

# **SYLLABUS**

## **Spring 2001**

Course Number: BUS 300 Sections 03, 07

Course Title: Business Ethics

Instructor: Dr Robert G Kennedy

Class Meets: Section 08 1:30-3:10 pm Thursday Room 101 McNeely

Section 09 1:30-3:10 pm Thursday Room 101 McNeely

Instructor's Office: 121 McNeely Office hours: MWF by appointment

Telephone: 651 962 5140 FAX: 651 962 5093

E-mail rgkennedy@stthomas.edu

Required Textbooks:

1. Kennedy, Readings Book for BUS 300 (green cover)

What is this course about?

Interest in ethics in business is not new, nor is it unique to a school like St Thomas. Most business schools offer a course in business ethics, and many require it. However, as even ancient philosophers recognized, a course in ethics is not enough to make a person ethical. Along with understanding must come a determination to do the right thing as well as the courage to do it in difficult situations. While we cannot do much in a classroom to develop in students such virtues as fairness and courage, we can help improve their understanding of the basic concepts of ethics.

One of the objectives of the course, then, is to examine some of these basic concepts (e.g., common good, human dignity, virtues, rights, stakeholders, vocational responsibilities, and organizational purpose). Another is to help students develop an ability to use these concepts as tools to discuss problem situations, to analyze them systematically, and to defend their conclusions. Finally, we hope to form in students a sense of their responsibilities as managers and professionals.

How will we do this?

The study of ethics as a systematic discipline is more than 2,000 years old. There are few new thoughts in ethical theory. Instead, whenever we think seriously about moral issues we find ourselves walking a path that others have walked before. In other words, whether consciously or unconsciously, we are heirs to a tradition of some sort whenever we try to sort out ethical problems. In this course, we will depend upon a tradition based upon such fundamental ideas as natural law and virtue, though we will leave the proper examination of that tradition to courses in the philosophy department.

Even though there may be few new ideas in ethical theory, there are many new problems in applied ethics. Our purpose as we look at issues throughout the course will be to try to discover the best (or at least the most defensible) resolution of the problem. Moral truth in practical affairs is often elusive, and this sometimes leads people to think that it is nonexistent. Finding it, though, often requires the help of others.

As a result, this course will be something like a seminar, which means that it will be a collaborative effort. You will be expected not only to read assigned material, but at times to share information, insights and experience with your group and with the whole class. The success of what we do during the semester will depend to a significant degree on the contributions of each individual member of the class. You may expect to spend an average of two to four hours in preparation for each of our class meetings.

### Description of Major Assignments and Exams:

#### Mid-Course Exam

There will be one exam in this course, the mid-semester, which will be a multiple-choice exam on 13/15 March. This exam will cover material we discuss during the first six class sessions and the assigned readings for those sessions. I will hold you responsible for the assigned readings regardless of how extensively we discuss them in class.

#### Short Case Analyses

You will be required to write two short (2-3 page) analyses of cases. These analyses will be due in Class 9 (3/5 April) and Class 11 (17/19 April). We will discuss how these analyses should be written about the middle of the semester.

#### Final Paper

The final paper, a case analysis about 5-10 pages long, will be due on the last day of class. The purpose of the paper will be to integrate what you have learned in the course. I will give you specific information about this assignment later in the course. This is a firm deadline. I will not accept papers after this date except in truly extraordinary circumstances.

#### NOTE — “Recycled” and copied papers:

I sometimes find that a student will submit a paper that had been submitted by someone else in a previous semester. A “recycled” paper like this, or any paper in which a student presents another person’s work as his/her own, will receive an “F” automatically. Any two papers that are substantially identical (e.g., two roommates working together on their papers) will also receive poor or failing grades. Your attention is also called to the University’s policy on plagiarism (see the current Student Handbook under “Academic

Information”).

#### Attendance:

You are expected to attend each class, and to be prepared for class discussions. This is a half-course and classroom activities are an important part of the course. If you miss more than three (3) classes for any reason you should not expect to pass the course. Of course, if you have good reasons for being absent, you may ask for an “Incomplete” for the class. Otherwise, I may, at my discretion, reduce your grade substantially or even fail you for the course.

