

Philosophy 305: Business Ethics and Public Policy

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: Friday 3pm-4pm and by appointment on [Zoom](#)

Course Description

Philosophy 305: Business Ethics and Public Policy is designed as an introduction to the application of moral philosophy to the conduct of individuals and businesses in contemporary society. It examines the organization and roles of private and public economic institutions.

This course is available for General Education credit in Social Sciences or Lifelong Learning. The goal of the Social Sciences requirement is understanding the behavior of humans as we relate to one another, to ourselves and to our environments, as we create the structures and values that govern our lives in the present and through time. The goal of the Lifelong Learning requirement is developing an appreciation for the importance of the continued acquisition of new and diverse knowledge and skills, and it offers opportunities to integrate personal, professional and social aspects of life.

Means of Instruction

CSUN calls this a Campus Online class (OC/COA/COS), which is mostly online but with some campus meetings. Most weeks course material is presented asynchronously online (you will have deadlines for assignments but we have no live Zoom meetings). We will, however, also meet 3 times in person on campus, where you'll take in-class exams. The dates for our on-campus meetings are:

- Test #1: **TBD** (Currently planned for Friday September 18th, 12pm-1:15pm)
- Test #2: Friday November 6th, 12pm-1:15pm
- Only if needed: Friday December 11th, 12pm-1:15pm only to make up missed tests #1 or #2

Classroom for on campus meetings: ED 1127

Course Format

This is a Campus Online class, meaning, it is mostly online but we'll meet in person on campus a few times during the semester. For the online component, we do not meet live. Lectures and other materials are pre-recorded, and you work on the course at your own pace to meet the assignment deadlines. This format requires you to work on your own and be responsible for the course deadlines. If you need an extension on any assignment you must let me know **before** it is due.

The in-person meetings are for closed-book, hand-written tests you'll complete using blue books. The course is organized around weekly Modules, starting with Module 1 (Module 0 contains general information about the course). Each module contains the material you're to complete that week. It will consist of texts to read and discuss, video lectures to watch, short quizzes on those lectures, and an end of module quiz. Think of these as your regular homework assignments. More intermittent assignments include our In-Person Tests and two extra credit opportunities.

What Should You Be Doing for This Class On A Typical Week?

- Read:
 - The **overview** to the module
 - the **assigned texts**
- Watch:
 - the **lecture videos** for each module
- Do:
 - complete the **lecture video quizzes**
 - post in the **discussions**
 - complete the **end of module quiz**

Course Specific Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Learn to identify, explain, analyze, compare and contrast, and evaluate major questions, concepts, theories, and arguments in business ethics and public philosophy
- Develop the ability to comprehend and critically analyze philosophical texts
- Develop the ability to write clearly, precisely, concisely, logically, and persuasively
- Become more thoughtful and reflective about your own business practices and civic engagement

Assignments

1. Discussions (10% of course grade)

Though we don't have in-person class meetings to discuss the course material, I am trying to replicate that online with discussion forums. The discussions are focused on the reading(s) assigned for that week's module. There are two parts for each discussion:

Step 1: You will write an initial post of 250-350 **by 10pm Thursday night** each week.

Step 2: After step 1, write a reply to one student with a different role than yours. Replies should be at least 100 words and be done **by 10pm Sunday night** each week.

2. Watching Lecture Videos (5% of course grade)

There are lecture videos hosted via Panopto Video for each module. These help to explain the content found in the readings, to prepare you for the tests and other assignments about this material.

You are expected to watch these videos. Panopto records data about your viewing behavior. For each video, you'll earn a completeness score (0-100%), assessing how much of the video you watched. Note: viewing speed (e.g., 1.5x) does not negatively affect the completeness score.

You should complete these by **10pm Thursday** each week.

3. Lecture Quizzes (10% of course grade)

To help you attend to the content of the lecture videos, there are comprehension quizzes found in each video (usually there is one quiz at the end, but sometimes there is also a quiz in the middle of the video). In order to earn a score on a particular quiz, you must complete **all** questions in the quiz; if you don't complete all of the questions, the system assigns you a score of zero. You can retake quizzes to improve your score; your most recent score is the one used for your grade in Canvas. There are lecture quizzes for each of our modules. Lectures will usually be broken into 2 to 4 parts (each part will typically be 10-20 min in length). The lecture quizzes for a given module will add up to 10 points.

