I. Catalog Description and Credit Hours of Course:

A study of the ethical questions that arise in the context doing business in modern society. (3).

Interdisciplinary Nature of the Course:

Business is a social system. Normative ethical theory, a subdiscipline in philosophy, is a behavioral system. The two systems represented satisfy the requirements for a course being interdisciplinary. Since the two systems represented are drawn from different perspectives, this course satisfies the requirements for a 400-level designation. In this course, analytical philosophical techniques are employed to assess and resolve "real world" dilemmas confronted in the course of making business decisions.

II. Prerequisites:

Senior standing; completion of University Studies core curriculum.

III. Purposes or Objectives of the Course:

Students should be able to:

1. Discuss several different ethical theories and to articulate important ethical concepts and principles. (Objs. 2 & 3)
2. Identify the ethically significant features of problematic situations encountered in doing business. (Objs. 6, 7, & 9)
3. Relate the ethically significant features of a controversy in business to an ethical theory or principle. (Obj. 6)
4. Choose (and defend the choice of) a theory or principle for resolving an ethical dispute in business. (Objs. 3, 7, & 9)
5. Articulate and defend fundamental value choices as those choices apply to making ethical judgments in the business context. (Objs. 7 & 9)

IV. Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course the students will be able to:

1. define fundamental ethical theories and principles used in business ethics. (University Studies Objectives 1, 3, 7)
2. analyze and evaluate issues in business ethics holistically using ethical theories and principles and to defend a chosen course of action. (University Studies Objectives 2, 7, 9)
3. identify and discuss interdisciplinary aspects of business ethics problems. (University Studies Objectives 2, 6, 7, 9)
V. Expectations of Students:

1. Attend class regularly (be prepared to be called on in class).

2. Participate in class discussions

3. Complete five (5) written case study reports.

4. Participate in a group oral debate

5. Prepare an interdisciplinary written research project.

6. Complete a mid-term and final examination (essay exam style).

VI. Course Outline:

1. Overview of Ethical Theory 6 hours
   
   A. The Need for Ethics in Business
      1. Ethical and Legalistic Thinking
      2. Trends in Business Ethics
         a. Proliferation of Codes of Ethics
         b. Ethics Committees and Ombudsmen
   
   B. Main Types of Ethical Theory
      1. Deontological
      2. Utilitarian
      3. Religious
   
   C. Aspects of an Ethical Theory
      1. Theory of Duty or Obligation
      2. Theory of Value
   
   D. Using Ethical Theory in Making Business Decisions

2. The Concept of Responsibility 12 hours
   
   A. Responsibility
   
   B. Responsibility and Liability
   
   C. Role Responsibility
      1. Social Roles
         a. Individual responsibility and individual values
         b. Corporate culture and corporate responsibility
         c. Top management values and responsibility
      2. Business as a Social Role
   
   D. Social Responsibility
      1. Two Kinds (non-maleficence, benefactor)
      2. Duty to Society (e.g., plant relocation, plant closing)
      3. Environmental Responsibility (e.g., hazardous waste)
   
   E. Responsibility in Multinational Settings
      1. Cultural relativism in standards of responsibility
3. Business Honesty and Deception  
   A. Why is Deception Wrong?  
   B. Honesty, Non-disclosure and Deception  
   C. Business and Deception  
      1. Marketing 
         a. Advertising deception  
         b. Sales deception  
         c. Research deception  
      2. Accounting 
         a. Dual sets of books  
         b. Deceptive Statistics  
         c. Auditing Practices  
         d. Conflicts of Interest  
      3. Finance 
         a. Insider Trading  
         b. Mergers  
         c. Banking Concerns  
      4. Management 
         a. Employee rights 
            1. Rights and Duties  
            2. Rights and Responsibilities  
         b. Employee safety  
         c. Privacy  
         d. Whistle-blowing  

3. Economic and Social Justice  
   A. Distributive Justice  
      1. Egalitarianism  
      2. Utilitarianism  
      3. Marxism  
      4. Meritocracy  
   B. Social Justice  
   C. Affirmative Action (Social Responsibility)  
      1. Moral Justification  
      2. Legal Justification  
      3. Contrasted with Reverse Discrimination  

VII. Textbook:  

VIII. Basis of Student Evaluation:  
   1. 20% of the course grade will be based on the case studies, one of which must address an issue in international business ethics.  
   2. 10% of the grade will be based on the debate performance
3. 30% of the grade will be based on the research project, with special attention paid to the interdisciplinary character of the underlying research.

