chapter from: *Good Business* Chap 1-3 (p. 33-113)
Ch. 1: Human Dignity, Technology and Business Ethics
Ch. 2: Common Good and Corporate Governance
Ch. 3: Stewardship and the Educated Consumer

**March 6:**
Group discussion of Ch. 1, 2, 3, & *Laudato Si* documents.

Watch *Gasland*, a documentary that shows the business practice of hydraulic fracturing in the United States. The film integrates themes such as the environmental impact of business practices, the common good, corporate governance, and stewardship.

**Discuss Critical Thinking Essay #2.** Use SJA method to place in dialogue what business practices were seen in The Last Mountain or Gasland and the wisdom of Catholic Social Teaching with a section on creative strategies for change. Due on Blackboard by March 12 by midnight.

** HW:** read and write a 1 page precis on either:
Ch 6 “Subsidiarity in the Midst of Globalization” or
March 27:

Watch excerpt from Gerry Straub’s documentary about HealthCare Practices in the Amazon and discuss themes of subsidiarity and solidarity in regard to how business can practice these virtues.

HW: Read and write 1 page precis from one of the handouts on Blackboard related to Business Ethics, Advertising, and Transparency.
HW: Read Chapter 8 (p. 231-259) in Good Business.

April 10:
Lecture and class discussion of the intersection of Business Ethics and Advertising Ethics in relation to Health.

Watch Food Inc.
Class Discussion of Ethics of Food Industry

April 24:
Final Essays Due. Students present Rough Draft versions of their Final Essay to practice public and professional speaking. Students will receive feedback from each student through peer evaluation. This is intended to help each student refine their Final Essay.

May 8 - Final Exams

May 11 - Semester Ends