

**University of Miami
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Sociology**

SOC 351, Sections P – Business and Society

Spring 2017

Professor: Michael T. French, Ph.D.
Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00am-12:15pm
Classroom: MM 112
Office: Merrick, Room 121F and Jenkins, Room 417K
Office Hours: Wednesdays from 2:00pm-4:00pm or by appointment
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Prerequisites

SOC 101 and/or permission of the instructor.

Course Description

This course will explore the influence of business objectives, values, and ethics on American culture, moral standards, and societal institutions. A careful analysis of the choices made by individuals, companies, and governments will demonstrate that sensible “choice architecture” can successfully nudge people toward better decisions without restricting their freedom of choice. Specific topics include: corporate social responsibility; ethical issues in business; business and government in a global society; business and public policy: the corporation and the natural environment; business and technological change; and business relationships with consumers and employees.

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will possess the following skills.

1. Students will understand the moral and ethical conflicts that confront businesses and society as a whole on a regular basis.
2. Through the use of current topics and case studies, students will learn how to analyze the stakeholders, positions, challenges, and potential compromises that surround business decisions.
3. The recent worldwide economic recession illustrates the serious risks associated with poor decision-making by all sectors of business and society. These mistakes will be identified and examined, and students will learn how we can avoid making similar mistakes in the future.
4. Students will be introduced to the important factors related to business leadership and accountability.
5. With the rapid development of new and controversial technologies, students will learn how businesses can harness new technologies while avoiding public controversy and remaining sensitive to the concerns of their many stakeholders.

6. As jobs shift abroad, transnational corporations are challenged to address their obligations to workers in distant locations with very different cultures. Students will be exposed to the opportunities and predicaments that businesses face when they locate operations in foreign countries.
7. Students will develop an understanding of how human activities affect natural resources and the friction that often evolves when environmental protection is a co-occurring goal with economic growth. Special attention will be devoted to the issue of global warming and both the contributions and responsibilities of corporations and individuals.
8. As the global economy emerges from the recent recession, the prosperity that accompanies economic growth is not shared equally. Students will study why businesses should consider the delicate balance between profit maximization, obligations to stakeholders, and public perception of their choices.
9. Business has a legitimate role to play in the public policy process, but it has occasionally exerted excessive influence and even corruption. Students will determine the legitimate scope of influence that business should have in politics and how businesses should voice their interests most effectively in the public policy process.

Grading

The course grade will be based on several short quizzes and essays (some announced, others not) (15%) a mid-term exam (25%), a final exam (35%), and a final report (25%). The final report will be due at the end of the semester. A final report (case study) topic will be selected by each student and then approved by the instructor prior to initiation of the report. The final report (10 double-spaced pages of text) must address a current topic (within the past 2 years) pertaining to the interests, conflicts, and compromises that emerge between business and society. Example topics include (1) the role of business in general, and advertising specifically, in establishing body image; (2) the proper use of social media by employees; (3) managing diversity in the workplace; (4) managing public issues in the cruise industry, and (5) the appropriate role of unmanned drones in business and society. Students can consult with textbooks, articles, and other reference materials, but no assistance is permitted from classmates, instructors, other students, friends, etc. Avoid Internet materials that are not sponsored by a reputable source. All supporting materials must be cited correctly in the text and referenced appropriately at the end of the report (*Chicago Style* preferred; http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). In addition, students are encouraged to utilize the Writing Center and submit their draft reports through SafeAssign, which will detect possible plagiarism. Final reports will be submitted to me through Blackboard (Assignments tab) via SafeAssign to ensure that any previous issues are resolved. Any late submissions will be assessed a penalty of 2 points per hour up to a maximum of 10 points per day. The final exam will be completed during the pre-assigned day during the final exam period. The final exam will be comprehensive and consist of problems similar to the ones included in the textbook and the mid-term exam. Every student must take the final exam during the assigned day and time. I do not offer make-up mid-term or final exams or extra credit assignments at the end of the semester.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to arrive in the classroom at least 5 minutes before the start of each class and to attend all sessions. Unexcused late arrivals or absences will result in a lower final grade. Unavoidable absences (medical emergencies, family emergencies, athletic events, etc.) should be confirmed with the instructor no later than one day prior to the class time. All cell phones, computers, and other electronic devices must be TURNED OFF during class time unless prior approval is obtained from the instructor. Emailing, texting, Facebooking, tweeting, Skyping, electronic surfing, and other forms of non-classroom communication are strictly forbidden. Each student is entitled to one warning and thereafter will receive no credit on the next quiz.

