

# PHIL 3200: Business Ethics

Jason G. Cather

Fall 2018

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Hours: By Appointment

Office: online only

Web: [jasoncather.com/students](http://jasoncather.com/students)

Class Hours: Wed. 5:30 - 10:00

Class Room: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Course Description

### From the Course Catalog:

This course is a study of the ethical principles that apply to business practices and goals. In addition to an examination of the moral theory and values behind a free market, this course examines a variety of ethically-charged issues, such as employer/employee rights and responsibilities, privacy in the workplace, whistle-blowing, corporate responsibilities, and advertising practices. Such issues are examined and critiqued in the light of the standpoints offered by different ethical systems and principles.

**General Education Statement:** General Education at Aurora University is explicitly connected to the University Mission: "Aurora University – an inclusive community dedicated to the transformative power of learning." The General Education program provides an interdisciplinary introduction to the content areas, builds critical thinking and communication skills, and fosters intellectual and ethical development throughout the undergraduate program. As members of an inclusive community, each student will experience AU's Core Values – Integrity, Citizenship, Excellence, and Continuous Learning – through General Education. This course fulfills the general education requirement "Cultures and Civilizations," which is designed to target the following learning outcome: Students will demonstrate a critical understanding of a range of diversity with regard to culture, theoretical outlook, worldview, gender, age, class, and other determining factors of human life.

## Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Read philosophical texts closely, identifying the argument of the text and restating it clearly and fairly in their own words.

2. Critically assess arguments in terms of the assumptions made and the structure of reasoning to a conclusion.
3. Formulate and defend a philosophical thesis with evidence and careful reasoning both in speech and writing.

## Required Readings

- Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Cicero: *On Obligations*
- Kant: *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
- Mill: *Utilitarianism*

## Course Policies

Please read and understand the policies listed below. You are responsible for abiding by and understanding all of these policies. If you e-mail a question for which The Answer Is On The Syllabus, I will respond "TAIOTS."

### General

#### Classroom Decorum and Content Notice

By virtue of attending an institution of higher learning, you are part of an academic community governed by the norms of free inquiry, hermeneutic charity, reasoned argument and a demand for evidence. Our classroom is a unit of this community, and you are expected to be mature adults and model citizens. Accordingly, everyone in the class will engage with one another respectfully, while hewing to the demanding norms of academic discourse. It is of the nature of the subject matter of this course (and therefore also the kinds of discussion that will take place) that they will be controversial. It is also of the nature of our discussions that it may not be obvious ahead of time *when* a difficult subject matter will arise as either a topic or an example, or what specific topics will cause concern. Because examples are necessary, and the topic of any course in our subject will involve material some will find disturbing, I cannot make accommodations to avoid the topics or to provide advance warning of each difficult or uncomfortable topic for a particular class. Please be advised and plan accordingly.

Your views may turn out to challenge the views of others, who in turn may challenge your views. Our classroom is *not* a place where your ideas will be safe from scrutiny. *However*, this will always proceed in a civil manner, according to our shared intellectual norms. If you feel that you were not treated in a civil manner, please arrange to see me in office hours.

Please note that the requirement of civility in no way exempts anyone from our rigid standards of evidence and argument. Nor does it grant *any* of your views immunity from criticism. I am liable to challenge any claims you may make, regardless of my own position on the matter. Learning and exercising critical thought requires these challenges of all of us.

All of this being said, I am very sympathetic students in distress regarding topics we discuss in class, and if in any way you feel the need to approach me with a concern about this, please do not hesitate to do so.

### **Consent to Recording and Intellectual Property**

I reserve the right to record every meeting of class in audio and/or video formats.

### **Your Use of Technology in the Classroom**

I strongly advise taking notes on paper (cf. “materials” below). Please do not allow your laptops, tablets, phones, etc. to be a distraction to you, to your fellow students, or to me. Take care of all socializing (e.g. facebook, texting, emails) outside of our classroom. If you need to use your phone for whatever reason, you may quietly leave the classroom and return when you are finished. If your use of technology causes a distraction for *anyone* in the room, including yourself or me, you will be dismissed from class for the day and an unexcused absence. Please meet with me if you would like to discuss permission to record my lectures.

### **E-mail**

Please read the syllabus and the *Frequently Asked Questions* section of the course website before e-mailing. If the answer to your question is on the website or the syllabus, I may not respond. I encourage you to email me if you have substantive questions concerning the material we are discussing in class. If you send me an e-mail, please show up to the next class. If several students have similar questions, I may answer your question in class. I may deem that it is better to speak with you in person to answer your question immediately before or after our class. Please do not e-mail me to ask what you missed if you were absent. There will be regular quizzes designed to test you on the material covered up to that point in the term. There will be no make-up quizzes offered – the same holds true for the essay assignments and conferences.

