“Every Jew has a purpose in this world. He is not the center of the universe, and his needs and self-interests have import only if they serve higher loftier goals.” – Yehuda Cohen, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

“I’m a religious man. I am Jewish but I believe in all religions. I believe in God and see him as an old man with a big white beard and pray to him every day for a few minutes.” – Uri Geller, Israeli psychic and entertainer

Would you invite a former National Treasurer of the American Jewish Congress to Shabbat dinner? What if that individual is Bernard Madoff? – Dr. Lou E. Pelton

Course Introduction

“I am I plus my surroundings, and if I do not preserve the latter I do not preserve myself.”
– Jose Ortega y Gasset, Meditaciones del Quijote

A fundamental underpinning of American business and society is the autonomous self, an archetype of rugged individualism and determination that gives rise to the “self-made man.” America’s self-made man is, in part, a derivative of a capitalistic economic system based on individuation and competition. In fact, the quest to attain the American dream engenders heroic status to the nation’s earliest industrialists. Business success evokes images of the Carnegies, Rockefeller and Vanderbilts. The autonomous self is an abiding ideal in American business and society. When one identifies himself/herself as a “Jew,” does it suggest a higher standard of ethical compliance? And, to what ethical standard should a Jew (or other individuals in the business enterprise) be accountable?

“Money is my first, last and only love”
– Armand Hammer, CEO, Occidental Petroleum

In recent years, the dauntless mugs of America’s most admired chief executive officers have been frequently featured on popular magazines. The paparazzi frequently stalks these high-profile executives as if they were Hollywood stars. The cast of leading men have included Sunbeam’s “Chainsaw Al” (a.k.a. “Rambo in Pinstripes”) Dunlap, WorldCom’s Bernie Ebbers, Enron’s Ken Lay, and GE’s Jack Welch – all leaders of companies held in the highest regard by American stockholders and the at-large public. Chainsaw Al Dunlap’s
“mean business” memoirs and Jack Welch’s six sigma tome were best-sellers. Massive layoffs, factory closings and discontinued products were accepted as new mantras for ensuring successful organizational performance and ultimately a more productive economy. In the aftermath of the dot.com debacles and financial fallouts, these icons of American capitalism have become fallen heroes. Their vulnerabilities have received widespread attention from the same popular press that reified their public standing. Blind trust has been supplanted with focused scrutiny of business practices across all publicly-held firms. Unprecedented legislative initiatives, like the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, have been enacted to restore stakeholders’ trust in the same capitalistic economic system that propagated these business icons. These violations of public trust inculcate both ethical and legal considerations.

This course also addresses product and service offerings that may evoke ethical considerations. Consider the following: “A Pennsylvania man who advertised ‘Blank receipts, 100 restaurant receipts, 50 styles, $5.98. Satisfaction guaranteed.’ The blank receipts are attractively designed to look like the receipts of restaurants anywhere in America: Captain’s table, Trophy Room, Village Green, P.J.’s and so on. The idea is that the purchaser, after filling in a date, a number of diners, and a total bill, can use these faked receipts in reporting expenses. An IRS spokesperson says that selling blank receipts is not illegal!” While the product is legal, is it an ethical market offering? Should “intent” be considered when evaluating the appropriateness of marketing products to the public? There are hundreds of products and services that warrant consideration of ethicalness.

Jewish Perspectives

In the noted work of Bahya ibn Paquda, Chovot ha-Levavot, he asserts that it is foolish “to put too much trust in wealth and in those who own great fortunes.” More than 500 years later, Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin Salanter echoed similar moral sentiment: “Just as one checks carefully to make sure their food is kosher, so too should one check to see if their money is earned in a kosher fashion.” In business, marketing guru Ted Levitt maintains “Who with minimal sensibilities and a palpable heartbeat would go to the mat for a company to earn a profit for its own sake?” – a stark contrast to Milton Friedman’s perspective that the pursuit of profits is inherently an ethical pursuit.

Rabbi Yitzchok Breitowitz proffers:

“The very first question that we are held accountable for after our deaths is ‘Nasata V’netata Be’emunah’ which means ‘did you conduct your business affairs with honesty and with probity?’ The second question is "did you set aside time for the study of the Torah, etc." But question #1 is were we ethical in the conduct of our business. If you look throughout the Torah, you will see a constant juxtaposition between the ritual commands of Judaism and the ethical obligations between one human being and another.

One verse may say, don’t eat meat and milk and the other verse will say, do not cheat, do not misrepresent, do not engage in fraud, because they are all part of the same religious structure. The notion of a dichotomy between ritual behavior and social behavior is a dichotomy that is totally foreign to Judaism because all of them are part of the same God-given basis of morality.”

