THE SOCIAL IMPACT CORE CURRICULUM

In the Social Impact Core Curriculum, NYU Stern undergraduate students:

• Become more aware of multiple stakeholder perspectives on important business issues;
• Develop a more nuanced understanding of the many relationships between corporations, governments, non-profits, market economies and civil society;
• Begin the process of developing professional ethics in harmony with their own personal values; and,
• Learn to articulate, defend, and reflect critically on a point of view.

Required Material


BUSINESS AND ITS PUBLICS

Business has become the defining institution of modern social life: corporate activity and influence affects economies, governments, and people, with far-reaching consequences for local and global communities. Modern society moves by way of its organizations and institutions; as corporate organizations assume more of this social power, we consider how their social responsibilities grow and change to keep pace.

Business and its Publics examines the relationships between corporations and society, in particular the social impact of business. Plenary topics, readings, and assignments frame this examination from multiple perspectives:

• The role of business in society
  We look at the original foundations and frameworks for modern corporations, to understand their purpose and the structure of their relationships with other key societal institutions, including the state and community;

• The impact of business on society
  We look at the power and limitations of markets, relationships with stakeholders, and social issues that arise from business operations, including threats to public and common goods, market failures and the social costs of negative externalities;

• The impact of society on business
  We consider how societal issues frame business opportunities and strategies, and how corporations can leverage their role in society to address social problems in ways that create value for stakeholders and shareholders.
INTRODUCTION TO INQUIRY / DISCOURSE

The Plenary sessions are designed to expose you to speakers who represent a distinct perspective on one of the central issues related to business and its publics. The Inquiry and Discourse sessions follow the Monday evening Plenary sessions.

The central goal of the Inquiry sequence is to expand your view beyond the initial perspective that you were offered in the plenary session. The Inquiry sequence will involve discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the perspective offered in the Plenary, readings that offer alternative perspectives, and real life predicaments suggesting complications and implications that perhaps no perspective can deal with effectively.

The central goal of the Discourse sequence is to give you an opportunity to articulate and defend your own personal perspective on the key issues and topics of the course. The Discourse sequence will give you an opportunity to select issues, conduct research, evaluate and document sources, and present a clear and well-supported argument.

The central skills that you will be developing in both the Inquiry and Discourse sequences are:

- Critical Thinking and Analytical Reasoning
- The Ability to Articulate and Defend Your Perspective

Critical thinkers actively analyze information and the assumptions underlying information, are generally skeptical of information they receive, and are open to challenging their own beliefs by seeking and investigating evidence.

Critical thinking combines a number of complex processes:

- **Rationality**: critical thinkers distinguish between emotion and reason; require evidence, and look for explanations rather than the “right answer”
- **Self-awareness**: critical thinkers recognize their own and others’ assumptions, biases, and frames of reference
- **Open-mindedness**: critical thinkers consider and evaluate evidence, inferences, and interpretations whether or not they are consistent with existing beliefs
- **Discipline**: critical thinkers are precise, avoid snap judgments, and analyze attempts to manipulate thinking or use irrational appeals
- **Judgment**: critical thinkers recognize the merit of assumptions and perspectives that are different from their own, and seek supporting evidence

By choosing NYU Stern, you have entered an academic community where knowledge is both disseminated and created. The practice of critical thinking and analytical reasoning will help you evaluate what you are learning, and the ability to articulate and defend your perspective will provide the tools you need to contribute to knowledge yourselves. In Business and Its Publics: Inquiry and Discourse, you will learn how to differentiate between perceptions, assumptions, opinions, and evidence as you learn to analyze, create and apply arguments.

GRADING

At NYU Stern, we seek to teach challenging courses that allow students to demonstrate differential mastery of the subject matter. Assigning grades that reward excellence and reflect differences in performance is important to ensuring the integrity of our curriculum.