### **Course Website**

Major assignments, revisions to the syllabus, and grades will occasionally be posted to our course website. You will receive a notification when a change has been made. The print copy of the syllabus is for your convenience; the authoritative version is online. If you miss class or forget to write the assignment down, check our course website first and then ask another student in the class. Do not email me to ask what the assignment is.

### **Materials**

1. **TEXTS:** You are expected to have the assigned texts for this class. Any additional materials will be distributed in class in advance of their due date. You are responsible for getting copies of materials from classes you missed. Bring every text – including the syllabus and course documents – to every class meeting. This serves two purposes. First, part of the work of philosophy is the comparison of texts, which means we will often be referring to multiple texts, regardless of the day’s assigned reading. Second, your studies are intended to prepare you for future employment. Being responsible for documents over the entire

term is an excellent way to practice important organizational skills, and develop a sense of responsibility.

2. **NAME PLATE:** In order to learn your names and so that your colleagues can address you respectfully, I provide materials for a name plate for your desk. You are responsible for this throughout the term. If you lose your name plate, please create another one before the start of class. I will use this to check attendance, which means if you do not have this, you may be marked absent. As this results from your not arriving at class prepared, this will be an unexcused absence.
3. **PEN & PAPER:** You are required to bring paper and a pencil or pen to each class. There may be quizzes or short writing assignments to be completed and turned in during the class. Loose leaf or detachable paper is suggested for this purpose. I strongly recommend that notes be taken on paper. I strongly discourage taking notes on your computer. This will actually be to your advantage, because we will be using symbols, diagrams, and tables, all of which are difficult to format on a computer at the pace we will be proceeding.
4. **STUDY GUIDES AND OTHER SOURCES:** The works we will be reading have a long and rich tradition of scholarship. Many, many people have read these texts, and there are no doubt countless study guides and interpretive essays that may be easy to find online. Rather than spending time reading these guides about our texts (scholars call these secondary sources), you should spend that time re-reading the texts themselves (the primary sources). Do not be tempted to plagiarize from these guides – if you can find it, it is likely that I can find it as well, and this will result in a failing grade (see academic integrity). All of my students have the integrity to do their own work. Cheating will not help you to understand the material, but will actually prevent you from learning it. More importantly, whatever points you think you might earn from cheating are not worth compromising your integrity. At the end of your life, you probably will not remember or care about the grade you made in this class. You will reflect on whether you lived with honesty and integrity.

## Grading Policies

For complete grading policies, including rubrics for papers and frequently asked questions, please refer to the supplements at the end of this syllabus.

## Grading Scale

The following explanatory rubric has been adopted by Aurora University professors:

- Performance that meets expectations and demonstrates adequate preparation in the subject: **C** (2 quality points per semester hour)
- Performance that meets and at times exceeds expectations and indicates good preparation in the subject: **B** (3 quality points per semester hour)
- Performance that consistently exceeds expectations and demonstrates comprehensive understanding of the subject: **A** (4 quality points per semester hour)

- Performance that is inadequate or inconsistently meets expectations and makes it inadvisable to proceed further in the subject without additional work: **D** (1 quality point per semester)
- Performance that consistently fails to meet expectations: **F** (0 quality points per semester hours)
- Plagiarism or other academically dishonest work (including “accidental plagiarism” or failure to cite your sources): **0%** (*Note: This is very different from an ordinary F!*)

An ‘A’ signifies excellent work, significantly above the base level I expect from students in my class. A-level work means superior understanding of the material, superior participation in class, and superior insight and skill in writing. It stands for “excellent.” A ‘B’ grade indicates work that is above the base level I expect. It shows good understanding of the material, frequent and thoughtful participation in class, and competent and insightful writing. It stands for “good.” A ‘C’ grade is awarded for average work, which means that it meets my basic expectations about understanding and writing skills. A ‘C’; grade shows a basic grasp of the material we study, good participation in discussion, and basic skills in analysis and writing. It stands for “average.” A ‘D’ grade is given when the performance in all these areas is below average. It simply stands for “below average.” An ‘F’ is applicable to situations where a student has clearly failed to complete the work in a satisfactory manner. Successful completion of all course requirements does not in any way ensure that you will receive any particular grade. It does, however, make it unlikely that you will get an ‘F’.

### **Credit Will Be Given For The Following:**

1. Participation (10%)
2. A set of short response papers due each week. (20%)
3. Reading notes for each text (15%)
4. Final Paper (30%)
5. Ethics case study assignment (25%)

### **Attendance and Participation**

There are no make-up assignments or quizzes. This is especially important given the constraints on our time together for this class. I expect you to attend and participate every day. I will take attendance for my records. You will not be able to succeed if you are absent regularly and your grades will reflect this fact.

