

Management 4803
Social and Ethical Responsibilities of Business Organizations and Managers

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Stories of questionable behavior by business organizations and by individuals within them are reported in the business press on a near-daily basis. While some of these behaviors are explicitly illegal, in other cases they don't clearly violate any formal statutes or regulations, but are still controversial because they represent a violation of business or professional ethics. But what does it mean for an organization (or a manager) to behave "ethically" or "unethically"?

This course is designed to familiarize students with contemporary thinking and issues in business ethics. Specific topics include: an introduction to ethical frameworks that are commonly applied to evaluate the "rightness" or "wrongness" of actions; the evaluation of competing perspectives on the role of business in society (e.g., Is a corporation really only responsible to shareholders?); and an examination of a variety of ethical dilemmas that present themselves on a routine basis in the business context (e.g., employee privacy issues, marketing of "vices" such as tobacco and alcohol, corporate governance, product safety, etc.). In addition, we consider how organizations facilitate ethical (or unethical) conduct through codes of ethics, organizational culture and incentives, leadership, etc. And finally, we explore how managers themselves make decisions that may have important ethical ramifications.

COURSE PREREQUISITE

Junior/senior status