

## Professional Ethics Syllabus

### **Instructor:**

**Tamler Sommers**

Office: 208 Camden

Office Hours: M 2-4pm, W 10-11am, or by appointment.

Telephone: 589-6291

Email: [sommers@morris.umn.edu](mailto:sommers@morris.umn.edu)

### **Course Description**

This course examines ethical issues and problems that arise in professional environments. Topics to be discussed include corporate responsibility, government regulation, employee rights, harassment, affirmative action, and issues concerning social and economic justice in a global economy. The course is divided into roughly three (unequal) parts. First, we study some basic reasoning skills as well as the methods philosophers employ to evaluate arguments. Second, we do a crash course in ethical theory. Finally, we'll use the tools acquired in the first two parts to address the complex moral problems that can be found in contemporary professional life.

### **Format**

#### **1. Reading Assignments.**

There is no textbook. All readings will be available online at the course webpage. We'll be referring to the readings frequently, so you must print out the assignments and bring them to class. If you fail to bring the reading to class, you'll be counted as absent.

#### **2. Exams.**

- a. 8 brief 'make sure you're keeping up with the reading' quizzes.
- b. Midterm exam.
- c. Final exam.

#### **3. Writing Assignments.**

- a. One 5-6 page paper.
- b. Written preparation for a mock trial.

#### **4. Class Participation.**

This course requires participation on your part, both formally and informally. Class lectures will feature plenty of opportunity for active discussion and debate, and there will be group presentations. Each student will also participate in one of two "trials."

#### **5. Attendance Policy**

Regular class attendance is crucial to avoid falling behind. Only two unexcused absences are permitted. The third absence will knock you down on borderline final grades (if you're on the border of B+/A- you'll get a B+). Every unexcused absence after will reduce your final grade by half a grade (B- to C+, etc). More than six and you fail the course. *You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet.* Excused absences due to illness require a note from student health. Too many blue slips will raise suspicions. Other excuses will be assessed on a case by case basis. Perfect or near perfect attendance will boost your final grade in borderline situations. If you miss an unannounced quiz, you may make it up by writing a detailed one page summary of the reading discussed that day. You may do this up to two times during the semester. After that, you'll receive a zero for that quiz. If you're the kind of student that has trouble going to classes regularly, *drop this course now.* Save yourself the heartache. This isn't the course for you.

## 6. Tardiness Policy

Please come to class on time. All quizzes will be at the beginning of class. Coming in more than twenty minutes late counts as an absence (unless you have a good excuse). If you come in less than twenty minutes late, and manage to sign the attendance sheet, you'll be counted as present. But if this happens too often, I'll notify you that all tardiness counts as being absent.

### Grading

Quizzes: 15%

Midterm: 20%

Final (cumulative, sort of): 30%

Final Paper 20%:

Trial Performance: 15%

All assignments are due at the beginning of class unless I specify otherwise. *No late work will be accepted without prior approval.* **Extra credit** will be offered for attending the Midwest Philosophy Colloquium, Thursday October 5 at 7:30 PM and Friday October 6 at 5 PM. Save the dates!

### Course Schedule (Subject to considerable revision)

#### **Section One: Introduction to Philosophical Reasoning**

- Philosophical Terms and Methods
- **Quiz: September 6.**

#### **Section Two: Crash Course in Ethical Theory**

- Louis Pojman, "Who's to Judge?"
- John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism"
- Onora O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kantian Ethics"
- James Rachels, "The Ethics of Virtue."
- Dalai Lama, "The Ethics of Compassion."

#### *Case Studies*

- Bowen McCoy, "The Parable of the Sadhu"

#### **Section Three: Economic and Social Justice**

- John Rawls, "An Egalitarian Theory of Justice"
- Robert Nozick, "The Entitlement Theory"
- Milton Friedman, "Capitalism and Freedom."
- Peter Singer, "Rich and Poor"
- John Arthur, "World Hunger and Moral Obligation: The Case Against Singer"
- ***Trial One: The Trial of the Rich American***

#### **Section Four: The Social Responsibility of Corporations**

- Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits"
- R. Edward Freeman, "A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation."
- John Hasnas, "Two Normative Theories of Business Ethics: A Critique"
- Milton Friedman, John Mackey, and T.J. Rodgers, "Rethinking the Social Responsibility of Business: A Debate"
  - Business: A Debate"

#### *Case study:*

- The Danish Cartoon Scandal: Should Comedy Central Have Censored South Park?

