



# Stony Brook University

## College of Business

### Course:

**BUS 446 Business Ethics: Critical Thinking through Film**

**Semester:** Fall 2016

**Instructor:** Professor Jadranka Skorin-Kapov

**Meeting Time:** Tuesday, Thursday 4:00pm – 5:20pm

**Location:** Harriman Hall 108

### Instructor Contact Information

**OFFICE:** Harriman Hall 323

**PHONE:** (631) 632-7426

**FAX:** (631) 632- 9412

**e-mail:** [jadranka.skorin-kapov@stonybrook.edu](mailto:jadranka.skorin-kapov@stonybrook.edu)

**web page:** <http://www.ams.sunysb.edu/~jskorin/vita.html>

**Instructor Office Hours:** Tu, Th 9:00am-9:30am;  
Tu, Th 3:00pm- 3:30pm;  
Mon, Wed 4pm-4:30pm

### Course Description:

This course combines critical thinking, discussion of moral values, and ethical considerations applied in a business setting. Using narrative film (i.e. a fictional scenario) to depict challenging ethical dilemmas, students will engage in critical thinking, evaluation of moral standards, and display of various ethical positions pertaining to contemporary society and business. A simulated situation as presented in a narrative film and supported by research from the humanities, will add to *experiential learning*, emphasized in contemporary business education.

**Prerequisites:** BUS 115, Business major or minor, U4

### Course Overview:

Critical thinking involves analysis of relevant issues such as creativity, goals, and impact. Morality presents a set of one's beliefs and contributes to one's character. Ethics is a set of actions in line with moral beliefs. Ethical dilemmas arise in situations that are complex, blurring the line between what is right and what is wrong. For example, assuming that telling the truth is morally right, is telling the truth always the preferred action?

The purpose of this course is to simulate a situation when you need to engage your capabilities in the following ways: (1) critically evaluate the product (film) in terms of its artistic creativity versus its business goal and ideological propagation; (2) discuss the ethical situation and actions depicted in a film by using different normative ethical positions; (3) evaluate your moral beliefs

by imagining yourself in the fictional role presented in film; (4) decide what would you do in such a situation.

Having a simulated environment is a pragmatic and a well-developed educational approach to challenging jobs. For example, pilots and astronauts go into a flight simulator before going into space, architects and engineers rely on modeling before undertaking the production. In analogy, when teaching business decision making, including leadership and entrepreneurship, films presenting ethical, business, personal, and social challenges can serve as a *simulator* for inducing experiential learning in the analysis of the business scenario. Since nowadays we live in an ever increasing virtual environment, prevalent with visual tools, using narrative film as a source for analyzing business decisions seems a worthwhile approach.

### **Required Texts & Other Course Materials:**

**Blackboard:** notes by J. Skorin-Kapov and some assigned articles.

Wanda Teays, *Business Ethics through Movies: A Case Study Approach*, Wiley-Blackwell (2015)

The films to be discussed in the course are available via different channels. There is a possibility of monthly subscription on either Netflix, Amazon Prime or Hulu Plus. (A comparison is at <http://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-prime-versus-netflix-versus-hulu-plus-2014-4>) Also, many films are available for renting on M-Go, usually for \$3.99 per film. In addition, assigned films will be held on reserve in the Melville Library in the event that they cannot be viewed elsewhere.

**Note: It is important that you read and/or see the assigned material before class.**

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

### **College of Business Program Learning Outcomes**

1. **Critical Thinking Skills:** Students will apply critical analysis to film as a product combining artistic elements, business elements, and ideological elements. This will enhance the ability to evaluate different strategies influencing one's moral, social and business values.
2. **Ethics and Social Responsibility:** By analyzing a fictional scenario students will learn and apply various ethical positions from different points of view: personal, corporate, stakeholders.
3. **Interpersonal and Communication Skills:** Students will learn how to write a well-organized and coherent analysis of a situation depicted in a film, and how to participate in discussions by clearly stating arguments supporting their views, and by acknowledging possibly conflicting arguments by others.

**Note:** Learning outcomes will be assessed through written assignments, in-class discussions, a group presentation, and a written group project.