What basis of morality should provide normative guidance to a Jew? Clearly, all individuals are confronted with ethical challenges in the marketplace. Is being a good Jew synonymous with being an ethical Jew? How do we assess the ethicality that underlies decision making in business scenarios? The nexus between these critical inquiries provides a general platform for this course.

According to a recent KPMG Organizational Integrity Survey

76% of employees in business have observed a high level of illegal and/or unethical conduct in their workplace within the past 12 months.

Nearly half of those employees have observed misconduct that (if exposed) would cause their organizations to “significantly lose public trust.”

Course Description

Using a comparative Jewish perspective, this course critically assesses the ethical and social impact management implications in the deployment of business strategy and tactics. Specific attention is afforded to the rights and responsibilities of the firm, consumers and


society. The course explores real-world decision-scenarios to provide a platform for highly interactive dialogue on issues dealing with ethics, organizational compliance, societal marketing, and social responsibility cast against a backdrop of Jewish value systems.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Examine alternative Jewish perspectives of ethics and social impact management
- Recount the basic tenets of moral philosophy, and assess how these principles may or may not be consistent with both historical and contemporary Jewish value systems
- Reflect on the identity of “being a Jew” relative to individual and organizational role sets and responsibilities
- Explore government and regulatory interventions as they relate to Talmudic
- Discuss cultural and international differences in Jewish perspectives of business ethics
- Defend a Jewish position on ethics, organizational compliance and/or social responsibility in marketing practice.

Required Readings and Support Materials

The following textbook is NOT required for all course participants, but it is an exceptional reading. The book is no longer in-print, but it is readily accessible on-line from amazon.com and other retail outlets:


There will be a number of articles from popular media, academic journals and trade journals, as well. These will either be posted as .pdf files to eCampus.unt.edu, or the references will be provided for you to procure from the University of North Texas libraries.

Professor Access and Course Resources

The University of North Texas Faculty Handbook mandates that “each faculty member is required to list and maintain office hours within their department...so that students can have access to their professors.” In the interest of serving your academic needs, I have designed a tripartite communications system.

Electronic Communication. The Department of Marketing and Logistics maintains a Web site for those seeking general information about undergraduate and graduate degree programs in marketing. You are also required to access the eCampus.unt.edu course site. This is an ideal site for those seeking general information about the course. Course materials, bulletins, communications and quizzes will use the Blackboard platform. This platform affords you 24/7 access to course information from most computers and all campus computer labs with an Internet connection. For interactive communications, I strongly encourage you to communicate with me at loue.pelton@unt.edu I check my email daily, unless I am out-of-town. Even when I am out-of-town, I monitor my e mail every 48 hours.

Face-to-Face Meetings. I am available to meet with you at most times. I will be available by appointment. I can arrange to meet with you at other times, but I encourage you to make an appointment. You are welcome to come by my office at any time.

Telephone Access. I may be reached at 972.333.3132 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. In the event that I am unavailable, a voice mail system will instruct you on the procedures for leaving a message. Please speak slowly and clearly, and remember to leave a number where I can reach you. I will make every effort to return telephone calls within 24-hours of the message recording. You may also reach the Department of Marketing and Logistics at 940.565.3120 during the hours of 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, except on official university holidays.

Course Policies and Procedures

Academic Integrity. Each course participant should be fully aware of the policies and guidelines for academic honesty in the University of North Texas Student Guidebook and on UNT’s web page (www.unt.edu). The Student Code of Conduct and an abbreviated list of other rules, regulations and policies are available from the Dean of Students in Union 319. Plagiarism is a serious compromise of academic integrity. Please be certain to cite any reference. Materials copied verbatim must be in quotation marks with a correct citation documented within the text. This applies to any and all materials taken from Internet sites.
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The College of Business Administration complies with the ADA, and it makes every effort to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a special need in accordance with ADA guidelines, please inform Dr. Pelton immediately. Every effort will be made to accommodate your special needs. The Office of Disability Accommodations (ODA) assists faculty members and students in addressing special needs.

Course Performance Assessment

In this course, your grade will be based on your total accumulated points on graded assignments and attendance/participation. Final course grades will be determined by dividing your total number of accumulated points over 1,000 possible points.

“The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.”
- John Ruskin

I think Ruskin is correct in his assessment of the "highest reward" for performance. Hopefully, your greatest reward from this course will be the experience. Nevertheless, I have a responsibility to assign each student a grade for her/his course performance. Performance assessment in this course will be based on the following.

Exams. There will be three exams (all are cumulative), and the lowest score will be dropped.

Experiential Exercises. Each student is responsible for individually completing three experiential exercises. These may be in the form of case study analysis, video "position papers" or other hands-on, real-world applications of course principles. Each one will be worth 200 points.

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