#### Grading:

Four performance factors will be taken into consideration in determining the final grade: the mid-course exam, the case analyses (short papers), class and small group participation, and the final paper. The greatest weight will be placed on the exam and the final paper, but significant emphasis will also be given to the cases analyses and class and small group participation. See the yellow sheet for further information.

The instructors in this course will be collaborating with each other to achieve consistency between sections on difficulty and grading standards.

#### Incomplete Work:

Occasionally a student will be unable to complete work for the course as a result of circumstances or events that cannot be controlled: illness, family or personal problems, and so forth. I will consider submitting an “Incomplete” grade for a student under such conditions providing that the situation is genuinely serious and that arrangements for the “Incomplete” are made before the end of the semester. I will not extend an “Incomplete” to a student who simply stops attending class or fails to turn in assignments on time.

#### Evaluation of Participation:

Since the major methodology of the course will be the discussion of cases and assigned reading, a major portion of the grade will be based on your active participation in class discussions. As a colleague of mine has deftly put it, good participation in discussions is:

Anchored in the case/essay  
Reflective (original, thoughtful, insightful, helpful)  
Connected to the discussion  
Concise

I attempt to grade for quality of participation with these criteria in mind. Right after each class, while the discussion is still fresh in my mind, I will assign a grade to each student.

My grading scheme will be as follows:

3 points discovery of substantial error (factual, evaluative, etc) made by instructor; must be presented to the class

2 points excellent contribution to the discussion; important for the class's understanding of the material

1 point some worthwhile participation

0 points no participation

-1 point evident lack of preparation

Each member of the class will be liable for responding to my questions during the class. However, if for some reason, you are unprepared, please mention this to me at the beginning of the class and I will not embarrass you.

**AFTERTHOUGHTS:** Some of us have difficulty putting our thoughts into words in time to make contributions to a discussion. If you have made little or no contribution to the day's discussion, and some ideas fall together for you later, you may write me a short note explaining your thoughts. I will accept these notes during the week following the class and will consider them in assigning a participation grade for that class.

#### SCHEDULE

##### WEEK ASSIGNMENT TOPIC

1. 30 Jan Chapter One Housekeeping; Management as  
1 Feb CASE: blueparrot.com a Professional Practice
2. 6 Feb Chapters Two; Three Professional Ethics  
8 Feb Being Reasonable and Practical
3. 13 Feb Chapters Four; Five Being Practical in Business  
15 Feb Human Goods
4. 20 Feb Chapter Six; Bill of Rights; Duties, Rights and Stakeholders  
22 Feb Universal Declaration of Human Rights
5. 27 Feb Chapter Seven Virtues and Management  
1 March CASE: (TBD)
6. 6 March Chapter Eight Models of Business  
8 March CASE: Sally's Place Case Analysis
7. 13 March Carnegie, "Wealth"; Intro to John Paul II; Case Analysis  
15 March Pope John Paul II, "Three Addresses" Mid-Course Exam

8. 27 March Arvanites & Ward, "Employment at Will" Employee Partnership I  
29 March CASE: Mihanovich Parts & Service

9. 3 April Rosenbrock, "Engineers" Employee Partnership II  
5 April CASE: Eagle Rapids Engineering Case Analysis #1 due

10. 10 April "Advertising Principles"; Customer Partnership I  
12 April MacKenzie, "Selling Dreams"  
CASE: Simon Bourke

11. 17 April Mulligan, "Moral Mission" Customer Partnership II  
19 April CASE: Maurer Plastics Case Analysis #2 due

12. 24 April Boatright, "Fiduciary Duties" Investor Partnership  
26 April CASE: Belloc & Holmes

13. 1 May Friedman, "Social Responsibility" Secondary Partnerships:  
3 May CASE: Berle Construction Communities

14. 8 May "Minnesota Principles" International Issues  
10 May CASES: Proud Pony Toy Co.;  
When in Rome . . . Final Paper due

NOTE: I may choose to make changes in this syllabus during the course. This may include changing readings, cases, or even assignments. Changes will be announced in class. It is your responsibility to keep abreast of any such changes.