In core courses, faculty have adopted a standard of rigor for teaching where:

- 25-35% of students can expect to receive A’s for excellent work
- 50-70% of students can expect to receive B’s for good or very good work
- 5-15% of students can expect to receive C’s or less for adequate or below adequate work

Note that while we use these ranges as a guide, the actual distribution for this course and your own grade will depend upon how well you actually perform in this course.

In line with Grading Guidelines for the NYU Stern Undergraduate College, the process of assigning of grades is intended be one of unbiased evaluation. This means that students are encouraged to respect the integrity and authority of the professor's grading system and discouraged from pursuing arbitrary challenges to it.

If a student feels that an inadvertent error has been made in the grading of an individual assignment or in assessing an overall course grade, a request to have that grade be re-evaluated may be submitted. Students should submit such requests in writing to the professor within 7 days of receiving the grade, including a brief written statement of why he or she believes that an error in grading has been made.
Please see www.stern.nyu.edu/undergraduate/grading for “Teaching and Grading at the NYU Stern Undergraduate College” for more information.

Grading in Plenary and Inquiry

Grading is based entirely on evaluations of class preparation and class participation, which includes attendance in both Plenary and Inquiry sessions. Class preparation and participation includes assignments such as research for in-class debates, exercises and writing assignments. Quality, in addition to quantity, is emphasized with respect to class participation.

Extraordinary class participation involves activities such as posing an illuminating and thoughtful question in class, contribution of new insights and ways of looking at the material or issue, new examples that you might find from reading the newspaper or other reliable sources, efforts to synthesize or compare across multiple readings or speakers, relating the material we discuss one week to material and perspectives we have discussed earlier in the course, and providing constructive feedback to your fellow students. Instructors will “cold call” on students regularly in an attempt to more fairly distribute students’ opportunity to contribute to class discussion.

Examples of class participation that would lead to a ‘poor’ assessment include repeating something a fellow student has already said, comments that suggest that you have either not done the reading or not paid attention to the plenary speaker, being unable to defend a perspective you have stated when asked to defend it, and comments that are tangential to the ongoing class discussion (suggesting that you have not been closely following the class discussion).

Attendance is essential. All unexcused absences in Plenary or Inquiry will negatively impact your final class grade. Per university policy, excused absences are only granted in cases of serious illness, grave family emergencies, or religious observance. Each of these situations must be documented to our satisfaction. We must be notified in advance for any excused absence. Missing classes for events such as extra-curricular activities, job interviews and travel will be treated as unexcused absences.

Class will start on time. Coming in late is disruptive, particularly in such a small discussion group. Arriving to class more than 5 minutes late will negatively impact your class participation grade. Students may enter class late or leave class early only if given permission by the instructor and if it can be done without disrupting the class. Instructors are not obliged to admit late students or readmit students who leave class early.

Grading in Discourse

Grading is based on evaluations of written assignments and class participation. A description of assignments and grading follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION – (includes Journal entries on Blackboard)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse Cycles 1, 2 and 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 1 Position Paper:</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cycle 2 Analysis Paper:</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cycle 3 Action Paper:</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
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Attendance and Tardiness

Our sessions involve creating a highly interdependent learning community. We are a small group and there are relatively few sessions in each sequence, so we count on each one of you to be present and involved every week. A total of three or more unexcused absences from Discourse sessions will result in the student receiving no credit (zero percent) for participation.

Reading/Homework

Students are expected to come to the plenary having read the assigned readings. Students are expected to come to class having read any other additional assigned readings. Homework, online discussion, and other assignments are expected to be completed and submitted on time.
DISCOURSE CLASS WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:
There will be three graded essays. You will preface these three essays with a series of Journal entries which you will post on Blackboard. They are required, will receive commentary and numerical score that will factor in as part of your participation evaluation. These Journal entries will help you construct your graded essays since the topics link to the assignment questions. Details follow below for all assignments.

Journal entry guidelines
- Concentrate on understanding the questions and respond to them thoughtfully.
- Pay close attention to how the journal questions relate to one another and work on integrating your knowledge through your journal responses within each cycle.
- Use the journals to explore ideas and to take intellectual risks, but remember to firmly ground your ideas in the texts or your experiences (depending on the type of journal question).
- Make sure your writing is clear, concise, and focused; slang, jargon, clichés, and other ambiguous or imprecise language should be avoided.
- Use the journals to establish your own analytical perspective and voice.

