

**Course Name:**

Business Ethic PHL 211 (Department of Philosophy/College of Arts and Sciences)

**Instructor:**

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**Library Faculty Member for Collaboration:**

George Aulisio

**Course Description:**

Building on the goals and objectives of the University of Scranton, this course examines the need for and development of ethical decision-making skills for critically analyzing ethical issues in business. Successful completion of this course will prepare the learner to: (i) recognize and identify fundamental philosophical theories, concepts, and principles, (ii) identify and critically evaluate ethical issues in business, (iii) apply ethical theories, principles and concepts to defend one's position on particular business ethical issues and dilemmas. In this course, we will discuss such topics as: economic justice, social justice, human rights, corporate responsibility, corporate social responsibility (CSR), employee-employer obligations, consumerism, advertising, environmental ethics, animal rights, privacy, discrimination, affirmative action, sexual harassment, intellectual property rights, honesty, fairness, integrity, and health and safety. The course will draw upon the philosophical foundations of the Western heritage developed in Ethics 210, as well as current business practices and research.

**Need for Information Literacy:**

Business ethics permeates all facets of one's life regardless if a student is a business major. This is evidenced by the fact that all students are consumers of business products and services, and upon graduation from college and/or post-graduate education, most students will become employees or employers. As such, it is essential that students develop skills of critical thinking to better analyze business practices, policies and services.

In this age of increased social media, many students are unaware of copyright laws, intellectual property rights and methods for evaluating the resources.

Information literacy skills can help students develop critical thinking skills necessary to make educated choices supported by reliable and trustworthy resources.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Integrate Information Literacy into Business Ethics (PHL 211). Students will develop critical thinking skills related to Blooms Taxonomy of: analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In particular:

- Students will be introduced to the extensive resource materials and methods available for research.
- Students will utilize resources in application of critical thinking skills.
- Students will learn to evaluate sources and information for efficacy
- Students will learn to properly cite resources utilizing programs available through the library.
- Students will cultivate awareness of the ethical and legal implications of research material and intellectual property.

### **Student Learning Outcomes Linked to Mission Statement:**

The learning outcomes are directly linked to the Mission Statement of the University of Scranton, particularly related to the highlighted points:

*The University of Scranton is a Catholic and Jesuit University animated by the spiritual vision and the **tradition of excellence** characteristic of the Society of Jesus and those who share its way of proceeding. The **University is a community dedicated to the freedom of inquiry and personal development fundamental to the growth in wisdom and integrity** of all who share its life.*

### **Information Literacy Standards Applied to Student Learning Outcomes:**

#### **1. *The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently (Standard 2).***

- Student will construct and implement effectively designed searches appropriate for specific engines.
  - Identify keywords, synonyms, and related terms for the information.
  - Select controlled vocabulary specific to the discipline of business ethics or the informational retrieval source
- Student will retrieve information using a variety of methods.
  - Use various search engines and databases
  - Use in person services available at the University to retrieve information (e.g., interlibrary loan/document delivery, professional associations, institutional research offices, community resources, experts, and practitioners)

#### **2. *The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system (Standard 3).***

- Student will compare new knowledge with prior knowledge and in-class teachings to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of the information
  - Determine if information satisfies research needs
  - Draw conclusions based upon research
  - Determine probable accuracy by questioning source of data and the limitations of data and the gathering tools
  - Integrates new information with previous information or knowledge.
- Determine whether the new knowledge has an impact on the individual's value system and takes steps to reconcile differences.

#### **3. *The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally (Standard 5).***

- Student understands the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology.
  - Identify issues of privacy and security in research
  - Identify issues related to free vs. fee-based access to information
  - Identify issues of censorship and freedom of speech
  - Demonstrate an understanding of intellectual property, copyright and fair use of copyrighted material

- Student follows laws, regulations, institutional policies and etiquette related to the access and use of information resources.
  - Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and does not represent work attributable to others as one's own

### **Methods:**

1. *All students participated in an information literacy session with the Library Faculty Member specially designed for doing Business Ethics*
  - *Students were educated on general research citations.*
  - *Students were educated on specific search engines for researching businesses.*
  - *Students were educated on structure and purpose of annotated bibliography.*
  - *Students were educated on copyright, fair use, and academic integrity.*
2. *All students submitted a final project that analyzed the business practices of a pre-approved business. (Assignment criteria attached.)*
3. *All students submitted an annotated bibliography which included:*
  - *proper citation*
  - *brief description of the particular citation*
  - *brief personal reflection on significance and value of the particular citation and how it may be utilized (to show the student's ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the particular source.)*

### **Results/Conclusions:**

1. Student projects included a minimum of ten (10) articles/resources cited compared with less than five (5) in previous years.
2. Students improved skills in critical analysis.\* Students provided in depth analysis of a corporation's business practices. Their analysis included specific business practices, as well as critical evaluations that were supported by research, rather than personal opinion. In the past, students resisted or failed to provide critical analysis of business practices. Their submissions were content rich in examples and research that supported their analysis.

