

**BUSINESS ETHICS AND CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY**

Area Corporate Development



**Syllabus for the winter term 2016/17**

***Tentative document. Subject to change!***

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Times & Locations:	Lectures 1 Lectures 2 Classes 1 Classes 2	Tue, 16-17:30, 100 / Hörsaal XVIII Wed, 14-15:30, 100 / Hörsaal XVIII Thu, 12-13:30, 100 / Hörsaal XXI Thu, 14-15:30, 100 / Hörsaal XXI

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**COURSE OVERVIEW**

New technologies, socio-economic dynamics, and cultural orientations have opened up new possibilities of how we live. Our environment today is increasingly challenging for the business world too. Traditionally, the central question for business people is how to grow revenues and profits. In line with this, they typically regard business ethics as an instrument to increase profitability. Business ethicists critically discuss the idea of profit and ask: under which circumstances is the maximization of profits valuable? This is one of the main questions of traditional business ethics. In this field, issues in the corporate world, such as marketing practices, fairness, justice, manager rewards, whistle blowing, consequences of globalization and leadership, etc. are reflected by applying classical philosophical approaches of Aristotle, Kant, and Bentham. But given the challenges of the new environment today, additional insights are necessary. We need to apply contemporary ways of thinking about our life to the business realm. We will see that ethics is not primarily about answers and solutions but about questions, critical reflection and finding stringent argumentations. This does not mean that answers cannot emerge, but that they should always be subjected to a process of critical reasoning. We practice this critical way of reasoning by studying continental philosophers like Levinas, Heidegger, Foucault, Nietzsche, Nancy, Sloterdijk, Jonas, Caputo, Baumann, Zizek. Students studying Advanced Business Ethics will learn to challenge their own role in a company, to reflect the consequences of their actions and to justify their decisions. The course draws on students' active participation in presentations and discussions.

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**COURSE STRUCTURE**

The course comprises six distinct units:

- I) Agency in Organizations
- II) Organizational Justice
- III) Corporate Social Responsibility
- IV) Leadership
- V) Globalization
- VI) Whistle Blowing

Each unit represents an ethical debate on a specific issue from the corporate world and contains an application of contemporary thinking to that issue. Each unit will take place in one week and includes two blocks: Lecture 1 & 2 and Class 1 & 2. There will be required readings for each block. Readings must be done by the students before each block. In each block, students will interact and discuss with the instructors and other students. Each unit starts with Lecture 1 (Tuesday, 16-17:30, HS XVIII) in which students learn about the standard business ethics debates in the field of the unit's topic. Furthermore, an applied case study is introduced by the instructors. In Lecture 2 (Wednesday, 14-15:30, HS XVIII) students will reflect upon the ethical debate and discuss the presented case study. In Class 1 (Thursday, 12-13:30, HS XXI) students discuss the main arguments advocated by selected continental philosophers regarding the business ethics debate. In Class 2 (Thursday, 14-15:30, HS XXI) students will intensively reflect on the lessons that can be drawn from the continental philosophers' concepts and arguments. Students are asked to prepare and present answers to a short list of assignment questions provided for each unit (see below) based on their selected readings. For that purpose students have to read and prepare selected material in advance. The assignment is expected to be handed in in form of a power point presentation (one slide per question). Slides must be uploaded (power point or pdf format) before Thursday, 12:00 noon (before Class 1) via ILIAS (format: *last name\_given name\_unit name*). By providing slides students can earn up to ten bonus points, i.e., a maximum of two bonus points per unit depending on the accuracy of their answers, to top up their points in the final exam of the course (the exam will have 60 points in total). The submission of prepared answers to the assigned questions is not mandatory – you will NOT receive negative points for the exam if you do not submit slides for a specific unit. Importantly, since this is bonus material, we are unable to give feedback on your submitted answers. You will only be informed of your total bonus points together with your final grade from the exam at the end of the course.

The first week of the semester starts with the first topic and includes the tutorials.

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## ATTENDANCE

It is highly recommended to hand in the assignments and to actively participate in the lectures and classes to earn a comprehensive understanding of the discussed issues. This is also an excellent preparation of your exam. Since it is impossible for you to participate in and benefit from class discussions when you are absent, your attendance at every lecture and class session is highly recommended. Note: you cannot earn bonus points for a specific assignment if you do not attend Class 2 (even though you might have submitted the assignment). There will be no exceptions to this rule.

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## GRADING

Grades are based on: 1) A written exam which lasts 60 minutes and takes place at the end of the mid-term (Tentative date: 1st of December 2016, 12:30 – 13:30).  
2) If you earn bonus points from the unit assignments they will be added to your points earned in the exam only if you pass the course with your exam grade.

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## COURSE LANGUAGE / CREDIT POINTS

English / 6 ETCS

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## LITERATURE

For each unit you will find a list with required readings. We expect you to read these texts thoroughly for classes, lectures and exam preparation. If you want to further your understanding of a specific topic you can refer to the additional readings, which provide a short list of insightful literature on the discussed topic. You will find some copies of the main text book in the faculty's library. In addition, we will provide you with a hard copy folder wherein you can find copies of the philosophical texts used in the course and the materials for preparing the case studies. The folders are placed at the two following locations (please ask for them):

Seminar für Allgemeine Betriebswirtschaftslehre,      Copy-Star Druck und Werbung GmbH  
Unternehmensentwicklung und Wirtschaftsethik      Zülpicher Straße 184

Building 102, Office (Room 3.220)  
Universitätsstraße 22a  
50937 Köln  
<http://www.codebe.uni-koeln.de/>

50937 Köln  
<http://www.copystar.de/>