## Course Specific Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to provide students with the following knowledge and skills:

**1.** Understand the theoretical concepts regarding narrative film (story, plot, genres, style) as art and as business. How to influence the spectatorship? How to critically examine the elements of the story and the message film tries to convey?

**2.** Learn about moral and ethical issues and apply them to the situation depicted in a film. The issues include:

a) The human condition (character) by addressing the question of moral character;  
b) Normative ethical theories including Virtue Ethics (Aristotle), Deontological Ethics (Kantian duties), Teleological Ethics (Utilitarianism);

c) Understanding ethical dilemmas including diverse perspectives and technological advances;

d) Analysis of ethical dilemmas applied to Business Ethics, including the relation between business and society, responsibility, human rights, business-stakeholder interactions, and ethics in the workforce.

- Demonstrate an ability to distinguish among the ethical principles guiding human behavior.

- Apply ethical reasoning to a variety of situations and human experience.

- Understand and differentiate ethical, legal, social justice, and political issues.

**3.** Develop the verbal and written skills to articulate valid arguments on better understanding of your own morality and code of ethics: your values, motives, and desires in your career.

- Collect the most pertinent evidence, draw appropriate disciplinary inferences, organize effectively for one's intended audience, and write in a confident voice using correct grammar and punctuation.

- Research topic, develop an oral argument and organize supporting details.

- Deliver a proficient and substantial oral presentation for the intended audience using appropriate media.

- Evaluate oral presentations of others according to specific criteria.

## Course Requirements & Grading Information:

The final grade is calculated out of a total of **100 points**, based on the following percentage components:

<b>Class participation</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Class notes assignments</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Paper assignment</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Group presentation</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Initial questionnaire</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Final questionnaire</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:**

- 1. Class participation** grade will depend on the extent to which you actively and constructively discuss relevant issues. You need to apply the concepts from readings to specific films, to clearly articulate your point of view, and to engage in discussing the viewpoints of others. Assigned class material should be read before class in which it is discussed. Points may be deducted for disrupting class (arriving late, leaving earlier, using phones, etc.)
- 2. Class notes assignments** should be submitted prior to discussions, and late submissions are not acceptable. **They should be about 300 words**, analyzing a specific filmic situation, and how the issues relate to the relevant discussions, readings and concepts studied in class. It should be submitted via blackboard and it will be checked for plagiarism. **There will be 8 class notes assignments, each graded on the following 0-3 point scale:** 0 = missing or not submitted on time; 1= submitted on time but incomplete or inadequate; 2= submitted on time but not addressing all issues; 3= submitted on time and meeting all requirements
- 3. Paper assignment** is a more detailed description of the film *A Most Violent Year (J.C. Chandor, 2014)*. It should be submitted via Blackboard, before the beginning of class when the film is scheduled for discussion. **It should be about 800-1000 words.**
- Depending on the class size, at the beginning of the semester students will form **groups of 3-5 members**. A group will select one of the topics for class discussion, find a relevant film, analyze it in light of the selected topic, and prepare a **Power Point presentation** for class. **The presentation should run up to 10 minutes, and the group will afterwards lead the class discussion up to 10 min. The group will receive a single group presentation grade.**
- There are two questionnaires to be completed in this class: the initial one at the beginning of class, and the final one during the last week of classes. The questionnaires will deal with your professional value statements and ethical understanding.

**Grading Policies**

The final grade is based on a 100-point scale, as follows:

- A = 95-100
- A- = 90-94.99
- B+ = 85-89.99
- B = 80-84.99
- B- = 75-79.99
- C+ = 70-74.99
- C = 65-69.99
- C- = 60-64.99
- D+= 55-59.99
- D = 50-54.99
- F = 49.99 or below

**Academic Integrity:** Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty is required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

The College of Business regards any act of academic dishonesty as a major violation punishable by severe penalties, including dismissal from the University. University policy requires that instructors and GAs and TAs report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the appropriate Academic Judiciary Committee, which is empowered to take strong action against violators. Under no circumstances will the College of Business permit cheating of any kind. Many activities constitute academic dishonesty. The following list is not inclusive, only suggestive:

