MNO 2707 BUSINESS ETHICS

AY2025/2026 Semester 1

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course explores ethical issues and challenges in business and organizations. Topics include various normative and descriptive models of ethical decision-making, differences in individual- and organizational-factors that influence ethical judgment and decisions. Class meetings will consist of lectures, in-class activities, as well as presentations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
- better recognise and be more aware of ethical issues at work.
- make better ethical judgments and decisions
- develop ability to understand and manage ethical conduct and social responsibility in business and organizational settings.

READINGS AND LESSON PREPARATION
Articles and book chapters to be announced for each week.

Recommended textbook: Trevino, L. K., & Nelson, K. A. (2021). *Managing business ethics: Straight talk about how to do it right*. John Wiley & Sons.

ASSESSMENTS

Component	Weightage
Class participation	15
Individual assignment	25
(attendance)	(10)
(Canvas assignments)	(15)
Individual final essay	35
Tema project	25
Total	**100%**

Class participation
Evaluation of your participation will be based on your ability to contribute comments that are insightful, relevant and progressive (i.e., comments that add on to what is being said and move the discussion forward, rather than restate what has already been said). Ask thoughtful questions, bring in good examples from current events and life experience, build on class concepts and others' ideas. Assessments of class participation will reflect the quality and consistency of your engagement and contribution to learning throughout the semester. I will be looking for quality in your participation and you will not need significant "airtime" to earn a high participation grade (if you put forth 1-2 key insights, you will receive a high class

participation grade for that session). **Please bring your own name tent in every class,** for our TA to record your participation.

Individual assignment
Attendance: You are expected to attend every class (arriving on time and being present for the entire session) and show respect to other students and me (without disrupting the class). For University approved reasons for absence, please email **written documentation** to your TA IN ADVANCE for approval. The BBA office requires us to report students who miss more than two classes in a row.

Canvas Assignments, due before Classes. Students are expected to read the required reading for the assignment and respond to questions related to the reading and course content. Late assignment policy will be applied to late submissions.

Individual final essay
Analysis of a chosen movie/documentary: I will provide 2 movies/documentaries that provide the context for the application of the concepts discussed in class. You can choose to analyze one of the two. The focus of your analysis should be the ethical issue(s) in the movie. Your essay should provide a *brief introduction* of the ethical issue(s) you identified, *analyse* whether characters/teams/organizations in the movie handled the ethical situation well or not well and potential *reasons/causes*, using the *concepts* discussed in class. You should cover BOTH prescriptive approach concepts AND descriptive approach concepts. At least *three* concepts from each of the two approaches. However, you should focus on *depth of analysis* instead of trying to use all the concepts discussed in class. Late assignment policy will be applied to late submissions.

Team Project
10-min ethical challenge: I will divide the class into project teams of about 4-5 members each. Each team should select a different recent (within the past 3 years) ethical issue/challenged faced by a company or industry in the Asia Pacific region. Sources for these issues must be reputable (e.g. the Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg Week, Fortune, Forbes, CNA, Straits Times, Financial Times, Business Times etc). For the 10-min presentation, the team should (a) briefly describe the ethical issue, (b) analyse the issue using course concepts (e.g. identify contributing factors and assess the seriousness of the issue), (c) propose actionable solutions/recommendations (suggest alternative actions or necessary changes in the future). Late assignment policy will be applied to late submissions.

The deliverables for the Team Project are as follows:

Item	Due
Finalize the topic on Google Doc	**Before Class 4**
Final Presentation slides (10 min + 5-10 min Q&A)	**Classes 5,6**

Late Assignment Policy:
If you submit an assignment late, I will deduct 1% of the assignment's grade for each hour that is late. I will no longer accept any late assignments after 2 days (except for special cases approved in advance).

SCHEDULE
This outline is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class.

Class 1: Introduction and Normative Approaches to Ethics

This week covers major normative or philosophical approaches to ethics, including Deontology, Utilitarianism, and Virtue ethics, to help students understand different frameworks of or criteria for judging right and wrong.

Required reading: Pinto Fire case Part I on Canvas

Recommended reading: Chapter 2 of Trevino, L. K., & Nelson, K. A. (2021). *Managing business ethics: Straight talk about how to do it right*. John Wiley & Sons.

Required reading for Class 1 and Assignment 1 due before Class 2

Class 2: Descriptive Approach to Ethics: Cognitive moral development stages, moral foundations, and culture differences

This week introduces the descriptive approach to ethics, based on empirical research and evidence. We begin with fundamental factors that shape individual ethical judgment, such as cognitive moral development stages, moral foundations, and culture.