4. 40% of the grade will be based on the examinations (20% each)

IX. Justification for Inclusion in University Studies Program:

The justification for inclusion is presented by the objective.

1. Demonstrate the ability to locate and gather information.

   Emphasis: Significant

   Course Content: This objective is addressed tangentially by the content of the course described in section III (C) of the course outline. Data location and gathering methods, however, are not a principal focus on the course material.

   Teaching Strategies: Lectures and discussions will be used to identify resources from which material for the case studies can be gathered. Business, philosophical, and mass consumption journals will be discussed as will available indexes. Lectures on research methods, library finders tours, etc, are not anticipated.

   Student Assignments: Assignments 1-3 listed under section VIII above require students to locate, gather and analyze data. In the case studies, for example, students will be expected to locate "real world" business ethics dilemmas (journals, news programs, public affairs programs, etc.), explain the nature of the ethical dilemma faced, and evaluate the reasoning used by the people involved in the situation to resolve the dilemma.

   Student Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the basis of the quality, sophistication and diversity of resources. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the course, the research paper should utilize both business and philosophical resources. The diversity of resources to which a student appeals is one measure of the degree to which a student is treating the course in a truly interdisciplinary manner.

2. Demonstrate capabilities for critical thinking reasoning and analyzing.

   Emphasis: Significant

   Course Content: To the extent that the clarification of terms and concepts, the evaluation of positions, and the evaluation of arguments adduced in favor of positions, and the evaluation of arguments adduced in favor of positions constitutes on facet of critical thinking, the entire content of the course addresses this objective.

   Teaching Strategies: The principal teaching strategy to be employed address this objective is the Sokratic examination of students in class (both by the instructors and by other students). The group debates will also address this objective to the extent that a debate requires the marshalling of arguments in support of one's own position and the preparation of arguments to counter the other side's position.

   Student Assignments: The debate, research project, and essay examinations address this objective. In each of these exercises, students will be expected to, among other things, draw distinctions, evaluate features of a situation for ethical relevance, and argue in support of a particular position. All of these are critical thinking skills.
Student Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the quality of their reasoning. The consistency, specificity, topicality, thoroughness of explication, etc., demonstrated in a student’s reasoning will all be weighed in evaluating student performance.

3. Demonstrate effective communication skills.

Emphasis: Significant

Course Content: The importance of effective communication is addressed directly by the material in section III of the course outline. Ethical problems sometimes arise simply as a result of infelicitous communication. Clear articulation of responsibilities, duties, expectations, etc., are essential to the ethical conduct of business activities.

Teaching Strategies: The two principal teaching strategies to be employed to achieve this objective are (a) strong emphasis on precise presentation of material in class during lectures, and (b) Socratic examination of students in class about the material under discussion with emphasis on precision and clarity of the student responses.

Student Assignments: All student assignments listed above address this objective directly. Presentations, whether written or oral, cannot be counted as successful unless effective communication skills are employed.

Student Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the mechanics of their presentations (grammar, spelling, etc.), the clarity and precision of their presentations, and the overall effectiveness of their presentations.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present.

Emphasis: Some

Course Content: The material presented in section I (A) (2) and in section II of the course outline touches on this objective to the extent that there is (a) a historical context for modern business ethics and that context is relevant to current practices, and (b) that responsibility is an evolving, not a static concept. The notion of responsibility, particularly corporate responsibility, has undergone tremendous change in the last 150 years and understanding that change is important for understanding current views.

Teaching Strategies: The principal teaching strategy to be employed is the lecture. Some discussion of historical developments will be included.

Student Assignments: No student assignments relative to this objective are envisioned.

Student Evaluation: Students will not be evaluated on the basis of this objective.

5. Demonstrate an understanding of various cultures and their interrelationships.

Emphasis: Considerable

Course Content: The inter-cultural aspect of business ethics is addressed directly in section II (e) of the course outline. The various problems that the cultural relativity of business practices generates for the multi-national corporation will be discussed at some length.

Teaching Strategies: The only teaching strategy currently envisioned to implement this objective is lecture discussion.
Student Assignments: At least one of the case studies prepared by the students will address this objective directly. Students will be required to present a case study on an ethical issue that arises primarily as a result of the multi-national setting.

Student Evaluation: The basis for student evaluation on this objective will be the case study. The degree to which students demonstrate an understanding of how it is that cultural diversity generates an ethical dilemma will be the principal factor in evaluating student performance.

