



Universidad  
de Alcalá



# Course Guide

## Business Ethics

No final exam in may, no extraordinary exam in june One unexcused absence allowed

Degree in Economía, Economía y  
Negocios Internacionales,  
Administración y Dirección de  
Empresas y Contabilidad y Finanzas

Academic Year 2022/2023  
Year 3-4 - Term 2

## Course Guide

Course Name:	Business Ethics
Code	361031
Degree:	Economía y Negocios Internacionales, Economía, Administración y Dirección de Empresas y Contabilidad y Finanzas
Department Area	Economía y Dirección de Empresas Organización de Empresas
Type:	optional subject
ECTS Credits:	6
Course and term	3rd, 4th- second term
Teacher : Faculty responsible	Pablo Contreras <a href="mailto:Teresa.del.Val@uah.es">Teresa del Val ( mteresa.val@uah.es)</a>
Office Hours:	: By appointment
Language:	English

### 1. OVERVIEW

What this course is not:

This is not a business course. Loyola University Maryland in Madrid offers a rich sequence of courses in the field of economy, marketing and financial issues that fulfil that mission admirably. Nor is this course a survey of the main contents of the current debate on the moral/immoral nature of business world from an economical perspective.

What this course is:

This is a *moral philosophy* course. A course concerned with determining the theoretical dimension of moral conflicts in the sphere of human life, social organisation and human society. In order to achieve this objective, it will be necessary to understand what we are talking about when we talk about “philosophy,” “moral philosophy,” “ethics,” “moral judgments,” “truth,” “action,” “deliberation,” “decision,” “justice,” “virtue,” “happiness,” etc. These concepts lead us to a critical reflection on main questions like: What is the connection between living, thinking, and morality? What does it mean to think morally? What is morally wrong? What is right? Why should I act morally? What does this mean? Are there absolute moral truths? If so, can we know what they are? If not, can we still

be moral? Are there any conflicts between my personal interests and my moral actions? If this is so, again, why should I act morally? These are some of the questions that we will be thinking through together in this philosophy course, not in order to answer them in a definitive form – once and for all – but with the aim of underlining the relevance they do have for us.

## OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to offer the students a philosophical background in the field of ethics and moral philosophy. Special emphasis will be made on the way that *critical thinking* is important in everyday life at many levels.

Following this premise, some specific goals will be:

- to gain an understanding of the main philosophical concepts relating to ethics and morals;
- to develop a more responsible attitude in connection with moral judgements and actions from a rationally justified perspective;
- to develop the ability of recognising ethical matters and moral conflicts and dilemmas;
- to stimulate moral sensibility and moral imagination;
- to develop argumentative abilities in the sphere of moral convictions;
- to show the importance of logical coherence when evaluating the behaviour of others and of ourselves as rational and moral agents.

Students at Alcalá University will have the chance to share their studies with American alumni.

Prerequisites: This course does not require any special knowledge of philosophy, as that is what it is providing. However, participants should have an interest in philosophy, ethics, and discussion.

## 2. SKILLS

<b>General skills:</b>	
<b>skill 1:</b>	Ability to analyze and synthesize

<b>skill 2:</b>	Ability to gather and select information relevant to each specific area of study
<b>skill 3:</b>	Textual analysis and interpretation skills, completing exercises and problem solving.
<b>skill 4:</b>	Skills relating to the gathering, analysis and processing of sources of information relevant to the study of ethics phenomena.
<b>skill 5:</b>	Practical and first-hand experience of the identification and interpretation of ethic questions

#### Specific skills:

<b>skill 1:</b>	to gain an understanding of the main philosophical concepts relating to ethics and morals;
<b>skill 2:</b>	to develop a more responsible attitude in connection with moral judgements and actions from a rationally justified perspective;
<b>skill 3:</b>	to develop the ability of recognising ethical matters and moral conflicts and dilemmas;
<b>skill 4:</b>	to stimulate moral sensibility and moral imagination
<b>Skill 5:</b>	to develop argumentative abilities in the sphere of moral convictions
<b>Skill 6</b>	to show the importance of logical coherence when evaluating the behaviour of others and of ourselves as rational and moral agents.

