



MGMT 2010:
Business Ethics
and the Individual
SPRING 2026

Instructor

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Office Hours

Monday, 14:00 - 15:00
and by appointment

Class Time

L1: Tuesday, 10:30 - 12:20
L2: Monday, 9:00 - 10:50

Location

L1: LSK 1003
L2: 5583

Course Overview

Every decision involves tradeoffs, and ethical behavior is no different. Cheating on a test, lying in an interview, or defrauding a customer can give you a material advantage. But if it is later discovered, it can have disastrous consequences for yourself, your organization, and others. And you may find yourself worrying about being found out in the meantime, or suffering guilt when reflecting on your behavior. Nevertheless, even those who think of themselves as good and moral people at times lie and commit unethical acts. How can we understand their (and our) behavior? Unethical behavior often starts small with decisions that can be rationalized and excused. But it can escalate when people try to cover up their actions. Often, they fail to recognize the severity of what they have done until it is too late. During this semester, we will do something we otherwise rarely have time for: deliberate about the ethicality of decisions we face in our lives and understand them in the context of different ethical frameworks.

In this course, you will learn (1) the ways and reasons for why people often fail to act in accordance with their own ethical values, (2) how we can establish what decisions are “ethical,” (3) how we can promote ethical behavior, and (4) what the current and future challenges for ethical behavior are. Importantly, this course will not teach you what ethical values you should follow. That is up to you to decide. Rather, the course will help you reason about ethical values, make informed decisions, and live up to your own ideals. The guiding principle throughout the course is that people are not inherently “good” or “bad,” but that the environment and the incentives they face affect how ethically they act. This is good news: it is much easier to change the environment and incentives than to change human nature! And as members and future leaders of organizations, this will be your task.

Course Objectives

After taking this course, you will know how to evaluate ethical decisions and how to identify environments that encourage people to act (un)ethically. You will have gained practice applying insights from research to understand real ethical dilemmas in organizations and the world at large. And you will have tools at your disposal to promote ethical behavior, both for yourself and for those you interact with. Although the class emphasis is on applications, you will also learn about theories of ethical decision-making. Along the way, you will learn how social scientists design experiments to study how people make decisions related to (un)ethical behavior. Finally, you will have the chance to work with your classmates on creating your own training to help others understand an ethical dilemma and an insight from this course.



Time Commitments

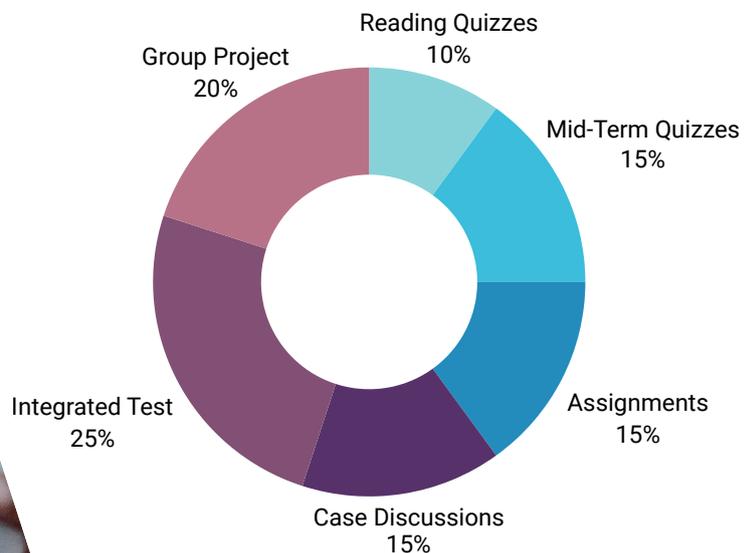
The assignments are structured so that you should expect to spend approximately **three hours** per week on this course, in addition to our in-class time. In the first part of the class, this time will mostly be dedicated to readings. In the second part, there will be assignments posted on Canvas, including preparations for an interactive negotiation exercise and two case discussions. In the third part, you will have short readings, allowing you to spend most of the time finishing the group project and preparing for the integrated test.