6. Demonstrate the ability to integrate the breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience.

Emphasis: Considerable

Course Content: This objective is addressed directly in sections II (C & D) and III (C) and section IV of the course outline. Problems of business ethics arise in complex settings in which diverse factors interact. Genuine understanding of an ethical problem requires an understanding of how factors such as economics, business practices, cultural values, aesthetic preferences, etc., interact.

Teaching Strategies: The main teaching strategy envisioned to achieve this objective is the lecture discussion.

Student Assignments: All student assignments mentioned above address these objective to some degree. However, this objective is not a principal focus of any assignment.

Student Evaluation: On all assignments students will be evaluated on the degree to which they incorporate diverse factors into their analyses of ethical problems. For instance, in dealing with environmental issues, students would be expected to display at least a rudimentary familiarity with relevant scientific data. Evaluation on this objective, however, is not a central focus of the course.

7. Demonstrate the ability to make informed, intelligent value decisions.

Emphasis: Significant

Course Content: The entire content of this course directly addresses the ability to make informed, intelligent value decisions.

Teaching Strategies: The principal teaching strategy to be employed in achieving this objective is Socratic examination of the students. Students will be encouraged to articulate principles of business ethics which will then be subjected to argument by counter-example, argument by undesirable logical consequences, etc. Significant attention will be paid to the confluence of choosing an ethical principle and choosing a way of life.

Student Assignments: All the student assignments listed above address this objective to some degree. In all assignments students will be expected to identify morally relevant features of a situation, relate such features to an ethical principle, choose (and defend the choice of) an ethical principle, and articulate a decisions based of relevant facts and applicable principles.

Student Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the cogency, the consistency and the completeness of their reasoning. Special attention will be paid to the ethical consequences of actions as those consequences enter into a students decision-making process.

8. Demonstrate the ability to make informed, sensitive aesthetic responses.

Emphasis: Some

Course Content: Although the objective itself is not directly addressed by the content of the course, the ability described is a necessary but not sufficient condition for understanding material contained in section II (d) of the course outline. Without the ability to make informed, sensitive aesthetic
judgments, one simply cannot appreciate the force of an argument to the effect that placing oil rigs off the coast of Big Sur or building a mall on the site of Manassas Battlefield is aesthetically grotesque. But understanding the force of an argument is necessary if one hopes either to respond to or to refute it.

**Teaching Strategies:** The principal teaching strategy to be employed in achieving this objective is lecture/discussion with emphasis on discussion. Students will be encouraged to attempt to articulate aesthetic responses and to incorporate them into arguments for or against particular actions.

**Student Assignments:** No student assignments are envisioned relative to this objective, although students could choose case study or debate topics which necessarily involve aesthetic issues.

**Student Evaluation:** Students will not be evaluated on the basis of this objective unless they undertake an optional project which requires it. Should that be the case, students will be evaluated on the basis of their ability to articulate an aesthetic position (as distinct from voicing personal tastes) and to incorporate that position into a broader argument.

9. **Demonstrate the ability to function responsibly in one's natural, social and political environment.**

**Emphasis:** Significant

**Course Content:** The point of a course in business ethics is responsible behavior in a complex environment. Accordingly, the entire content of the course addresses this objective. However, to the extent that the operative word in this objective is 'responsible', the material presented in section II of the outline is of primary interest.

**Teaching Strategies:** The principal teaching strategy to be employed in achieving this objective is Socratic examination of students with questions such as "What would you do in this situation?" followed up by either criticisms or requests for reasons for the action chosen. In all such exchanges, attention will be paid to the "ecology of social roles".

**Student Assignments:** All student assignments listed above relate to this objective, but the debate and term paper are of special significance.

**Student Evaluation:** Student will be evaluated on the basis of their understanding of role responsibilities and the interactions between roles. Students will be expected to display an understanding of the impact a particular decision might have in areas other than that in which the decision is made (i.e. economic, political, legal repercussions of a decision, etc.). Ultimately, responsible action requires a genuinely interdisciplinary approach to action--business decisions are not made in a social vacuum and students will be expected to display some familiarity with the broad range of considerations that go into making an ethical business decision.

X. **Background:** This course is designed to be team taught. At least one member of the team should have formal training in both theoretical and applied ethics and one other member of the team should have formal training in at least one of the business disciplines mentioned in the course description section III (C). A team consisting of more than two members would be highly desirable (allowing additional expertise) but fiscal realities make such a prospect highly unlikely.

XI. **Class Size:** Given that this course will be taught seminar style and that it is both writing and research intensive, maximum class size should be 25.