### 3. COURSE CONTENT

This course will cover the following topics:

#### *What is Moral Philosophy About?*

- Introducing our topic.
- Living, thinking, and choosing – their meaning Film no. 1: *Cat People* (Jacques Tourneur, 1942)
- Living, thinking, and choosing – their meaning (cont.). Film no. 2: *My Life to Live* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1962)
- What do we believe in? Can we make our beliefs coherent? What types of morality can we enumerate?
- How do we formulate our moral judgements? Film no. 3: *Twelve Angry Men* (Sydney Lumet, 1957)

### *A Modern Threat to Ethics?*

- The death of God

### *Introducing Some Moral Dilemmas*

- Should we always obey the rules? Film no. 4: *A Few Good Men* (Bob Reiner, 1992)
- Is war morally justifiable? Film no. 5: *Shame* (Ingmar Bergman, 1968)
- What does it mean to be “human”? Film no. 6: *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982)

### *More Modern Threats to Ethics*

- Relativism
- Egoism
- Determinism

### *Issues in Business Ethics*

- Students’ presentations
- Provisional conclusions

## 4. METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

### 4.1. Distribution of credits

Number of hours: 150

<b>Number of class hours: 40</b>	
<b>Number of independent study hours: 110</b>	

## 4.2. Additional notes on class attendance and general code of conduct

<b>Note on chatting, food and drinks in class</b>	Many university professors abroad consider it quite disrespectful or even insulting if you chat, eat or drink during class. Your professors will require your full participation and undivided attention. Eat, drink, go to the bathroom, chat before or after class or during your break if the class is long. Make an effort to dress comfortably but properly for class as well, out of respect for your professor and your host university.
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### Class attendance

1.- If students miss courses their final grade will be systematically lowered (one unexcused absence allowed). 0.5 points lowered per absence (our scale: 0 to 10) per class of an hour and a half.

2.- Coming late to class. Students who come to class more than 15 minutes late will not be allowed to enter. Being about 10 minutes late is acceptable. If those 10 minutes late happen frequently the professor will talk to the student and give her/him a warning before lowering her/his grade.

C. Finally, you must remember that you are ambassadors of the United States and of Loyola University Maryland in Spain. People will judge our country and our college through your attitude and behaviour abroad. You must respect the Loyola code of conduct abroad, Spanish Law and all the rules of your host university. You may not put yourself or others at risk or ruin the reputation of Loyola University Maryland in Spain by your behaviour.

I am sure you will all agree that all these guidelines are based on common sense and that they will help you have a productive and most pleasant semester in Spain.

## 5. ASSESSMENT: Procedures, assessment and grading criteria

Midterm exam: 25%

Final exam: 25%

Presentations and participation: 50%

Students will be evaluated on a sliding scale A-F as per their exams, group presentations, and participation in class discussion. The objective of this course is to gain understanding on moral problems and to develop the ability of argumentative abilities referring to practical dilemmas and conflicts. Therefore, *discussion* will be specially taken into consideration.

Group presentations should normally involve three students and be no longer than 15 minutes.

## 6. REQUIRED READING

The textbook for the course is Simon Blackburn, *Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), originally published in 2001 as *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*.

## FILMS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Some of the above listed topics will be discussed and completed by means of films. Films are not only a way of entertainment, but also and primarily a critical instrument of debate and reflection. In this course we will watch and discuss the following films:

- *Cat People*, Jacques Tourneur (1942)
- *Twelve Angry Men*, Sidney Lumet (1957)
- *My Life to Live*, Jean-Luc Godard (1962)
- *Shame*, Ingmar Bergman (1968)
- *Blade Runner*, Ridley Scott (1982)
- *A Few Good Men*, Bob Reiner (1992)

Other additional activities will be announced in due course.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu>

## 7. INFORMATION NOTE

The University of Alcalá guarantees its students that, if due to health requirements the competent authorities prevent the total or partial presence of the teaching activity, the teaching plans will achieve their objectives through a teaching-learning and evaluation methodology in online format, which will return to the face-to-face modality as soon as these impediments cease.