Honor Code

I expect you to abide by the University of Miami Undergraduate Honor Code. You can find it on the web (https://umshare.miami.edu/web/wda/deanstudents/pdf/undergrad_honorcode.pdf).

Testing Accommodations

Anyone using the testing accommodation of the Office of Disability Services (http://www.miami.edu/index.php/academic_resource_center/disability_services/) must schedule appointments at least 1 week prior to the exam, and preferably earlier. The spaces fill up quickly.

Course Materials and Required Readings

The required books for the course are:

Lawrence, A.T., and J. Weber. 2017. *Business and Society: Stakeholders, Ethics, Public Policy* (15th Edition). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Thaler, R.H., and C.R. Sunstein. 2009. *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (Revised and Expanded Edition). New York, NY: Penguin Books.

The optional books for the course are:

Thaler, R.H. 2015. *Misbehaving*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company.

Ariely, D. 2010. *Predictably Irrational* (Revised and Expanded Edition). Harper Perennial.

Ariely, D. 2011. *The Upside of Irrationality: The Unexpected Benefits of Defying Logic at Work and at Home* (Revised and Expanded Edition). Harper Perennial.

Ariely, D. 2013. *The Honest Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone--Especially Ourselves* (Revised and Expanded Edition). Harper Perennial.

Ariely, D. 2015. *Irrationally Yours: On Missing Socks, Pick-up Lines, and Other Existential Puzzles*. Harper Perennial.

Levitt, S.D., and Dubner, S.J. 2009. *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. William Morrow.

Whenever necessary and helpful, class handouts, research manuscripts, and recent journal, magazine, and newspaper articles will be provided throughout the semester to highlight current issues related to business and society. Students are encouraged to meet with me if they would like to introduce a current business and society topic for class discussion.

Class Format and Attendance

The class format will be designed to stimulate respectful participation from all students. I encourage questions, comments, and debate. The quality of the class is a direct function of your preparation and discussion. Students are expected to be punctual for all classes (i.e., arrive in the classroom at least 5 minutes before the start of each class), and attend every class. Short quizzes and essays (some unannounced) will be administered at the start of some sessions or assigned in class and then completed at home. Unexcused late arrivals or absences on a quiz day will result in a zero grade. Unavoidable absences (illness, family emergencies, athletic events, etc.) should be confirmed with the instructor no later than one day prior to the class time. It will be very difficult to obtain a passing grade if you are not able to attend at least 80 percent of the contact time.

Professor Bio

Dr. French (www.mtfrench.com) is a health economist and Professor (joint tenure) in the Department of Sociology (www.as.miami.edu/sociology/people/faculty/michael-t-french) and Department of Health Sector Management and Policy at the University of Miami, with secondary appointments in the Department of Economics and Department of Public Health Sciences. He is also Director of the Health Economics Research Group (www.miami.edu/herg) in the College of Arts and Sciences, Research Director of the Health Sector Management and Policy Program in the School of Business Administration (<http://www.bus.miami.edu/undergraduate-programs/curriculum/majors/health-sector/index.html>), and a Senior Fellow of the Center for Health Sector Management and Policy (<http://www.bus.miami.edu/explore-the-school/health-programs/health-center/>). His research interests and experience includes health economics, health policy, program evaluation, substance abuse research, alternative health care delivery systems, pharmaco-economics, human resource economics, and the economics of crime. He has been principal investigator or project leader on numerous research grants with the National Institutes of Health, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and several state agencies. He is currently editor of the *Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics*; on the editorial boards for *Health Services Research*, *Evaluation and Program Planning*, and *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*; and serves on several research advisory boards for universities, national and international companies, government agencies, and health care organizations. Dr. French has published over 180 peer-reviewed scholarly articles in a variety of multidisciplinary professional journals including *Addiction*, *Addictive Behaviors*, *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, *American Journal of Health Promotion*, *American Journal of Public Health*, *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, *Applied Economics*, *Benefits Quarterly*, *BMC Psychiatry*, *Cancer Practice*, *Contemporary Economic Policy*, *Criminology*, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, *Eastern Economic Journal*, *Economic Inquiry*, *Economics of Education Review*, *Economics and Human Biology*, *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, *Evaluation and the Health Professions*, *Evaluation and Program Planning*, *Evaluation Review*, *Health Economics*, *Health Services Research*, *Implementation Science*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Industrial Relations*, *Journal of Addictive Diseases*, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *Journal*

