MNO2707 Business Ethics

AY2025/2026 Semester 2

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Time: Biweekly
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
We will adopt a psychological approach to understanding ethical judgments and behavior. We will try to provide some answers to a fundamental problem in ethics: Why do good people who want to do good nevertheless do bad things? Answering this question requires an understanding of the fundamental psychological processes that govern human thought and behavior in the ethical domain. These psychological processes can lure anyone – including you and me – into the ethical lapses that ruin careers, destroy businesses, harm people, and bring shame to individuals and organizations. Understanding these processes will give you insights into how you would design your life, your organization, and your teams. Class sessions will consist of lectures and in-class activities.

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.

Book: Bazerman, M.H., & Tenbrunsel, A.E. (2011). Blind spots: Why we fail to do what's right and what to do about it. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ.

You can access the e-book through the NUS library.

ASSESSMENTS

Component	Weightage
Class contribution (individual)	40
Final essay (individual)	35
Team project (group)	25
Total	**100%**

1. **Class Contribution:**
   a. Attendance (10%)
   b. Participation in Class Discussions (15%)
   c. Mini writeups (15%)

To be prepared for class, you must read and think about the week's topic <u>before the class</u>. Evaluation of your **participation** will be based on your ability to contribute comments that are <u>insightful, relevant and progressive</u> (i.e., comments that add on to what is being said and move the discussion forward, rather than restate what has already been said). 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 a single, key insight and that is all you contribute to a session, you will receive the maximum class participation grade for that session).

As a significant proportion of the grade is tied to class participation, it is important that you attend all class sessions. Missing a class will affect your own and your classmates' experience in the class. **Attendance** will be recorded every week.

There will be **3 Mini writeups,** to be submitted before classes 2, 3, and 4. Each submission has a weightage of 5%. These mini writeups should not exceed <u>300 words</u>. Students are expected to read up on the upcoming topic, think of (or search for) examples from industry or personal experience to relate with the upcoming topic. Find connections, ways to use the ideas in the future, or good examples of the ideas from your own work experience (or the work experience of those you know).

2. **Final Essay**

Final Individual Essay: Ethical Audit (1,500-word maximum)

For your final assignment, you will conduct an ethical audit of an organization of your choice. Your paper must be no longer than **1,500 words** and is due **Friday, April 17 at 11:59 PM** via Canvas.

For this assignment, you will choose **one** of the four major course themes and analyze your organization *through that single lens*:

- **Ethical Awareness**
- **Moral Courage and Whistleblowing**
- **Conflicts of Interest**
- **Incentives**

Your paper should include the following:

Part 1: Organizational Background
Briefly describe key details about the organization (industry, size, structure, relevant history). Keep this concise.

Part 2: Ethical Problems or Points of Risk
Identify and explain actual ethical issues or likely areas of ethical risk in the organization *specifically related to the course theme you selected*. Use concepts, frameworks, and evidence from class lectures and assigned readings.

Part 3: Design Solutions
Propose concrete, realistic design interventions that could reduce the ethical risks you identified. This is the **most important** part of the paper. Your solutions must explicitly draw on course ideas, theories, and research and demonstrate clear understanding and application.

Expectations and Evaluation
Strong work will:

- Systematically analyze the organization using relevant course concepts
- Show clear, critical reasoning
- Apply course ideas accurately and creatively
- Reflect on why these issues matter for you as a future business professional

Confidentiality
All essays are confidential and will be read only by the professor and TA. You may change the organization's name and the names of individuals if doing so helps protect privacy, especially if discussing sensitive or illegal behavior.

You are welcome to discuss your chosen organization and theme with me during the semester.

3. **Team Project**

In the final class period, you will complete a team project in class. However, you must prepare for it before class. The team project will involve an in-depth analysis of a Documentary (to be announced later) using core concepts from readings and lectures in classes 1-4. This in-class group assignment will involve answering questions about ethical problems and offering solutions to those problems by applying course concepts and ideas. To do well on this project, you must keep up with course readings and lectures and also read the material assigned for this final class.

SCHEDULE

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

Class 1: Introduction to Ethics

Readings: Chapters 1 - 4 of Blind Spots, by Bazerman & Tenbrunsel

Day 2: Individual-Level Factors Affecting Ethical Behavior Pt 1

Readings: Chapter 5 of Blindspots, by Bazerman & Tenbrunsel

Why Good Accountants Do Bad Audits, by Bazerman, Leowenstein, & Moore

See Red Flags, Hear Red Flags, by Greenstone

The Talking Cure, by Suroweicki

Day 3: Individual-Level Factors Affecting Ethical Behavior Pt 2

Readings: The Whistleblower's Quandary, by Waytz, Dungan, & Young

GM Recalls: How General Motors Silenced a Whistle Blower, by Higgins & Summers

Research: Whistleblowers Are a Sign of Healthy Companies, by Stubben & Welch

Day 4: Organizational-Level Factors Affecting Ethical Behavior

Readings: How Customers Can Rally Your Troops, by Grant

Creative Compensation, by Lublin

How Markets Crowd Out Morals, by Sandel (reading the responses to Sandel is optional)

Day 5: Team Project Task

Watching: A Documentary (details to be announced in week 1)

Reading: The relevant readings will be announced in week 1

Day 6: In-Class Team Project

Teams to work on the assigned task during the class.

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