- Cheating on exams or assignments by the use of books, electronic devices, notes, or other aids when these are not permitted, or by copying from another student.
- Collusion: two or more students helping one another on an exam or assignment when it is not permitted.
- Ringers: taking an exam for someone else, or permitting someone else to take one's exam. Submitting the same paper in more than one course without permission of the instructors.
- Plagiarizing: copying someone else's writing or paraphrasing it too closely, even if it constitutes only some of your written assignment.
- Submitting the same paper in more than one course without approval of the instructors.
- Falsifying documents or records related to credit, grades, status (e.g., adds and drops, P/NC grading), or other academic matters.
- Altering an exam or paper after it has been graded in order to request a grade change.
- Stealing, concealing, destroying, or inappropriately modifying classroom or other instructional material, such as posted exams, library materials, laboratory supplies, or computer programs.
- Preventing relevant material from being subjected to academic evaluation.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act:**

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services at (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.sunysb.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities.shtml>

## **Critical Incident Management:**

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.

## **Blackboard:**

You can access class information on-line at: <http://blackboard.sunysb.edu>. If you have used Stony Brook's Blackboard system previously, your login information (Username and Password) has not changed. If you have never used Stony Brook's Blackboard system, your initial password is your SOLAR ID# and your username is the same as your Stony Brook (sparky) username, which is generally your first initial and the first 7 letters of your last name.

If you are having trouble logging into Blackboard, you will need to log into [SOLAR](#) to verify your **Net ID username & set your Net ID Security Question and Password**. For more information, visit: <http://clientsupport.stonybrook.edu/>

If you are a student and continue to have a problem logging into Blackboard, you will need to bring photo ID to either the Melville Library SINC Site Room S1460 or the Union SINC Site Room 080 and speak to a Blackboard Administrator from Saturday - Friday from 9 am - 5 pm.

## **Course Structure**

The lectures will iterate between theoretical topics, real business cases, and subsequent discussions on films. A presentation and a discussion of theoretical topics and business cases will serve as a preparation for subsequently analyzing some films. **The assigned material should be read prior to class. Assigned films to be discussed should also be seen in advance, to facilitate connections with theoretical concepts, and to facilitate the preparation of the assignment analyzing a given film.**

We will critically discuss some films from the Teays' textbook, and films not discussed in the textbook, to allow for creative discussions. Students' assignments refer to films not presented in the textbook and should be submitted online before the class in which these films will be discussed. The analysis should relate the theoretical concepts with the characters and the story depicted in film: What are the main ethical issues? How do they relate to the theoretical concepts discussed? Why is this relevant?

# Class Schedule and Assignments

## Week 1

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**Tu 8/30**      **Overview of syllabus:** topics (morality, character traits, normative ethics and applied ethics, critical thinking, decision making), course objectives, student requirements, grading and assessment. **Discussion on group projects.**

**Reading:**

*Introduction to Critical Thinking and Decision Making* (J. Skorin-Kapov) (Blackboard)  
*Experience from film* (J. Skorin-Kapov) (Blackboard)

**Th 9/1**      **Moral agency, overview of ethical positions (virtue ethics, teleological ethics, deontological ethics)**

**Reading:**

*Overview of Ethical Positions* (J. Skorin-Kapov) (Blackboard)  
Chapter 2.1. in *Business Ethics Through Movies*  
Discussion on current real world cases involving ethical issues.  
**Discussion on film** *Insider* (Michael Mann, 1999)

## Week 2

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**Tu 9/6**      **No Class**

**Th 9/8**      **Mythical structure of narration and character types**

**Reading:**

*On Jung's Archetypes, Campbell's Mythology, and Vogler's Practical Guide for screenplays* (J. Skorin-Kapov) (Blackboard)

C. Vogler, A Practical Guide to Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*."

[http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero%27s\\_journey.htm#Practical](http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero%27s_journey.htm#Practical)

Watch: *Movies in your Brain: The Science of Cinematic Perception*

(<http://www.oscars.org/events/movies-your-brain-science-cinematic-perception>)

Greg Miller, *Data from a Century of Cinema Reveals How Movies Have Evolved*

(<http://www.wired.com/2014/09/cinema-is-evolving/>)

**Discussion on film:** *Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back* (Irvin Kershner, 1980)

**Group membership defined; over the next 2 weeks groups need to identify films for group presentation.**

## Week 3

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**Tu 9/13**      **On narrative film in general** (story, plot, genres, style): Understand film as art and as business. How to influence the spectatorship? How to critically examine the elements of the story and the message film tries to convey?