*\*This was developed throughout the semester with mini-assignments that required research and practice with citations.*
3. The average grade: 88%
4. Unexpected benefit: The format of this project had the added benefit of providing an improved grading framework, viz., it provided an objective element for the instructor to assess the student's performance.

## **Highlights of Student Submissions:**

### **Annotated Bibliography:**

- Harquail, C. V. (2010, May 25). The Best PR that \$1.6 Million Can't Buy: Authenticity in Action at Zappos. *Authentic Organizations RSS*. Retrieved December 3, 2012, from <http://authenticorganizations.com/harquail/2010/05/25/the-best-pr-that-1-6-million-cant-buy-authenticity-in-action-at-zappos/>  
Zappos made a mistake in an online pricing error that cost Zappos \$1.6 million to honor the customer orders that have been placed during the time period of the online pricing error. Despite some people who argued that this was only a public relations ploy, Zappos' response reflected its core value that they would build open and honest relationship with communication. I utilized this case to explain the ethical consideration that Zappos would not try to look for a reason to invalidate customer orders, like other common business practices. Furthermore, Zappos also did not blame those who charged for making the coding error.
- Kreitner, R., & Kinicki, A. (2012). Chapter 1: Organizational Behavior: The Quest for People-Centered Organizations and Ethical Conduct. In *Organizational behavior* (10th ed., pp. 2-31). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.  
Robert Kreitner and Angelo Kinicki are both professors of the Arizona State University who discussed the success story of Zappos.Com, Inc. in the first chapter-opening case of their book. The authors also classified Zappos.Com, Inc. as one of people-centered organizations after Tony Hsieh, the CEO of Zappos.Com, Inc. helped in the "People-Centered Organizational" research conducted by Jeffrey Pfeffer of Stanford University. Pfeffer argued through people-centered organization, a company could create a new competitive advantage. Furthermore, Pfeffer believed that People-Centered Organization is ethical organization that would concern sustainability and protect human resources as well as natural resources. People-Centered Organization taught us that we should accept the challenge to do better job, whatever our roles in society, as employer, employee, entrepreneur, manager, or stockholder, because all of these efforts would improve quality of life for those who are affected by our behaviors. Both authors suggested that organizations are social intervention that helps us to achieve the goal collectively that we could not achieve them alone. Zappos tries to be a good global corporate citizen by building social capital that results in strong relationship, goodwill and trust. I believed this theory could help in explaining Zappos' organizational culture for delivering happiness to stakeholders. Moral consciousness of Zappos that organizational cannot stand alone without community.

- Byron, William J. "Part Nine." Faith-based Reflections on American Life. New York: Paulist, 2010. 173-75. Google Books. Paulist Press. Copyright. Web. Nov.-Dec. 2012.  
Father Byron reflected on the basis of his Corporate Social Responsibility Model in pages 173-175. He briefly explained which each aspect (economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary) and how they could be used to describe the reasons why each corporation makes the decisions that they do.
- Allentown, Pennsylvania: WEGMANS SUPERMARKET SETS PRECEDENT FOR ORGANICS DIVERSION.(2008). *Biocycle*, 49(1), 16-16.  
Abstract: Allentown Wegmans store started a waste diversion program after it opened. The arrangement has been so successful that Wegmans wants all of its supermarkets to follow suit with similar programs.  
Relevance: Useful for the discussion of sustainability and the environment.

### **In-Text Citations:**

*General comment: Student content was richer in details including examples and complete with more academic sources and improved citation methods. In addition, student assessments' of practices seemed more in-depth. In the past students would simply state a practice was "wrong", but did not provide any theory or reasons for their opinion. The focus on information literacy seemed to provide an avenue for the student to question practices and support their opinion with fact or research.*

- "Zappos.Com, Inc. was founded by Nick Swinmurn in 1999 as an e-commerce shoe store business and initially Tony Hsieh was only one of the investors of Zappos (Hsieh, 2010, *Delivering Happiness: A Path To Profits, Passion, And Purpose*). During these thirteen years, we have seen that the infant business corporation Zappos.Com, Inc. grew up into a giant multimillion dollar corporation, while other giant corporations were shaken to their cores by the fierce wind of aggressive global competition."
- "Now we come to the topic of environmental sustainability. As stated before, KFC states on their website that they are committed to reducing their environmental footprint. The Yum! Websites states that their plans to reduce their environmental impact are to have global energy and water consumption both down by 10% by 2015 and develop five LEED certifiable restaurants by 2012. (yum.com). As far as these plans are concerned – and if they are followed through – this is definitely a success for environmental sustainability. But while these future goals are a step forward into being more sustainable, just this year it was exposed that KFC has been supporting deforestation of the Indonesian rainforests and using this illegal timber for their paper goods (Golgowski, 1)."