### **Section Five: Income and Happiness**

- Robert Frank, “How Not to Buy Happiness”
- Johan Norberg, “The Scientists’ Misguided Pursuit of Happiness”
- Kashden and Klein “Comment on Frank”

#### *Case study:*

- Should there be a progressive consumption tax?

### **Section Six: Personal and Professional Integrity in the Workplace**

- John M. Darley, “How Organizations Socialize Individuals into Evildoing.”
- Albert Z. Carr, “Is Business Bluffing Ethical?”
- Norman Bowie, “The Ethics of Bluffing and Poker”
- Ronald M. Green, “When is ‘Everyone’s Doing it’ a Moral Justification?”
- Ralph Nader, “The Anatomy of Whistle-Blowing”
- Michael Davis, “Some Paradoxes of Whistleblowing”
- Ronald Duska, “Whistleblowing and Employee Loyalty”

#### *Case Study*

- ***The Insider*** (movie)

### **Section Eight: The Ethics of Advertising**

- Roger Crisp, “Persuasive Advertising, Autonomy, and the Creation of Desire”
- Robert L. Arrington, “Advertising and Behavior Control”

#### *Case studies*

- George G. Brenkert, “Marketing to Inner-City Blacks: PowerMaster and Moral Responsibility”

### **Section Eight: Diversity and Discrimination**

- Sydney Steele, “Affirmative Action: the Price of Preference”
- Barbara Bergmann, “Does Affirmative Action Hurt Its Intended Beneficiaries?”
- Gilbert, Neil, “What Do Women Really Want?”
- Deborah Epstein, “How Can a ‘Dumb-Ass’ Woman Achieve Equality in the Workplace?”
- Eugene Volokh, “What Speech does ‘Hostile Work Environment’ Harassment Law Restrict?”

#### *Case studies*

- ***Trial 2: The Trial of the “Friends” comedy writers.***

### **Section Nine: Business and the Environment**

- Larry Ruff, “The Economic Common Sense of Pollution”
- Mark Sagoff, “Zuckerman’s Dilemma: A Plea for Environmental Ethics”
- Gregg Easterbrook, “The Case Against Nature”
- William Baxter, “People or Penguins?”
- Peter Singer, “Down on the Factory Farm”
- Michael Pollan, “An Animal’s Place”

### **Section Ten: Global Ethics.**

- Denis Arnold and Norman Bowie, “Sweatshops and Respect for Persons”
- Ian Maitland, “The Great Non-Debate Over International Sweatshops”
- Nicholas Kristof “In Praise of the Maligned Sweatshop”
- Kaushik Basu, “The Economics of Child Labor”

#### *Case studies*

- Pfizer Pharmaceuticals in Nigeria: Philanthropy or Opportunism

## University of Minnesota Policies

### Grading standards (definition of grades)

- A Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- B Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- C Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
- D Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
- S Represents achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better.
- F (or N) -- Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I (see also I)
- I -- (Incomplete) Assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, a student is prevented from completing the work of the course on time. Requires a written agreement between instructor and student.

### Make-up exam policy

Make-up quizzes and exams are available only when a student has an excellent reason for missing the regular quiz or exam and arrangements are made either before the missed quiz or exam or as quickly as humanly possible thereafter.

### Senate student academic workload policy

For undergraduate courses, one credit is defined as equivalent to an average of three hours of learning effort per week (over a full semester) necessary for an average student to achieve an average grade (C) in the course. For example, *a student taking a four credit course that meets for four hours a week should expect to spend an additional eight hours a week on course work outside the classroom.*

### Statement on accommodations for students with disabilities

It is University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Please contact the Disability Services office, 589-6163, Room 362 Briggs Library to discuss accommodation needs.

### Statement on classroom conduct

Students are expected to interact with the instructor and other students with respect and courtesy. Students should attend every class session prepared to learn and work. Participation in class is expected, which includes both speaking up and listening. Give class your full attention while here. Complete all assignments including the reading -- in a timely fashion. Do not bring cell phones or recording equipment to class without the instructor's consent. Students whose behavior is disruptive either to the instructor or to other students will be asked to leave. Students whose behavior suggests the need for counseling or other assistance may be referred to counseling services. Students whose behavior violates the University Student Conduct Code will be subject to disciplinary action.

### Statement on academic misconduct

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. In this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

### Statement regarding sexual harassment

University policy prohibits sexual harassment as defined by the University of Minnesota Regents' policy:

<http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.pdf>