

IBUS3104: Ethical International Business Decisions

Week 1: Moral Reasoning and Philosophy

Week 2: Utilitarian ethics

Week 3: Deontological ethics

Week 4: Virtue ethics

Week 5: Situational Analysis

Week 6: Corporate Social Responsibility

Week 7: Ethical Dilemmas in International Marketing

Week 8: Distributive Justice and Fair Trade

Week 9: Ethics in International Finance and Accounting

Week 10: Group Presentations

Week 11: Ethical dilemmas in HR management: the fair workplace

Week 12: Climate change and other super wicked problems

Week 1: Moral Reasoning and Philosophy

What are ethics? And what is ethical?

- Morals
- Reasoning
- Weighing up the pros and cons
- Subjective
- Distinguishing between right and wrong
- “The philosophy of morality; of right and wrong”

The origins of ethics

- One of the first moral philosophers was Socrates:
 - What makes a good person?
 - What is right, wrong, just, unjust, pure or impure?
 - How can we justify our moral opinions?
 - Is there a general ethics or single moral code?
 - What makes a good business person?

Systematic study of morality

- What is right?
- Why is it right?
- How to do the right thing?

What is the purpose of business?

- Profit for shareholders/owners (Friedman)
- Supply the needs and wants of customers = better and more economic goods and services (Drucker)
- Business is a social enterprise; its mandate and limits are both set by society (DeGeorge)
- If business continues to view itself as purely economic, rather than social and quasi-political institution, it can only continue to incur the hostility of people and perpetuate the image of itself as an amoral, and possibly immoral, institution – Klein, 1988

Course framework

- Ethical reasoning – what is the right thing to do?
 - Deontological ethics
 - Teleological ethics
 - Virtue-based ethics
- Analytical ethics – why? What is the foundation of our ethical reasoning?
- Practical ethics – how to make sure we actually do what we think is the right thing to do?

Readings

Tech has no moral code. It is everyone's job now to fight for one; O'Shea

- The common view is that a tiny minority has been making money by disrupting things at the expense of the majority
- Coding is about writing the most elegant program to get a computer to complete a task
- Ethical considerations are often considered outside the engineers' remit or above their pay grade – for others to ponder, while they build stuff
- The problem with this outlook is that digital technology is so widely used, the coders who write the programs need to anticipate the needs of others, their vulnerabilities and circumstances: a significant and complex task
- Issues arise because of many factors, including the profit motive, rushed design, and a lack of diversity among technology workers, which reduces the chances that thoughtful programs will be written, with sufficient attention paid to issues of diversity and discrimination

- Also need to consider who software engineers are accountable to – their chief executives, themselves or the public?
- Builders of digital technology need space, and encouragement, to discuss the resources they need, if they are to work in ways that are respectful and focused on the needs of users
- Proper regulation of these industries by governments is well overdue, but it's not a total answer.
- Workers need the power to resist the business model that creates these problems, and they often have good ideas about how to solve them
- What might such problem-solving look like?
 - Ethical training
 - Allowing users to know what data is collected about them, and giving them the choice of what and how they want to share
 - Actively considering the experience of a diverse cohort of users, and involving them in the development and beta testing of new programs and tools.
- Oversight by humans may be more expensive than automation, but it is essential and unavoidable if we want to improve our digital environment