COURSE DESCRIPTION

No Text Required

This course explores the historical relationships between business, government, and society and the variety of economic/political forms those relationships took over time. It examines the interests of various ‘stakeholders’ and the degree to which those interests were competing, conflicting, or converging. We will examine more closely who is winning and who is losing in today’s global economy and implications for business and public policy. We will take a critical look at current business principles and practices and consider their impacts on society. We will debate the merits and demerits of current and proposed government policies. As such, this is a course about beliefs, values, and ideologies on one hand and reality and practicality on the other. You will be challenged to develop personal beliefs, values, principles and practices that you can rely on in your professional and personal life. The course will also prepare you to better participate in a democratic society.

The course centers on a number of inquiries concerning business and its relationship to government and society. It provides information and discussions addressing these important topics. As the course progresses, you are encouraged to consider and reconsider your answers to these questions.

1) What is business - in the past and currently?
2) How should business relate to its many stakeholders?
3) What are the proper roles and relationships for business, government, and society?
4) What rights and what responsibilities should business have?
5) What is a reasonable profit and what is theft?
6) Has the pursuit of private gain been at the expense of the public good?
7) Taxes: who should pay and how much?
8) Does the mechanism of the marketplace ‘automatically’ correct abuse and concentrations of monopolistic power or is regulation required? If required, what should be regulated and how?
9) Is global free trade more of a gain or more of a loss for the human race? Why?
10) Given the various issues that we studied in this course, what are your main conclusions about business practices today and their impacts on a democratic society? What changes would you recommend and how could they be achieved?

Rather than depend on a text, we will use many sources to provide us with current information regarding these questions. Some of those sources will be provided; some you will need to discover through research. Success in this course requires attendance, participation, ‘tuning into the news,’ searching for authoritative information, considering the views of others, and thinking.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

You will:
1. Develop an understanding of the interests of business, society, and government and the impacts of those interests on a variety of stakeholders.
2. Develop a deeper understanding of ethics and their application to business.
3. Learn a variety of strategies and techniques that business organizations can use in relating to their stakeholders and the difference between manipulative public relations tricks and sincere efforts to achieve mutually acceptable solutions.
4. Develop a personal set of beliefs, values, principles, and ethics that will form a foundation for your decisions and actions as managers, employees, customers, and citizens.
5. Begin to develop the courage to stand up for your convictions when it counts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

The assessment of each student’s work will be based upon the following using a 100 point scale:

10 % Attendance – each absence deducts 1 point on 100 point scale.
20 % Assignments – for on time submission of completed study questions and short research and reflection assignments. These assignments may include “tuning into the news” for current discussions of assigned topics relevant to class discussions. When reporting on news items, reference the source and date. Your answers and findings will not be graded; the grade is for doing and submitting the work on the assigned day. This is designed to encourage you to prepare for class discussions and also prepares you to provide better answers on the two tests. Late submissions will receive a 33 % penalty deduction.

40% Understanding of Key Issues - There will be two tests covering the assigned film(s), readings, lectures, and class discussions. Both tests will be a combination of multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. They are designed to test your understanding of the key issues and the facts and ideas related to those issues. Late tests will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances and will be subject to grade deductions unless a prior arrangement is made with the instructor.

25 % Individual Research & Team Presentation

Individual Research 15% - Each student will belong to a team investigating an assigned “State of the Union” topic. Each student is responsible for independent research on the assigned topic and will provide research related to the topic as a whole but may focus on specific aspects or subtopics. Based on this research, each student prepares a folder including a typed bibliography (minimum of 8 sources cited) followed by a short abstract describing the content and conclusions of each cited source. Copies of the first 1-2 pages of cited articles should be included. Readable copies of relevant charts and graphs should also be included. The research should include sources from both sides of any argument and reflect the different points of view. Each student is also responsible for a series of PowerPoint slides (min 8 / max 12) summarizing research findings and displaying illustrative tables or graphs when available.
Team Presentation 10% - Class sessions will include a period of time for team sharing of research findings and discussion of their meaning. The team should meet outside of class prior to its presentation and merge the individual PowerPoint slides onto one disk or flash drive. Please insert a title/name page at the beginning of each team member’s slides. The team should also provide a copy of the slides (3/page) for the instructor just prior to the presentation. After merging the individual slides, the team is responsible for reaching conclusions about the “State of the Union” for that topic and to answer the key question provided with each topic. This should be a written document with an outline presented at the end of the PowerPoint. Majority and minority reports may be necessary. It is not acceptable to make this the responsibility of only one person.

