MGT 444 Business Ethics and Corporate Governance  
Fall 2015  
Schedule # 22184 (Section 1)

Course Information

Class Days: Tuesdays & Thursdays  
Class Times: 11:00am-12:15pm  
Class Location: GMCS-310  
Prerequisites: BA 300, BA 350  
Instructor: Taekjin Shin, Ph.D.  
Phone: 619-594-1913  
Email: tshin@sdsu.edu  
Office Hours Times: Tuesday 1:00pm-1:45pm, Thursday 10:00am-10:45am, and by appointment  
Office Hours Location: SSE 3365

Note: This syllabus provides a general plan for the course. Adjustments and revisions may be necessary. Although every effort will be made to announce the changes in a timely manner, it is ultimately the students’ responsibility to have an up-to-date knowledge about course schedule, requirements, and other relevant information and perform accordingly. When you are not sure about anything, please do not hesitate to contact the instructor.

Course Overview

We live in an era where ethics, ethical issues, and moral dilemmas are fundamental to every aspect of business and economic activities. As you prepare yourselves to enter the world of business, a sound understanding of ethics and the ability to apply this understanding to various business contexts are critical.

There may be different ways to learn business ethics. Some may argue that this is a topic that is really up to personal beliefs and characters. Some may believe that you learn it only from the real-world experience, not by sitting in a classroom. Some may think mandatory ethics training that is often required by large organizations can solve the problem. Although these claims have merits, we are here to learn business ethics. To maximize learning effectiveness in our situation, we have our strategy. Three key aspects of this strategy are highlighted here: theory, application, and discussion.

1. **Theory.** To take a full advantage of the setting as an academic course in a university, we study theories. There is simply no better setting to tackle these sophisticated theories than in an upper-division college classroom. Although some theories may appear arcane, you will realize that they are extremely useful and relevant. They will be your powerful tools.

2. **Application.** For most of us, understanding theories per se is not an ultimate goal. We study how the theories are applied to current business situations. To achieve this, we will examine business cases in a variety of contexts including product safety, employment relations, work-life balance, stakeholder management, and whistleblowing. Understanding specific facts about each case is not as important as developing a skill to link theory and real-world case back and forth, so you can use your theory (your tools) in any business situations you may encounter.

3. **Discussion.** This is a face-to-face class. The best way to spend our time and energy in class is to engage in a lively discussion. We will avoid spending our time in summarizing the readings or seeking a quick consensus. Instead, we will focus on exchanging knowledge and ideas, honing our skills to develop coherent arguments, and ultimately learning from one another. Your active participation is crucial.

Student Learning Outcomes

By successfully fulfilling all requirements of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain the philosophical arguments for and criticisms of major ethical theories that are relevant to current business situations
- Identify major ethical theories being explicitly or implicitly used to justify or criticize certain positions in business situations, particularly in corporate governance issues
• Use major ethical theories and related perspectives to evaluate and criticize certain positions or decisions in business, particularly in corporate governance issues
• Develop a coherent argument that supports a certain position or decision in business, particularly in corporate governance issues, and defend it using theoretically informed logic

Course Materials

You are not required to purchase any books for this course. All readings are available electronically on Blackboard (https://blackboard.sdsu.edu/webappslogin) under “Course Documents.” See “Course Schedule” below in this syllabus for detailed schedule and bibliographic information for each reading.

This is a reading-intensive course. It is extremely important to come prepared for each class session. Assignments should be read and given some thought in advance of class. Although the instructor is more than happy to answer questions and help you understand the contents of the readings, the instructor will not provide a general summary of the readings. It is your responsibility to read them and be prepared for classroom discussion. You will not be able to successfully complete the course without full understanding of the readings. Exams and other assignments are designed to ensure that you complete the readings and understand the concepts in them thoroughly.

It is strongly recommended that you bring assigned readings to each class, either in hard copies or electronic versions. Either individually or collectively, we will frequently refer to specific facts and arguments found in the readings.

Name Cards

Please bring a name card to each class, at least until you are absolutely certain that everyone in class knows your name. Everyone should aim to learn every classmate’s name.

Pictures

Within the first two weeks of the course, please consider emailing me (tshin@sdsu.edu) a digital picture (.jpg, .gif, .png files for example) that clearly shows your face. This will tremendously help me match your name with your face. Please put “MGT 444 Section 1 picture” in the email subject. If you do not have a digital camera or do not have a suitable picture, I will be happy to take a picture of you in class, with your consent. Your pictures will be used solely for the identification purpose for this course and will be discarded after the semester is over.

Course Assessment and Grading

Grades will be determined by your performance on the following course requirements:

• Attendance: 10 points
• Three quizzes: 15 points total, 5 points each
• Presentation: 10 points
• Midterm exam: 30 points
• Final exam: 35 points

Total points: 100 points.