Required reading: Pinto Fire case Part II on Canvas

Recommended reading: https://moralfoundations.org (full of resources about moral foundations)

Chapter 7 (for an overview of moral foundations) of Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion.* Pantheon/Random House. http://righteousmind.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/ch07.RighteousMind.final_.pdf

Atari, M., Haidt, J., Graham, J., Koleva, S., Stevens, S. T., & Dehghani, M. (2023). Morality beyond the WEIRD: How the nomological network of morality varies across cultures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 125*(5), 1157–1188. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000470

Required reading for Class 2 and Assignment 2 due before Class 3

Class 3: Descriptive Approach to Ethics: Individual-level factors affecting ethical decision-making

This week presents research-based models of ethical decision-making and discusses key processes of individual ethical decision-making such as ethical awareness and moral emotions, as well as factors influencing this process, such as norms/social consensus, moral disengagement, etc.

Required reading: Wells Fargo case on Canvas

Recommended reading: Chapter 3 of Trevino, L. K., & Nelson, K. A. (2021). *Managing business ethics: Straight talk about how to do it right*. John Wiley & Sons.

Bazerman, M. H., & Tenbrunsel, A. E. (2011). Ethical breakdowns. *Harvard business review*, *89*(4), 58-137. (on slippery slope and schemas/biases)

Required reading for Class 3 and Assignment 3 due before Class 4

Students post their team project topics on Google Doc before Class 4

Class 4: Descriptive Approach to Ethics: group- and organizational-level factors affecting ethical decision-making

This week focuses on group and organizational formal and informal systems and leadership that influence individual and organizational ethical behaviors.

Recommended reading: Chapters 5 & 7 of Trevino, L. K., & Nelson, K. A. (2021). *Managing business ethics: Straight talk about how to do it right*. John Wiley & Sons.

Downsides of goal setting: Ordóñez, L. D., Schweitzer, M. E., Galinsky, A. D., & Bazerman, M. H. (2009). Goals gone wild: The systematic side effects of overprescribing goal setting. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *23*(1), 6-16.

Slides due before Class 5 for teams presenting in Class 5

Class 5: Student Presentations

Slides due before Class 6 for teams presenting in Class 6

Class 6: Student Presentations

Final essay due by Nov 22 (Friday) 23:59pm

ACADEMIC HONESTY & PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity and honesty is essential for the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. The University and School expect every student to uphold academic integrity & honesty at all times. Academic dishonesty is any misrepresentation with the intent to deceive, or failure to acknowledge the source, or falsification of information, or inaccuracy of statements, or cheating at examinations/tests, or inappropriate use of resources.

Plagiarism is 'the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own' (The New Oxford Dictionary of English). The University and School will not condone plagiarism.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT do not require specialist knowledge to use. Many of these AI tools are commonly used in social media, for example, to create content and disguise and refine content created from programmes like ChatGPT. We understand that students will be drawn to using these AI Tools, as they would for any other electronic aid.

However, to be clear, normal academic rules still apply. As noted in the Code of Student Conduct:
"The University takes a strict view of cheating in any form, deceptive fabrication, plagiarism and violation of intellectual property and copyright laws. Any student who is found to have engaged in such misconduct is subject to disciplinary action by the University."

With respect to AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools), your instructor will clarify whether the use of these tools as inputs into your assignment development process is acceptable. AI is a technology that requires skill to use, and knowledge about when and how to use it. If you use ChatGPT or any other such AI tool in your work, you must provide a proper representation of how you used the tool and what prompts you used to generate output. Failure to cite its use constitutes academic misconduct.

Further, as with any information source, be aware that minimal efforts yield low quality results. You will need to refine your work and fact check the output, as you would double-check information from any source. Further, you should be selective in how and when you use such tools instead of using it for each and every assignment you create.

To summarise:
1. Always check with your instructors on what are the permitted uses of AI tools.
2. Have a discussion at the start of a course about the use of AI.
3. Where permitted, acknowledge your use of AI.
4. You remain responsible for the quality of your work and its appropriate representation.
5. Failure to follow the above steps can lead to a concern about plagiarism (academic dishonesty).

As always. you have the obligation to make clear to the assessor which is your own work, and which is the work of others. Otherwise, your assessor is entitled to assume that everything being presented for assessment is entirely your own work. This is a minimum standard.

Additional guidance can be found at:
Admission Condition: http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/administrative-policies-procedures/acceptance-record#NUSCodeofStudentConduct
NUS Code of Student Conduct: http://nus.edu.sg/osa/resources/code-of-student-conduct
Academic Integrity Essentials: https://libguides.nus.edu.sg/new2nus/acadintegrity#s-lib-ctab-22144949-4
Guidelines on the Use of AI Tools For Academic
Work: https://libguides.nus.edu.sg/new2nus/acadintegrity#s-lib-ctab-22144949-3