of the American Board of Family Medicine, Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research, Journal of Employee Assistance Research, Journal of Experimental Criminology, Journal of Health Economics, Journal of Healthcare Finance, Journal of Health and Social Behavior, Journal of Health and Social Policy, Journal of Human Resources, Journal of Internal Medicine, Journal of Maintenance in the Addictions, Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, Journal of Occupational Medicine, Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, Journal of Public Health Policy, Journal of Quantitative Criminology, Journal of Research on Adolescence, Journal of Risk and Uncertainty, Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, Labour Economics, Justice Quarterly, LABOUR: Review of Labour Economics and Industrial Relations, Law and Policy, Medical Care, Medical Care Research and Review, Monthly Labor Review, Population Health Management, Public Health Reports, Risk Analysis, Social Science and Medicine, Social Science Quarterly, Social Science Research, Sociological Inquiry, Substance Abuse, Substance Use and Misuse, Southern Economic Journal, Telemedicine and e-Health, The Gerontologist, and The Prison Journal.

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. Business in Society

- A. The corporation and its stakeholders Chapter 1 (LW)
- B. Managing public issues and stakeholder relationships Chapter 2 (LW)
- C. Corporate social responsibility Chapter 3 (LW)

II. Libertarian Paternalism, Choice Architecture, and the “Nudge”

- A. A new paradigm Introduction (IS)
- B. Understanding the basics Chapters 1-5 (IS)

III. Business and Ethics

- A. Ethics and ethical reasoning Chapter 5 (LW)
- B. Organizational Ethics Chapter 6 (LW)
- C. How to increase organ donations Chapter 11 (IS)

IV. Business in a Globalized World

- A. Business in a Globalized World Chapter 4 (LW)
- B. Credit markets and the worldwide economic recession Chapter 8 (IS)

V. Business and Public Policy

- A. Business-government relations Chapter 7 (LW)
- B. Influencing the political environment Chapter 8 (LW)
- C. Privatizing social security Chapter 9 (IS)
- D. Privatizing marriage Chapter 15 (IS)

MID-TERM EXAM (March 23)

VI. Business and the Natural Environment

- A. Sustainable development and global business Chapter 9 (LW)
- B. Managing for sustainability Chapter 10 (LW)
- C. Saving the Planet Chapter 12 (IS)

VII. Business and Technology

- A. The role of technology Chapter 11 (LW)
- B. Regulating and managing information technology (optional) Chapter 12 (LW)

VIII. Business and Its Stakeholders

- A. Consumer protection Chapter 14 (LW)
- B. Employees and the corporation Chapter 15 (LW)
- C. Managing a diverse workforce Chapter 16 (LW)
- D. Business and its suppliers Chapter 17 (LW)
- E. The public and corporate reputation Chapter 19 (LW)

IV. Health, Wealth, and Happiness

- A. Additional nudges Chapter 16 (IS)

FINAL (CASE STUDY) REPORT (Due date: April 27 at 10:30am; any guidance from the professor must be obtained prior to April 21)

FINAL EXAM (Thursday, May 4 from 11:00am to 1:30pm)