No extra credit of any kind is offered. Each component is explained in detail below.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for this course. Attendance for each class means a presence at both the beginning and the end of the class meeting. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence for the semester. Any absence after that must accompany official documentation to avoid reduction of the attendance grade by one point. For example, if you have three absences, including one due to a severe illness with a doctor’s note, your attendance score will be 9 points.

Excused absences (i.e., absences that do not incur a one-point penalty) include:
• Death or major illness in a student’s immediate family
- Participation in a university-sponsored activity such as athletics, performances, forensics, etc.
- Religious observances that are planned in advance and recognized by the university
- Injury or illness that is severe or contagious
- Required participation in military duties
- Jury duty

If you are not sure about a specific situation, please discuss with me in advance.

**Quiz**

There will be three (3) unscheduled quizzes. The purpose of the quiz is twofold: to access your performance and to provide motivation for continuous studying and attendance. The timing of the quiz is determined based on the overall level of performance, participation, and attendance. Each quiz will be worth 5 percent of the total grade, or 5 points. The quiz will include questions that test your understanding of concepts and your ability to analyze a business case using the concepts we learn. The format of the quiz will be discussed in class in advance. For those who miss a quiz and submit official documentations to verify that the absence is excused, a make-up quiz can be given within two weeks from the quiz date.

**Presentation**

Working in a team of three to four students, each of you will prepare and present a business ethics case in class. Teams will be formed during the second week of class, and each team will be assigned to one of the presentation slots in the course schedule: see “Student Presentations” in the section “Course Schedule.” There are five steps in the presentation requirement.

- **Step 1.** Identify a business ethics-related news article and send it to the instructor at least two weeks prior to the presentation. If you are not sure which one to choose, I highly encourage you to talk to me early on. The news article of your choice should meet the following requirements:
  1) The topic has to be related to business ethics that we address in this course
  2) The topic cannot overlap the topics we already covered or are scheduled to cover in this course
  3) The news article has to be a report of an event or incident, not an op-ed, analysis, or blog entry
  5) The article should address ethical issues facing businesspeople, not legal or government issues (e.g., lawsuits or university activities), those facing specific professions that have their own specialized ethics fields (e.g., journalism and medicine), or those whose issues are idiosyncratic (e.g., professional sports or utilities)
  6) The article should not be excessively long. It is impossible to set a page limit due to differences in formatting. Use your common sense (if you feel it’s too long, chances are your classmates will feel it’s too long) and consider deleting parts of the article that are not relevant to our discussion
- **Step 2.** Upon the instructor’s approval of the choice of the news item, develop 3-5 questions for class to discuss and email the questions to the instructor at least one week prior to the presentation
- **Step 3.** Upon the instructor’s approval of the questions, the news article and the questions will be distributed to class via email prior to the presentation
- **Step 4.** Present the case in class. The presenters will explain the article briefly and then lead a discussion based on the pre-approved questions.

Presentation grades will be based on the quality of the questions (5 points) and the quality of the classroom discussion (5 points).

**Exams**

The midterm exam will be on Tuesday, October 15, 2015 during our regular class time (11:00am-12:15pm). The final exam will be on Tuesday, December 15, 2015, 10:30am-12:30pm. The exams are to test your fulfillment of the student learning objectives described above in this syllabus. For each exam, please bring an 8-1/2” x 11” blue book.

If you need to schedule a makeup exam due to a legitimate scheduling conflict, please discuss with me at least two weeks prior to the exam.
Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Academic Honesty

The University adheres to a strict policy regarding cheating and plagiarism (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html). These activities will not be tolerated in this class. Become familiar with the policy. Not knowing the policy is not an excuse. Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failing this class and a disciplinary review by Student Affairs.

Examples of Plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Using sources verbatim or paraphrasing without giving proper attribution (this can include phrases, sentences, paragraphs and/or pages of work)
- Copying and pasting work from an online or offline source directly and calling it your own
- Using information you find from an online or offline source without giving the author credit
- Replacing words or phrases from another source and inserting your own words or phrases
- Submitting a piece of work you did for one class to another class

If you have questions on what is plagiarism, please consult the policy (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html) and this helpful guide from the Library: (http://infodome.sdsu.edu/infolit/exploratorium/Standard_5/plagiarism.pdf)

Expectations and Ground Rules for Student Conduct

To maximize positive and effective learning experience and to ensure fairness to everyone, it is important that we agree on a few ground rules. Overall, we expect everyone to behave professionally and respectfully for one another. More concretely, the following rules will be strictly enforced:

1. The use of cell phones and other communication devices is strictly forbidden, including voice conversation, texting, instant messaging, or any other sort. If you violate this rule, you will be asked to stop using it, and if the violation repeats, you will be asked to leave and will be considered absent for the attendance record purpose. If you have any legitimate reasons (for example, medical emergency) to use a phone, please let me know.
2. The use of laptop and tablet computer in class is strictly limited to note taking and occasional classroom activities that are pre-approved by the instructor. Any other type of use is highly distracting for yourself and other students. If you violate this rule, you will lose the privilege to use the computer for that class. If the violation repeats, you will lose the privilege to use the computer for the rest of the semester. If more than one student violates this rule, laptop use will be prohibited for everyone in class for the rest of the semester.
3. If you have a compelling reason to record or videotape the class, please talk to me in advance.
4. Please avoid entering class late or leaving early, as this may be disruptive. If you have any unavoidable situation that constrains your ability to arrive on time and stay until the end of the class, please let me know in advance.
5. Please do not request special treatment, extra credit, or accommodations not available to other students and outside what is detailed in the syllabus, unless you have a legitimate and compelling reason.
6. We will be discussing ethical and moral issues that may be sensitive and controversial. Some of us may have strong opinions and emotional reactions based on our own beliefs, culture, and ideology. No matter what the topic is, maintaining a civil and respectful attitude towards everyone in class is absolutely crucial to ensure a safe and positive learning environment. Any unprofessional and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated and will promptly be reported to the appropriate authorities.
7. For a given topic we discuss in class, you do not have to worry about what the “correct” position is. What your position is for the topic is not as important as how you arrive at that position and how sound your
logic is. For the same reason, don’t make efforts to second-guess your instructor’s own position regarding a certain topic. It is simply irrelevant.

**Interacting with me**

If you have any questions or concerns about the subject matter or your performance in this course, I urge you to contact me; sooner is better than later, but anytime is better than no time. One of the easiest ways to communicate with me is by email at tshin@sdsu.edu. Please feel free to call at 619-594-1913 or stop by at my office at SSE 3365. Usually I am able to respond to an email within two (2) business days. In most cases, the response time is much shorter than that. If I do not have a definite answer to your question within that timeframe, I will at least acknowledge the receipt of your email and assure you that I will be working on it.

When you send an email to me, please consider putting an easily identifiable subject. I recommend “MGT 444 Section 1: Questions about Utilitarian Theory” for example. Note that this subject includes the course number, section number, and the topic.

My job, first and foremost, is to make sure everyone is successful. Please help me do my job as best as possible. Let me know how you feel about your progress, what works and what doesn’t, and anything that we can do to maximize your learning effectiveness.

Although I am here to help you, please do not wait until the day before the exam (or even the day of the exam) to ask specific questions about test materials. If you have specific questions or need general assistance, make sure that you discuss with me, either in class, in person, or via email, well before the scheduled exam. To be absolutely fair to everyone in class, I cannot give to select students last-minute information that may compromise the integrity of the exam. Keeping up with the material as we go through the semester is the best strategy.

**Course Schedule and Required Readings (subject to change)**

Tuesday, August 25. Introduction and Course Overview
- This syllabus

Thursday, August 27. Justice Theory

Tuesday, September 1. Issue 1: Pharmaceuticals and Justice

Thursday, September 3. Rights Theory

Tuesday, September 8. Issue 2: Employee Right

Thursday, September 10. Utilitarian Theory

Tuesday, September 15. Issue 3: Product Safety

Thursday, September 17. Objectivist Theory

Tuesday, September 22. Issue 4: Price Gouging

Thursday, September 24. Social Contract Theory

Tuesday, September 29. Student presentations

Thursday, October 1. Issue 5: Sweatshops

Tuesday, October 6. The Ethic of Care

Thursday, October 8. Gender and Work-life Balance

Tuesday, October 13. Midterm Review

Thursday, October 20. Student Presentations

Thursday, October 22. Corporate Governance: A Primer

Tuesday, October 27. Corporate governance: Current Debates

Thursday, October 29. Shareholder Value Principle
Tuesday, November 3. Stakeholder Theory

Thursday, November 5. Issue 6: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Tuesday, November 10. **Student Presentations**

Thursday, November 12. Issue 7: Shareholder Activism

Tuesday, November 17. **Student Presentations**

Thursday, November 19. Issue 8: CEO Compensation

Tuesday, November 24. Issue 9: Hostile Takeovers and Poison Pills

Thursday, November 26. Thanksgiving. No class.

Tuesday, December 1. Issue 10: Internet Company IPOs

Thursday, December 3. Issue 11: Downsizing

Tuesday, December 8. Issue 12: Whistleblowing

Thursday, December 10. Final Review

Tuesday, December 15. 10:30am-12:30pm. **Final Exam**