

# Business & Economic Ethics

Philosophy 325

Dr. Stephen Hicks

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Of all the endeavors that have contributed to the quality of human life, business ranks with science, art, and education. Yet like all human endeavors, business raises its share of difficult ethical questions and problems. Our task this semester will be to explore those questions and problems.

We will divide our time equally between theory and practice. We will discuss the debates over egoism and altruism, and over capitalism and socialism; competing accounts of rights, justice, profits, and competition; and the nature of employer-employee and business-consumer relations. And we will discuss the practical implications of those debates through numerous real-life case studies.

## Course Readings

- David R. Henderson, editor. *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*. Available free online at <http://www.econlib.org/LIBRARY/CEE.html>. Also available in hardcover and paperback from Amazon.com and other sources.
- Burton Folson, *The Myth of the Robber Barons*
- Henry Hazlitt, *Economics in One Lesson*
- Stephen Hicks, *Cases and Readings in Business Ethics* binder packet
- Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (Signet)
- James Bowman, *Honor: A History*
- Monographs by Tara Smith and Timothy Sandefur

## Assignments and Grading

- Three point writings ..... 30
- Essay (April 20) ..... 20
- Participation ..... 20
- Exam ..... 30

## On the Essay

- Topic: “What is the Role of Honor in Business?” More information to come.
- 2000 words.
- Due: Tuesday, April 20, 6 p.m.
- Center for Ethics and Entrepreneurship prizes for the best essays in Philosophy 325: \$300 for First Place. \$100 each for two Honorable Mentions.

A copy of this syllabus and schedule can also be found online at [www.StephenHicks.org](http://www.StephenHicks.org).  
For Honor Code and Disability issues, consult the College’s website.

# Schedule and Readings

[CEE] = *Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*    [SH] = *Cases and Readings in Business Ethics*

Week	Lecture Topics	Readings
1 Jan 19	Introduction: Business, Wealth, and Modern Ethical Debates  One case in business history: Cornelius Vanderbilt	Folsom, Chapter 1
2 Jan 26	Two cases in business history: J. D. Rockefeller and James J. Hill	Folsom, Chapters 2 and 3
3 Feb 2	Ethical Principles: Egoism, Altruism, or Predation?  The Ethics of Free Markets versus Socialism	Stephen Hicks, "AR and Contemporary Business Ethics" [monograph]  Hazlitt, Chapter 1
4 Feb 9	<i>Honor: A History</i> Discussion 1  The Economics and Politics of Free Markets versus Socialism	Hazlitt, Chapters 2-3  Robert Hessen, "Capitalism" [CEE] Robert Heilbroner, "Socialism" [CEE] Robert A. Lawson, Economic Freedom [CEE]
5 Feb 16	Case: Minimum Wages  Case: Rent Control	Linda Gorman, "Minimum Wages" [CEE]  Walter Block, "Rent Control" [CEE]  [Optional: Hazlitt, Chapters 18 and 19]
6 Feb 23	<i>Honor: A History</i> Discussion 2  Case: The Tragedy of the Commons	Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" [CEE]
7 Mar 2	Guest Speaker: Roberto Salinas Leon  Overflow	
8 Mar 9	Spring Break: No classes	
9 Mar 16	<i>Honor: A History</i> Discussion 3  Ethics in Mixed Social Systems	Quotations on politicized business [SH]  Rand, <i>Atlas Shrugged</i> , Chapters 1-6
10 Mar 23	Ethics in Mixed Social Systems	Rand, <i>Atlas Shrugged</i> , Chapters 7-10
11	<i>Honor: A History</i> Discussion 4	

Mar 30	Case: <i>Kelo v. New London</i> Guest Speaker: Jeff Orduno	Institute for Justice & Supreme Court on <i>Kelo v. New London</i> [SH]; “Zoning: Examples” [SH] Timothy Sandefur, “To Pursue and Obtain Happiness and Safety” [monograph]
12 Apr 6	Case: Laetrile Contemporary debate: Should medical marijuana be legal?	“Manufacture & Regulation of Laetrile” [SH]
13 Apr 13	No class. Independent work on essay	
14 Apr 20	<b>Note:</b> Essay due Case: The FCC’s ‘Fairness Doctrine’ Contemporary debate: Should there be a “Fairness Doctrine” for the Internet?	“The FCC’s ‘Fairness Doctrine’” [SH]
15 Apr 27	The Ethics of Money Money, Information, & Financial Markets	“Quotations on Money” [SH] Tara Smith, “Money <i>Can</i> Buy Happiness” [monograph]
16 May 4	Case: Ethics and the Subprime Mortgage Crisis Conclusions	Subprime Mortgage Crisis Flowchart, etc. [SH]
17 May 11	Final Examination, 6 p.m.	

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