Business Ethics
Prof. J. George Frynas, University of Roehampton, London, UK

SHORT COURSE DESCRIPTION

Business ethics is the study of business situations, activities and decisions where moral issues of right and wrong are addressed. The course will discuss the theories that underpin normative and descriptive business ethics, the relevance of ethics for managerial decision-making, cross-cultural ethical differences between different countries as well as the tools and techniques of business ethics management. We then specifically examine the role of business ethics for different stakeholder groups that are important to companies: shareholders, employees, consumers, suppliers, the government and others.

READING MATERIALS

Readings are specified in the course schedule for each topic. They are mostly academic journal papers. Students will be able to find the readings online via the SKKU website once the course starts.

For those who are interested in deepening their knowledge of the subject and would like to purchase a book on the subject for themselves, we recommend the following textbook:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Students are expected to read the reading materials. Please come to class prepared to discuss this material together along with any fresh developments reported in the media.

Grading

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Assessment criteria

Attendance:
students will get one point for attending each session. Students are required to attend at least 80% of all lectures and workshops according to SKKU regulations.

Group Project Presentations and Reports:
The Group Project require students to submit a essay on the specified topic related to ethical codes of conduct in companies. The group project will have the following deliverables: (i) A presentation to the class, and (ii) A written report. Each group is required to give a presentation on the assigned topic. The group project presentation and report will be assessed according to the students’ understanding of the topic, the clarity of presentation and the appropriate use of references, among others.

Final exam:
The last session will be a one-hour final exam with a mix of multiple choice and true-false questions.
Tuesday (26 June)

Session topic: What is business ethics?
This session will introduce the meaning and relevance of ethics in the contemporary business world. We will explain the importance of business ethics and its relationship to morality, law, trust and organizational performance.

Case studies:
Two crises at Royal Dutch-Shell (2014), No such thing as a free drink (2016)

Preparatory readings:

Wednesday (27 June)

Session topic: Business Ethics versus Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility
This session introduces the concepts of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability, and contrasts them with the concept of ‘Business Ethics’.

Case studies:
Pharmaceuticals – What are limits to responsibility? (2014), Sustainability at Tetra Pak in India (2017)

Preparatory readings:

Thursday (28 June)

Session topic: Ethical theories
This session will discuss different normative and descriptive theories that can help to understand and guide ethical practices in business, such as utilitarianism, deontological ethics and stakeholder theory.

Case study:
Stakeholders and Suncor Energy (2002)

No preparatory reading

Friday (29 June)

Session topic: ‘Margin Call’ – The unethical impact of money
We will watch the award-winning film ‘Margin Call’. Set in a fictional investment bank at the start of the global financial crisis, the film offers very rich material for understanding unethical behaviours in the business world and how such behaviours have contributed to the financial crisis. Building on the film, this session will discuss how ethical and unethical decisions are made in companies.

Preparatory reading:
Monday (2 July)

Session topic: Tools and techniques of business ethics management

This session will discuss the practical tools and techniques for managing business ethics, including codes of practice, social accounting and reporting.

Case studies:
Anglo American and SEAT Toolbox (2012), Implementing Tata’s code of conduct (2006)

Preparatory readings:

Tuesday (3 July)

Session topic: Cross-cultural ethical management

This session will explore how ethical practices differ between different countries, and will explore the different factors (e.g. national characteristics, education and personal values) that underpin such decisions.

Case study:
Parable of the Sadhu (1999)

Preparatory readings:

Wednesday (4 July)

Session topic: Shareholders and business ethics

This session will discuss the nature of shareholder relations in a corporation and ethical issues in corporate governance.

Case studies:

Preparatory reading:

Thursday (5 July)

Session topic: Employees and business ethics

This session will identify the ethical implications of firms’ relationships with employees.

Case study:
Aviation industry (2016)

Preparatory reading:
one
Monday (9 July)

Session topic: Group Presentations
Preparatory reading: Not required
Assignment: group reports are also due for submission on Thursday

Tuesday (10 July)

Session topic: Customers and business ethics
This session will discuss the ethical issues and problems faced in business-customer relations, including responsible marketing practices and ethical consumption.

Case studies:
Dilemma of an Accountant (2017), Nestle infant formula (2010)

Preparatory reading:

Wednesday (11 July)

Session topic: Suppliers, competitors and business ethics
This session will critically examine the ethical issues and problems that arise in a firm’s dealings with its suppliers and competitors.

Case study:
Producing toys (2016)

Preparatory reading:

Thursday (12 July)

Session topic: The role of government and regulation
This session explains the role of government and regulation for ethical and socially responsible business practices.

Preparatory reading:

– WEEK IV –

Monday (16 July)

Session topic: Civil society and role-play
This session will critically analyse the ethical issues that arise from the relationship between business and civil society organizations. We will also discuss social enterprises, which are hybrid organizations – they are neither civil society nor profit-maximizing businesses. Then the students will take part in a role-playing exercise where they have to address a real life ethical crisis in a company.
Case study: Greenpeace-Foron (2016)
Preparatory reading: none

Tuesday (17 July)
Final Exam

Wednesday (18 July)
Session topic: Research ethics
This session will discuss the role of ethics in research.
Case study: When good results are bad results (2016)
Preparatory reading: none