You should complete these by **10pm Thursday night** each week.

4. End of Module Quizzes (10% of course grade)

At the end of each Module, you'll take a quiz testing you on that material. They consist of roughly eight to ten multiple-choice type questions. There is a time limit of 15 minutes. You

will get up to 2 attempts at each assignment; your grade will be the *average* of your attempts (so if you're happy with your grade on the first attempt, you don't need to make a second attempt).

You should complete these by **10pm Sunday** night each week.

5. *In-Person Tests (50% of course grade in total)*

Test #1 (25% of course grade)

Test #2 (25% of course grade)

In-person tests will assess your understanding of the concepts, claims, and arguments we cover in the modules. The tests will be closed-book, closed-note. They will consist of questions requiring written responses – primarily multi-paragraph essays, but including some short answer.

You will have the opportunity to makeup a missed test on Friday December 11th

6. *Reflection Video (15% of course grade)*

You will record a 5 minute video reflecting on what you've learned about business ethics, how the materials in this course affected your beliefs about these topics, and perhaps their relevance to business practices we didn't get to focus on in the course. You cannot read from a script, but you can use minimal notes which you'll submit with your video. Full instructions will be posted on Canvas.

Class Schedule

Module 0: Aug 24th—Aug 30th

- Familiarize yourself with the course syllabus
- No work due
- (Optional) Read Stanford Encyclopedia Articles on Deontology, Consequentialism, and Virtue Ethics

Module 1: Aug 31st—Sep 6th

- **Watch:** Module 1 Overview
- **Read:** Excerpts from Adam Swift, *Political Philosophy: A Beginner's Guide for Students and Politicians*, "Social Justice"
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)

- **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
- **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer's Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 2: Sep 7th—Sep 13th

- **Watch:** Module 2 Overview
- **Read:** Gerald Gaus, "The Idea and the Ideal of Capitalism"
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer's Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 3: Sep 14th—Sep 20th

- **Watch:** Module 3 Overview
- **Read:** Kai Nielsen, "A Moral Case for Socialism"
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **On Friday at 12pm**
 - **Take** Test #1 in Person (Possibly Rescheduled)
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer's Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 4: Sep 21st—Sep 27th

- **Watch:** Module 4 Overview
- **Read:** Ben Hale, “The Veil of Opulence”
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer’s Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 5: Sep 28th—Oct 4th

- **Watch:** Module 5 Overview
- **Read:** Robert Goodin, Ch 9 of *Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy*
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer’s Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 6: Oct 5th—Oct 11th

- **Watch:** Module 6 Overview
- **Read:** Virginia Held, Ch 4 “Justice, Utility, and Care” from *The Ethics of Care*
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer’s Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 7: Oct 12th—Oct 18th

- **Watch:** Module 7 Overview
- **Read:** Richard Miller, Ch 1 “Against Morality” from *Analyzing Marx*
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer’s Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 8: Oct 19th—Oct 25th

- **Watch:** Module 8 Overview
- **Read:** Jeremy Waldron, p. 37-61 from *The Right to Private Property*
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer’s Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 9: Oct 26th—Nov 1st

- **Watch:** Module 9 Overview
- **Read:** Chris Meyers, “Wrongful Beneficence: Exploitation and Third World Sweatshops”
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**

- **Respond:** To a Peer's Discussion Post
- **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 10: Nov 2nd—Nov 8th

- **Watch:** Module 10 Overview
- **Read:** Elizabeth Anderson, "Recent Thinking About Sexual Harassment"
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **On Friday at 12pm**
 - **Take:** Test #2 in Person
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer's Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 11: Nov 9th—Nov 15th

- **Watch:** Module 11 Overview
- **Read:** Tommie Shelby, from Ch 1 of *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform*
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer's Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 12: Nov 16th—Nov 22nd

- **Watch:** Module 12 Overview
- **Read:** Zephyr Teachout, "Economists Are Wrong About Price Gouging" and Jeremy Snyder, "What's the Matter with Price Gouging?"
- (Optional) **Read:** Matt Zwolinski, "The Ethics of Price Gouging"

- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer's Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 13: Nov 23rd—Nov 29th

- **Watch** Module 13 Overview
- **Read:** Denis Arnold and Keith Bustos, “Business, Ethics, and Global Climate Control”
- (Optional) **Read:** Wohlfiel and Casale articles
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer's Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 14: Nov 30th—Dec 6th

