
Course Learning Outcomes for Unit I

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Analyze the philosophical concept of ethics, its practical applicability to business, and its distinction from the law.
9. Identify ethical considerations related to child labor and sweatshops.

Reading Assignment

In order to access the following resource(s), click the link(s) below:

- Gogoi, P. (2008, October 10). Wal-Mart supplier accused of sweatshop conditions. *Businessweek Online*, 5. Retrieved from <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=34848105&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Renouard, C. (2011). Corporate social responsibility, utilitarianism, and the capabilities approach. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 98(1), 85-97. Retrieved from <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=55701713&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Tierney, J. J. (2006). The culture of child labor. In A. Manheimer (Ed.), *At issue. Child labor and sweatshops*. Retrieved from http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/EJ3010005208/OVIC?u=oran95108&xid=7e6822a9&pd=ic.galegroup.com.libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu#The_Culture_of_Child_Labor
- Trevino, L. K., Hartman, L. P., & Brown, M. (2000). Moral person and moral manager: How executives develop a reputation for ethical leadership. *California Management Review*, 42(4), 128-142. Retrieved from <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=3633777&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Watson, A. (2014). Ethics vs. compliance: Do we really need to talk about both? *InsideCounsel*, 24(266), 23. Retrieved from <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=94146202&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Unit Lesson



Click [here](#) to access an introduction video.

Click [here](#) to access the introduction video transcript.



Click [here](#) to access a video that briefly introduces topics in this unit.

Click [here](#) to access the video transcript.

Lt. Commander of the *Enterprise*, Mr. Spock, part Vulcan, part human, famously suppresses his human side in making decisions that profoundly affect the *Enterprise's* exploration, mission, and success. Mr. Spock, on more than one occasion, risks his own life for that of the many. Mr. Spock engages in the same reasoning when he is willing to sacrifice his life to ensure that the prime directive of the mission is not violated by revealing an alien presence to the native people of Nibiru and contaminating their entire culture (Abrams, 2013). Mr. Spock believes that the needs of the Nibiru natives outweigh his need to live and risks his own life. Even in seemingly smaller decisions that do not affect life and death, Mr. Spock espouses this theory that if the benefit to a few or even one is outweighed by the benefit to the many, the few must be sacrificed. Mr. Spock believes that individuals should act to serve the greatest good for the greatest number and determines what is best by looking principally at the end result. Does the end justify the means used to effectuate the goal?

In this unit, we will explore what it means to be an ethical person and why it is important in both personal and business settings. We will read about the foundational concepts of ethics as well as the character and power of an ethical leader. To paraphrase Socrates, the best way to live an honorable life is to behave in private as we do in public ("Thoughts on the Business of Life," n.d.). Whom do *you* want to be, and why? How will you become the person you want to be? On what basis will you judge what is ethical? These crucial questions serve to guide us during this course as well as help us grow as individual leaders within your organizations. For example, corporate cultures, as we will examine later in the course, are comprised of a myriad of different aspects, but the most important is *you*. Your actions and non-actions, as well as your verbal behavior, will ultimately determine the character and direction of your organization.

We will also explore various principles of ethics, including ethical relativism and utilitarianism, as well as fundamental rights. Is ethics a fixed concept, or is it fluid? Does it take into consideration another's culture, or are there some issues that are steadfast and nonnegotiable? For example, is cannibalism acceptable? Is it acceptable in some cultures? In 1972, a flight carrying 45 passengers from Uruguay to Chile crashed high in the Andes. The 16 survivors lived in sub-zero temperatures waiting to be rescued for 72 days. After the food on board was consumed, and with no wildlife to catch because of the winter conditions and the fact that they had no tools with which to catch any animals, the survivors turned to eating the corpses of the dead passengers, since they all agreed without which they surely would have died. Due to their survival instincts, the survivors were later rescued. Was it unethical to have sustained themselves off of the dead bodies? Did it matter that they had already died, and they did not kill anyone? What if they had killed someone or let him or her die in order to use as food? You will be asked to think about the hard, sometimes uneasy, questions of ethics in this course.

Some will take a relativist approach by arguing that ethical decisions depend upon certain factors such as the situation or one's culture. Such an approach asserts that we must look at the decision to be made from the perspective of the individual in the situation. From this viewpoint, using the corpses as food was ethical because no one was killed in the process; they were already dead, and the passengers were providing nourishment for their bodies. From a utilitarian lens, some will argue that the actions were morally justified by the end result, as the benefits were great while the sacrifices were few. Some will argue that as a fundamental principle, cannibalism is wrong in any situation. People have fundamental rights not to be defiled after death and to be properly buried. Based on the first two concepts, the theories differ though the end result is the same: cannibalism is acceptable in that situation.

In addition to foundational concepts of ethics, we will explore corporate social responsibility (CSR) and theories surrounding how organizations should operate in the market, as there is a lack of shared definition as to what CSR means. What is the ideal role of for-profit organizations? We will think broadly and delve into the various key roles of an organization as it relates to CSR. Should an organization donate part of its profits, engage in community-building within its area, support the arts, or focus mainly on maximizing value-creation for its shareholders and then only subsequently focus on the community in which it operates?

We will apply these concepts in moving from the moral person to the ethical manager—from the individual to the organization. We will address whether the same measures should be applied and how one becomes a leader and transmits his or her values in the organization. Is living by one's ethical beliefs enough? Will the organization grow and properly evolve through action alone? Will the action be understood as it was intended, or will there be confusion and ambiguity? You will be given the tools to decide how best to be the ethical leader you want to be.

In this unit, we will challenge ourselves and our way of thinking. We will explore our personal ethical beliefs, and we will likely discover it is not as easy as doing good or bad. We will analyze how, as individual leaders, we decide what is good or bad and which of those involved are affected by these choices and in what ways.

References

Abrams, J. J. (Producer/Director). (2013). *Star trek into darkness* [Motion picture]. Unites States: Paramount Pictures.

Thoughts on the business of life. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/quotes/8713/>