5% Proposed Solutions – each student will write a short paper focused on one of the problems discussed in the class and propose business practices or government policies that might offer plausible solutions to those problems. Please describe the problem using a paragraph format, but use an annotated bullet-point format for the solution(s). Each student should be prepared to briefly describe the problem and proposed solution(s) to the class. The grading for these papers and presentations consists of an assessment of the student’s critical analysis of the problems, credibility of evidence supporting the analysis, sufficiency of proposed solutions, originality of solutions, and quality of writing.

COURSE OUTLINE & ASSIGNMENTS
(This schedule is subject to modification and additional short assignments may be added).

3/30  1. It’s Just Business: Once Upon a Time

4/1  2. It’s Just Business: Business Today & The State of the Union

Assignment for 4/6: Read the 3 Adam Smith articles which are provided on Blackboard and submit completed study questions (2 sets) which are also found there.

Assignment for 5/4: As a team, view The Corporation DVD (2 hours 30 minutes) and individually submit completed study questions.

4/6  3. The Way It Was Meant to Be: Adam Smith

4/8  4. The Way It Was Meant to Be: The American Vision

Assignments for 4/13: Conduct a quick internet study regarding the meaning of “The Common Good” and submit completed study questions. Also begin individual research on assigned team topics.

4/13  5. The Way It Was Meant to Be: The Common Good
Assignment for 4/15: 1) Read assigned selections from the US Constitution and complete study questions. 2) Research current political arguments between Democrats and Republicans regarding the need for and effectiveness of federal government regulations vs. market competition and corrections; submit a 1 page description summarizing your findings.

4/15  6. The Way It Was Meant to Be: The US Constitution

Assignments for 4/20: Read the New Yorker article, “The Greed Cycle,” by John Cassidy and submit completed study questions.


Assignment for 4/22:  1) Read assigned John C Bogle material and submit completed study questions. 2) Explore news items regarding the 2007/2008 meltdown of Wall Street/Financial Markets and write a brief 2 page report of the key causes and the impacts of “Wall Street” practices on all other types of businesses (Main Street) and on the economy.


Assignment for 4/27: Individual research for team’s State of Union topic.

4/27  9. Team Time for Research Project

Assignments for 4/29: Prepare for TEST ONE covering the early history of business, Adam Smith, the American Vision, the Common Good, the US Constitution, the Enterprise Triangle, the Greed Cycle article, the John Bogle readings, and Wall Street research, as well as the lectures and class discussions on all these topics. The test will not cover the DVD on Corporations.

4/29  10. TEST ONE

Assignments for 5/4: 1) Read “History of Corporations” articles and submit completed study questions. 2) Also, remember that the film, The Corporation, must have been viewed and study questions individually submitted.

5/4  11. The Way It Is: Corporations & Their Practices; Corporations & Government; Corporatism

5/6  12. Wall Street, Corporations, and Ethics

Assignment for 5/11: Complete PowerPoint presentations for topics 1 & 2. Make copy of PowerPoint (3 slides per page, full page for unreadable graphs) and provide to the instructor just prior to the presentation.
5/11  13. State of the Union Reports 1 & 2

Assignment for 5/13: Complete PowerPoint presentations for topics 3 & 4. Make copy of PowerPoint (3 slides for page, full page for unreadable graphs) and provide to the instructor just prior to presentation.

5/13  13/14. State of the Union Report 3 & 4

Assignment for 5/18: Complete PowerPoint presentations for topics 5 & 6. Make copy of PowerPoint (3 slides per page, full page for unreadable graphs) and provide to the instructor just prior to the presentation.


Assignments for 5/20: 1) Read article “Do Corporations Rule the World?” and submit completed study questions. 2) Read article to be assigned and submit completed study questions. 3) Also scan the Preface to “Confessions of an Economic Hit Man”(no study questions).

5/20  15. Do Financial Markets & Corporations Rule the World?

Assignment for 5/25: Individual review of problems discussed thus far in class.

5/25  16. Is America’s Fall Inevitable?

Assignment for 5/27: Prepare for Test Two covering “The Corporation,” the history of corporations, corporations and government, ethics, “Do Corporations Rule the World,” the assigned article, as well as class lectures and discussions on these topics.

5/27  17. TEST TWO

Assignment for 6/3: Each student will write a short paper (see Course Requirements section above) focused on one of the problems discussed in the class and describe plausible solution(s). These will be briefly presented and discussed in class.

6/1 No Class: Individual Preparation of Solutions Paper

6/3  18. Class Solutions