- **Watch:** Module 14 Overview
- **Read:** Mark Reiff, “The Union as a Basic Institution of Society”
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer's Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Module 15: Dec 7th—Dec 13th

- **Watch:** Module 15 Overview
- **Read:** Helena De Bres, “Justice and International Trade”
- **By Thursday 10pm:**
 - **Watch:** Lecture Video(s)
 - **Do:** Lecture Video Quiz(zes)
 - **Post:** Your Initial Discussion Post
- **On Friday at 12pm**
 - **(Only if Needed) Take:** make-up test for tests #1 or #2
- **By Sunday 10pm:**
 - **Respond:** To a Peer’s Discussion Post
 - **Do:** End of Module Quiz

Finals Week: Dec 14th—Dec 20th

- **By Wednesday 10pm:**
 - **Record and Submit** your Reflection Video

Grades

Letter grades will be assigned using the plus/minus system, as follows:

A = 93.3-100%
 A- = 90.0-93.2%
 B+ = 86.7-89.9%
 B = 83.3-86.6%
 B- = 80-83.2%
 C+ = 76.7-79.9%
 C = 73.3-76.6%
 C- = 70.0-73.32%
 D+ = 66.7-69.9%
 D = 63.3-66.6%
 D- = 60-63.2%
 F = 0-59.9%

Given the above grade ranges, I round up grades based on hundredths. I use standard convention for rounding up: increase the tenths digit by one if the hundredths digit is 5 or greater (5, 6, 7, 8, 9), and leave it as is if it is 4 or less (0, 1, 2, 3, 4). For example, a grade of

89.94% would remain a B+. Grades of 89.95% to 89.99% would be rounded up to 90.0% and earn an A-.

Late Work

You are expected to be aware of deadlines and submit your work on time. Late work will only be accepted if approved by the instructor. To maximize your chances of obtaining an extension, you should contact me before a deadline to negotiate an extension. I encourage you to reserve such requests for genuine emergencies, rather than simply forgetting a deadline. If you miss numerous assignments because of something significant (e.g., you're struggling with your mental health, experience homelessness, a major family conflict), please reach out as soon as possible—I am here to help you succeed in the course despite these sorts of barriers. Simply experiencing one of these situations does not guarantee you'll be able to miss all missed work. But I will do my best to work with you to get back on track.

Policies about In-Person Tests

Your in-person tests are the major assessments of your understanding of the course material. They require written answers in an exam book (what are typically called “blue books” though the ones sold by the CSUN bookstore are green). These tests should be 100% your own work. **During tests you cannot make use of written materials or electronic devices, and cannot interact with any other people.** Because of this, you will not be allowed to have any of these things on your person or near you during the test. You should either not bring them into the test room, or be willing to put them in a bag you place at the front of the room.

In light of this policy, being observed with a phone or other banned materials on your person during a test will be interpreted as evidence of cheating. This will result in the consequences described above. I will do everything reasonable to prevent cheating, and to report all cases of cheating when they occur.

Policy About Use of AI

Students are not allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, or Grammarly) for any assignments in this course. You should not use AI to brainstorm ideas, generate an outline, or generate actual sentences you use on any assignment. Violating this policy constitutes academic dishonesty, and will result in the consequences described above.

It is impossible for me to police the use of AI purely to read and study the course material (i.e., understand the course content). But I do not recommend using AI to summarize course readings. I expect you to read the course texts yourself. I recommend putting your questions about the course readings in our Discussion assignments, and/or asking them directly to me via

email or in office hours. But I understand the appeal of using AI as a tutor that's available 24-7. But proceed with caution, given the propensity for AI models to "hallucinate".

Pronoun/Preferred Name

I will gladly honor your gender pronoun and any request to address you by an alternate name. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. It is the goal of this course and CSUN to create an environment in which all students feel supported and respected academically and personally.

Special Accommodations

If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD), and inform me as soon as possible of any accommodations they determine you are eligible for. The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684, <http://www.csun.edu/dres/index.php> NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611, <http://www.csun.edu/ncod/>

If you would like to discuss your need for accommodations with me, please contact me to set up an appointment.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank both Professors Kristina Meshelski and Mitchell Herschbach: this class is drawn, both in content and in presentation, from versions of Philosophy 305 that they have taught. I encourage you to take a class with either if and when the opportunity arises.