It is important that you come to class prepared, having done the readings in advance. While the lecture will review some of the key points, it is intended to complement the readings, not duplicate them. For our two case discussions, we will spend a substantial portion of the class discussing them. Close reading of the cases is vital for us to have an engaging discussion.

Readings

Book chapters and additional readings available via Canvas.

Grading

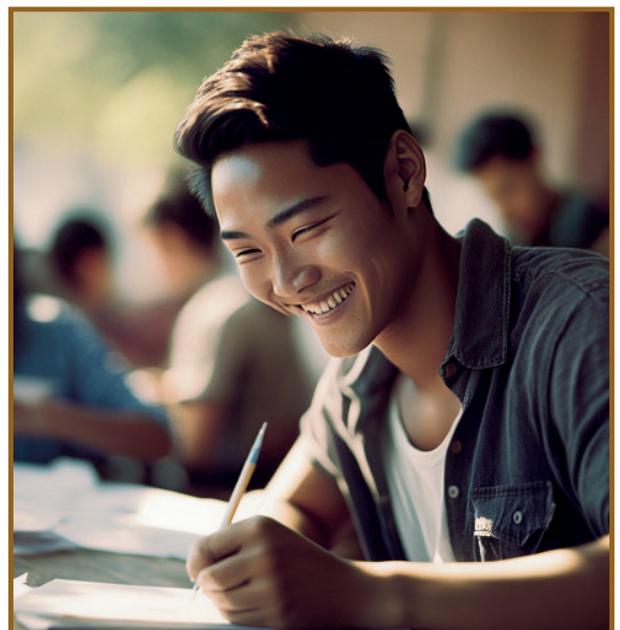


March 9/10	Quiz #1
April 13/14	Quiz #2
May 5	Integrated Test
May 18	Final Project Due

Course Requirements

Reading Quizzes: We will begin most classes with a one-question quiz on the assigned readings. The question will relate to the main point of the readings and serves two important functions: (1) it allows you to see if you understood the key point of the reading and (2) it will be a useful resource when you prepare for the integrated test at the end of the semester. There will be no reading quiz on the two quiz days.

Quizzes: We will also have two quizzes during the semester. The first quiz will take place during Week 5 and cover content from Weeks 1 through 4. The second quiz will take place in Week 9 and cover content of Weeks 5 through 8. Each Quiz will consist of multiple-choice questions and take place at the beginning of the class. The aim is to help you stay on track with the course material. You can also think of those questions as preparation for the integrated test. As with the reading quizzes, the goal is to see that you understand the main points of the course.



Group Project: In the second half of the course, you will have a chance to create a story about a fictional ethical dilemma in an organization. As part of a group (~6 students), your task will be to write a scenario that two students could play out and that puts one of two characters (or both) in a difficult choice. The scenario should be something that (1) resembles something people may encounter in the real world, (2) that presents at least one person with a difficult choice, and (3) that has a takeaway lesson.

Integrated Test: In the last week, we will have a test that will cover the content of the entire course. It will consist of a mix of multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions, short responses, and long responses. As with the quizzes, no question will ask you about a minor detail or a technicality. The purpose of this class is to engage with big ideas and to understand and apply general concepts.

Assignments: Two assignments will be posted on Canvas. One asking you to engage with and reflect on a documentary (Week 4), and one asking you to prepare for an interactive negotiation (Week 6). Assignments are due before the start of class.

Case Discussions: In Weeks 8 and 11, we will discuss two cases and you will be evaluated on your active contributions to those discussions.

Class Etiquette

This course relies on everyone's active participation and as part of the discussion, you may find yourself disagreeing strongly with other positions. The course is enriched if we can freely exchange our opinions and are respectful of other positions: ethics is a fascinating subject exactly because there is often no right or wrong answer. Try to find common ground with those who disagree and identify why you reach other positions. That is more rewarding than entrenching into opposing positions. You will not be graded on whether your instructor agrees with you.