Class will begin promptly. I will close the door to take attendance, and no student is to enter until after roll is called, when I will re-open the door to admit late students. After twenty minutes, I will close the door for the duration of the class. If you come to class and the door is closed, check your watch. If it is more than twenty minutes after the start time, you will be counted as absent (you are still welcome step in and attend if you can do so without a disturbance, but you will not receive credit for attending that day. If you arrive late, please shut the door behind you).

About attendance *Extra Muros*: There is a special case with school sanctioned events (e.g. away games or model U.N. meetings). Participation in these will count as attending class extra muros (outside the walls). You are counted as attending extra muros only under specific conditions. In order to qualify as attending class, you must fulfill these requirements:

1. You must notify me in person (not e-mail) in advance of your absence.
2. I must record your event in my grade book in advance of your absence. NOTE: It is your responsibility to make sure I have my grade book available, and mark down on the book that you will miss that day. DO NOT assume that I have recorded it unless you see me with your own eyes write it down in front of you in my grade book.
3. You must provide official, written verification that the event is school-sanctioned at the time I write it down. This means that I will need the official notice *in advance* of the day in question.

Any assignment that is due on a day you will be absent may be turned in electronically or by proxy. To turn in an assignment by proxy, simply find a dependable student in the class willing to serve as your proxy. Give your proxy a hard copy of the assignment in advance, and have him or her turn in the assignment in to me during class. It will be helpful, and I will be appreciative if you identify that you are turning in an assignment on someone's behalf. This will prevent me from thinking that there has been a violation of academic integrity. If you prefer to submit your work electronically, make sure you follow the format exactly. You will also want to verify that I received it, so please check with me in person at the next class meeting you attend.

NOTE: you may turn in assignments by proxy if you are absent for any reason, but unless I am explicitly aware in advance that you intend to submit an assignment electronically, I may not receive it, in which case it will be counted as missing or late.

### **Late Work**

As a policy, I do not accept late work without consultation about the matter. If you notify me in advance, it may be possible to work out an extension for an assignment (although I strongly caution against taking on this kind of "assignment-debt"). If we have passed the due date for an assignment, I am willing to consider taking late assignments (I have done so in the past), but I will not accept them unless we meet in person to discuss it. If you complete the assignment, meet with me as soon as possible so we can discuss the possibility of working out an arrangement.

### **Academic Integrity**

The policy for academic integrity in this course is very straightforward: I expect that any work submitted for this course will be your own. Never submit another's work as your own. This goes for any unit of writing, down to a sentence, or a memorable phrase. If someone else wrote it first, you must cite it, and give credit to the original author. This includes but is not limited to readings from the assigned texts, readings from outside sources (see the section on secondary sources under policies on materials), words I use in a prompt for a writing assignment, and help given in revising your papers (I always recommend using the writing center, but you are

not to allow an editor to re-write your paper). Any submission of another's work as your own constitutes plagiarism. Any instance of plagiarism, intentional or otherwise, will result in a grade of zero for the assignment, and makeup will not be allowed. I will be happy to meet with you during office hours to discuss any questions you may have about what constitutes plagiarism. If you are at all unsure, please meet with me. It is not worth making a mistake on this matter. If you are unsure about how to cite a source, please be in touch with me in advance. If this is not possible, make your best good-faith effort. There is a vast difference between a mistake in citation procedure and failing to cite at all.

### **Seriously, Don't Plagiarize!**

I recognize that most instances of plagiarism occur out of a sense of panic or desperation over one's grade. If you find yourself struggling, please e-mail me and explain your situation. I am understanding of students who are struggling. I have no leniency toward those who cheat. Remember that not all Fs are created equal. Writing a poor paper will at least result in *some* credit, whereas a plagiarized paper will earn nothing but my disappointment. If this isn't clear, go through the assignments on the syllabus for this course, and see the difference. Assume someone completes all of the response sets (thus getting full points), and makes an F ( $\leq 59\%$ ) on every other assignment. Add up all of those points. Now change the second assignment to a zero and add up all of those points.

### **Students With Disabilities**

Federal law mandates the provision of services at the university-level to qualified students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you require accommodations, I need official documentation from the school in order to provide them. Because retroactive accommodations cannot be made in most cases, you will need to provide this documentation as soon as possible.