**Reading:**

*Film, Identification, Emotion, Genre* (J. Skorin-Kapov) (Blackboard)

Watch: *Understanding film narrative: Observations on film art* (D. Bordwell)

<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2014/01/12/understanding-film-narrative-the-trailer/>

**Discussion on films:**

*Noah* (Darren Aronofsky, 2014)

*Funny Games* (Michael Haneke, 2007) (international co-production, exterior is filmed on Long Island)

*Disconnect* (Henry Alex Rubin, 2012)

**Th 9/15**      **On qualitative analysis, ethics and society:** On ethical decision making.

**Reading:** Chapter sections 1.1 and 1.2 in *Business Ethics through Movies*

*About Benefit Corporations* (J. Skorin-Kapov) (Blackboard)

On “B Corp” (Benefit Corporation) <https://www.bcorporation.net/what-are-b-corps>

**Discussion on films**

*A Hijacking* (Tobias Lindholm, 2013) Danish film

*Michael Clayton* (Tony Gilroy, 2007)

Discussion on real world cases involving similar ethical issues.

**Week 4**

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**Tu 9/20**      **Discussion on film**

*Margin Call* (J.C. Chandor, 2011)

**Class Notes Assignment 1 on *Margin Call* due beginning of class.**

**Th 9/22**      **Virtue Ethics and moral character**

**Reading:** Chapter section 2.4 in *Business Ethics through Movies*

**Discussion on films displaying moral character, including:**

*Erin Brockovich* (Steven Soderbergh, 2000); *Michael Clayton* (Tony Gilroy, 2007); *Insider* (Michael Mann, 1999)

Discussion on real world cases.

**Deadline for submitting film proposals for group presentation.**

**Week 5**

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**Tu 9/27**      **Discussion on film**

*Insomnia* (Christopher Nolan, 2002)

**Class Notes Assignment 2 on *Insomnia* due beginning of class.**

**Th 9/29**      **Teleological Ethics:** The end justifies the means

**Reading:** Chapter section 2.2 in *Business Ethics through Movies*

*Greed is Good* speech clip from *Wall Street* (Oliver Stone, 1987)

**Discussion on film *Contagion*** (Steven Soderbergh, 2011)

Discussion on real world cases involving similar ethical issues.

**Group presentations schedule finalized.**

**Week 6**

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**Tu 10/4**      **Discussion on film**

*Experimenter* (Michael Almereyda, 2015)

**Class Notes Assignment 3 on *Experimenter* due beginning of class.**



**Th 10/6: Deontological Ethics:** on Kantian ethics and duties  
**Reading:** Chapter section 2.3 in *Business Ethics through Movies*  
**Discussion on film** *Shattered Glass* (Billy Ray, 2003)  
Discussion on real world cases involving similar ethical issues.

## **Week 7**

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**Tu 10/11**      **Discussion on film**  
*Arbitrage* (Nicholas Jarecki, 2012)  
**Class Notes Assignment 4 on *Arbitrage* due beginning of class.**

**Th 10/13: Moral reflection:** environmental issues  
**Reading:** Chapter section 3.1 in *Business Ethics through Movies*  
**Discussion on film** *A Civil Action* (Steven Zaillian, 1998)  
About activism and fake news tactics using film (example: *The Yes Men* and Bhopal Disaster  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiWlvBro9eI>)  
Discussion on real world cases involving similar ethical issues.

## **Week 8**

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**Tu 10/18**      **Discussion on film**  
*The Day After Tomorrow* (Roland Emmerich, 2004)  
**Class Notes Assignment 5 on *The Day After Tomorrow* due beginning of class.**

**Th 10/20: Ethics in workplace:** addressing different ways of workplace violence  
**Reading:** Chapter section 3.2 in *Business Ethics through Movies*  
**Discussion on film** *Network* (Sidney Lumet, 1976)  
Discussion on real world cases involving similar ethical issues.