Sometimes, questions do have right and wrong answers, particularly as they relate to the readings. Be mindful that all students are here to learn new content. It is the responsibility of all of us to create a space where everyone feels welcome to participate and speak up even if they are not sure they know the correct answer. Asking questions is highly encouraged at any time during the lecture or discussion.



Academic Honesty

Although the theme of the course is that there are often no simple rules for acting ethically, the university does have rules about academic integrity. Please make sure to read them closely, as being unaware is not an excuse for violating them: <http://ugadmin.ust.hk/integrity/student-1.html>

The quizzes and the integrated test are meant to be completed on your own. You may not collaborate, copy someone's answers, or share your answers with anyone, nor use electronic devices or prompt LLMs like ChatGPT. Each question makes up a small part of your grade, but getting caught cheating on one of them will lead you to fail the course.

Some homework assignments have a collaborative component that is detailed further in the respective assignments. You should feel free (and, indeed, are encouraged) to discuss the assignments and the content of the class with other students. Sometimes, this may lead students to produce very similar answers, which is fine. However, you may not copy anyone's answers or share your answers with them.

The Group Project is, of course, collaborative. Here, you should make sure to cite the sources that you draw on for inspiration. It is tempting to avoid citing other work to make a submission look more original. However, citations add credibility to your work and show that you have done good research.



Additional Support

Unethical behavior, including cheating – as we will discuss in the course – is often the result of panic under pressure. University life can be a lot of fun, but it also can be stressful and poses new challenges, both academic and personal. The instructor and TA are here to help you learn and grow. We can answer questions during office hours or via email and WhatsApp, grant extensions on course deadlines, and connect you with other campus resources. If you find yourself struggling in any way, let us help or connect you to those who can help: you do not need to struggle on your own.

The university offers mental health support to all students: <https://counsel.ust.hk/>

Note on Artificial Intelligence

Tools like ChatGPT and DeepSeek are changing how we learn and work and are becoming indispensable in the modern workplace. You may use them for your assignments without restrictions. However, **be warned that these tools can hallucinate** and are not authoritative sources. Ultimately, you are responsible for the accuracy of what you write. They are best used as tools to support your learning and cannot replace your own thinking. *(This policy may differ from your other courses. When in doubt, ask your instructors.)*



Course Schedule

Part 1: Ethical Reasoning

Class #1 (February 2/3)
Syllabus & Course Introduction

Class #2 (February 9/10)
Introduction to Behavioral Ethics

Blind Spots: Chapter 1

Class #3 (February 23/24)
Normative Ethics

Blind Spots: Chapter 2
How to Be Perfect: Chapter 1

Class #4 (March 2/3)
Moral Ambiguity

Movie: (Dis) Honesty - The Truth About Lies
Motivated Bayesians: Feeling Moral While Acting Egoistically

Part 2: Ethical Behavior

Class #5 (March 9/10)
Altruism

Quiz #1 (Class 1 - 4)
How to Be Perfect: Chapter 8

Class #6 (March 16/17)
Lying & Deception

Assignment: Bullard Houses
Deception: The Role of Consequences

Class #7 (March 23/24)
Markets

Phishing for Phools: Chapter 1
Case: Turing Pharmaceuticals

Class #8 (March 30/31)
Policymaking

Repugnance as a Constraint on Markets

Part 3: Ethical Challenges

Class #9 (April 13/14)
Climate Change

Quiz #2 (Class 5 - 8)
Secret Diary of a Sustainable Investor (Part 3)

Class #10 (April 20/21)
Artificial Intelligence

How Malicious AI Swarms Can Threaten Democracy
Amazon AI Recruitment

Class #11 (April 27/28)
Organizational Culture

Blind Spots: Chapter 6
Case: Rob Parson at Morgan Stanley

Class #12 (May 5, 18:00)

Integrated Test