## Schedule

**Week 01, 10/22 - 10/26:** Introduction: Kinds of ethical theories

- **Read This:**
  1. Aristotle: *Nichomachean Ethics* Book I - Book V
  
- **Do This:**
  1. Bring Reading notes for Aristotle to class
  2. In Class: Response Set 1

**Week 02, 10/29 - 11/02:** Aristotle (continued)

- **Read This:**
  1. Aristotle: *Nichomachean Ethics* Book VI - Book X
  
- **Do This:**
  1. Reading notes
  2. Bring text response 2 to class
  3. In Class: partner response and reply set 2

**Week 03, 11/05 - 11/09:** Cicero

- **Read This:**
  1. Cicero: *On Obligations*, Book I
  
- **Do This:**
  1. Reading notes
  2. Bring response set 3 to class

**Week 04, 11/12 - 11/16:** Cicero (Continued)

- **Read This:**
  1. Cicero: *On Obligations*, Book II - Book III
  
- **Do This:**
  1. Reading notes
  2. Bring response set 4 to class
  3. In Class: Case study example



**Week 05, 11/19 - 11/23: Kant**

• **Read This:**

1. Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface - Chapter 2

• **Do This:**

1. Reading notes
2. Bring response set 5 to class
3. In Class: Case studies 1

**Week 06, 11/26 - 11/30: Kant (cont.)**

• **Read This:**

1. Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Chapter 3

• **Do This:**

1. Reading notes
2. Bring response set 6 to class
3. In Class: Case studies 2

**Week 07, 12/03 - 12/07: Mill**

• **Read This:**

1. Mill: *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 1 - Chapter 2

• **Do This:**

1. Reading notes
2. Bring response set 7 to class
3. In Class: Case studies 3

**Week 08, 12/10 - 12/14: Conclusion**

• **Read This:**

1. Mill: *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 3

• **Do This:**

1. Final Papers Due
2. In Class: Case studies 4

## Suppliment: ACADEMIC SENTENCE FRAMES

- Agreement:

I agree with \_\_\_\_ and would like to add \_\_\_\_.

I like what \_\_\_\_ said because \_\_\_\_.

- Disagreement:

I'm not sure I agree with what \_\_\_\_ said, because \_\_\_\_.

I can see that \_\_\_\_\_. However, I disagree that \_\_\_\_\_.

- Re-Focus:

We're getting off topic. I want to get back to \_\_\_\_\_.

- Clarification:

Could you say that in a different way?

What's your evidence for \_\_\_\_\_?

Could you please repeat what you said?

I'm not familiar with that word, so I'm not sure what you meant by what you just said.

Could you please explain what \_\_\_\_\_ means?

If I understand you correctly, you're saying \_\_\_\_\_. Is that a fair characterization?

- Extension:

This makes me think \_\_\_\_\_.

I was thinking about what \_\_\_\_ said, and I think \_\_\_\_\_.

Now I'm wondering \_\_\_\_\_.

- Some Locutions to Avoid:

For me, \_\_\_\_\_.

To me, \_\_\_\_\_.

I feel that \_\_\_\_\_.

I believe \_\_\_\_\_.

In my opinion, \_\_\_\_\_.

Personally, \_\_\_\_\_.

These sound like humility, but they make your claims emotive rather than evidence-based. This prevents productive disagreement. By making statements that are really about yourself rather than an idea or text, counter arguments will seem like personal attacks rather than a cooperative search for truth. It can prevent learning from mistakes, because they can be re-interpreted so that they're never wrong: "Well, the text may say \_\_\_\_\_, but for me, it means \_\_\_\_\_." It may seem great that you could never be wrong about that. But you can't be really right either. If you're making a claim about how you feel, rather than about what the text says,

you don't understand the text correctly, you just feel a certain way. Take a stance! If you're correct, or have a strong point, take credit! If you're wrong, or someone shows a problem with your argument, you get to learn something.

- Better Alternatives:

It seems to me that \_\_\_\_\_.

On my reading, \_\_\_\_\_.

As far as I can tell, \_\_\_\_\_.

If I understand correctly, \_\_\_\_\_; although I am happy to be corrected.

Some of these sound very much like the ones to avoid. But if you look carefully, you will see that these are all statements about ideas, or about texts and your interpretations of them. Someone can offer an argument to each of these locutions: "I can see where it would seem that \_\_\_\_\_, but [evidence to the contrary]." Or, "I would take exception to your reading, because [evidence to the contrary]." Notice how these alternatives avoid the problems of the other locutions. They commit you to a position. You can't turn them around with a double meaning, so if you make a mistake, you have to take ownership of it and move on. This means that you may need to change your mind, or to come up with better evidence. I want you to be more concerned with *getting things right in the end* than with *being right to begin with*. Notice also that each of these, especially the last one, frames the possibility that you are mistaken as an opportunity for you to learn and grow. You are welcoming disagreement and objections, rather than protecting yourself from them. These formulations show that you understand that academic argument is a cooperative exercise, not a fight.

- Reconsideration:

My pre-reflective intuition is \_\_\_\_\_. But I can imagine reasons for thinking \_\_\_\_\_ instead. For example, \_\_\_\_\_.

Initially, it seemed to me that \_\_\_\_\_, but upon further consideration, it looks like \_\_\_\_\_.

- When you think you know what the answer is, but you have that sneaking suspicion that you might be wrong, and you would rather be quiet than make a mistake:

It seems like the answer should be \_\_\_\_\_. Am I missing something?