## **Week 9**

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**Tu 10/25: Discussion on film**  
*A Most Violent Year* (J.C. Chandor, 2014)  
**PAPER ASSIGNMENT on *A Most Violent Year* due beginning of class.**

**Th 10/27**      **Ethical challenges in business:** inequity  
**Reading:** Chapter section 3.3 in *Business Ethics through Movies*  
**Discussion on film** *Made in Dagenham* (Nigel Cole, 2010)  
Discussion on real world cases involving similar ethical issues.

## **Week 10**

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**Tu 11/1**      **Discussion on film**  
*Two Days, One Night* (J. Dardenne and L. Dardenne, 2014) Belgian, French, Italian film  
**Class Notes Assignment 6 on *Two Days, One Night* due beginning of class.**

**Th 11/3 Addressing workplace harassment**

**Reading:** Chapter 3.4 in *Business Ethics through Movies*

**Discussion on film** *North Country* (Niki Caro, 2005)

Discussion on real world cases involving similar ethical issues.

**Week 11**

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**Tu 11/8 Discussion on film**

*The Hunt* (Thomas Vinterberg, 2012) Danish film

**Class Notes Assignment 7 on *The Hunt* due beginning of class.**

**Th 11/10 Global Justice and Human Rights: Business, society, racism**

**Reading:** Chapter section 3.5 in *Business Ethics through Movies*

**Discussion on films** *Sleep Dealer* (Alex Rivera, 2008), *Trading Places* (John Landis, 1983)

Discussion on real world cases.

**Week 12**

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**Tu 11/15 Discussion on film**

*Babel* (Alejandro Iñárritu, 2006)

**Class Notes Assignment 8 on *Babel* due beginning of class.**

**Th 11/17 Ethical challenges in business: Ethics and Business Competition**

**Reading:**

A. Shleifer, *Does Competition Destroy Ethical Behavior?*

([http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/shleifer/files/competition\\_ethics.pdf](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/shleifer/files/competition_ethics.pdf))

**Discussion on film** *Glengarry Glen Ross* (James Foley, 1992)

Discussion on real world cases involving similar ethical issues.

**Week 13**

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**Tu 11/22: Ethics and Business Innovation**

**Reading:**

K.E. Martin, *Innovation, Ethics, and Business* ([http://www.corporate-ethics.org/pdf/innovation\\_ethics.pdf](http://www.corporate-ethics.org/pdf/innovation_ethics.pdf))

**Discussion on film**

*Tucker the Man and His Dream* (Francis Ford Coppola, 2000)

**No Assignment this week: prepare for group presentations**

**Th 11/24 No Class – Thanksgiving**

**Week 14**

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**Tu 11/29 Group presentations**

**Th 12/1 Group presentations**

## Week 15

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**Tu 12/6:** Summarizing the ethical concepts addressed in the course

**Discussion on films:** *Groundhog Day* (Harold Ramis, 1993); *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee, 2000)

**Th 12/8:** Concluding a discussion on ethical concepts, films seen in the course, and possible impact on development of moral judgments.

### Films suggestions for Group Projects:

*Up in the Air* (Jason Reitman, 2009)  
*Return to Paradise* (Joseph Ruben, 1998)  
*Leviathan* (Andrey Zvyagintsev, 2014) Russian film  
*Footnote* (Joseph Cedar, 2012) Israeli film  
*Outbreak* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1995)  
*Suffragette* (Sarah Gavron, 2015)  
*Crash* (Paul Haggis, 2004)  
*After the Wedding* (Susanne Bier, 2006) Danish film  
*Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989)  
*Human Capital* (Paolo Virzi, 2013) Italian film  
*Runaway Jury* (Gary Fleder, 2003)  
*Spotlight* (Tom McCarthy, 2015)  
*The Big Short* (Adam McKay, 2015)  
*The Dinner* (Ivano De Matteo, 2014) Italian film  
*The Emperor's Club* (Michael Hoffman, 2002)  
*The Fugitive* (Andrew Davis, 1993)  
*The Inheritance* (Per Fly, 2003) Danish film  
*The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998)  
*Water* (Deepa Mehta, 2005) Indian, Canadian film

**NOTE: In consultation with the instructor, other films could be selected for a group project.**

**Assessment of student work: A rubric will be used to assess the paper assignment.**