Essay submission and design guidelines - please follow these explicitly:
1. Submit your essay assignments using the “Assignments” tab on Blackboard. Essays submitted will be evaluated by “Turn-It-In,” an online service that compares your content and wording to a database of other essays and Web sites.
2. Affirm on your cover page or at the end of your paper that the work you are submitting is your own by including the following statement:
   This work is my own. I have fully and appropriately referenced any work and efforts of others on which I relied and I did not engage in any method or means that provided me an unfair advantage. I confirm that I have adhered to the NYU Stern Code of Conduct in its completion.
3. Use a font size of 12 points with margins of 1 inch.
4. When submitting an assignment or attachment, always include your name as part of the filename! (For example, Ortiz_cycle2.doc).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Integrity is critical to the learning process and to all that we do here at NYU Stern. All students are expected to abide by the NYU Stern Student Code of Conduct. A student’s responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
- A duty to acknowledge the work and efforts of others when submitting work as one’s own. Ideas, data, direct quotations, paraphrasing, creative expression, or any other incorporation of the work of others must be clearly referenced.
- A duty to exercise the utmost integrity when preparing for and completing examinations, including an obligation to report any observed violations.
- Carefully review and abide by the rules and policies of NYU as outlined in detail at http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/code-of-ethical-conduct.html and http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines.html, recognizing that being fully informed about NYU and Stern rules and codes governing civil behavior and academic integrity is an obligation of community membership.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Students whose class performance may be affected due to a disability should notify the professor early in the semester so that arrangements can be made, in consultation with the Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, to accommodate their needs. Please see www.nyu.edu/csd for more information.

NYU STERN COURSE POLICIES
- Laptops, cell phones, smartphones, recorders, & other electronic devices may not be used in class unless advance permission is given by the instructor.
- Assignments submitted after the deadline will either not be accepted or will incur a grade penalty unless due to documented serious illness or family emergency. Instructors will make exceptions to this policy for reasons of religious observance or civic obligation only when the assignment cannot reasonably be completed prior to the due date and the student makes arrangements for late submission with the instructor in advance.
CYCLE ONE: Argue for Change (Analysis Paper)

Consider the respective roles of government and corporations in providing public services.
The activities of businesses – providing goods and services – seem distinct from the legislative, administrative, judicial and executive roles of government. But the line between the government and private sector blurs somewhere in the middle, where government-run institutions provide public services and for-profit businesses perform essential government functions. For example, the U.S. Post Office competes in the package delivery market, while cities and states turn to private firms to operate public prisons and provide police security services. We also find hybrid alternatives: partial government ownership of for-profit corporations, and quasi-government agencies run as for-profit businesses.

Which is best? Privatization (turning over public services to private firms) can cut government costs, and result in more efficiently run operations. But the profit imperative of private firms can lead them to reduce expenses and result in diminished quality and reliability of public services that society depends on.

In this paper you will choose one of these overlapping areas to examine and analyze. Assess the pros and cons of private or public operation, and determine what form of ownership and control best serves society’s interests.

Cycle 1, Journal 1:
Theodore Roosevelt, in his “New Nationalism” speech, argued that while government should honor and respect the rights of corporations, strong government oversight, if not outright control, is needed over the provision of public services. Is this as important today as it was in 1910? How does society benefit when the government controls or directly provides public goods and services? Give examples, and discuss the criteria that would apply.
Due 2/1/12, 400 words

Cycle 1, Journal 2:
In his essay "Wealth," Andrew Carnegie argues that those with the most money in society should use their surplus wealth to directly create or fund public institutions that improve the lives of all people. R. Edward Freeman, in his article about stakeholder theory, describes frameworks for corporations to include the interests of broader elements of society in their operations. Can society trust corporations to provide essential public services? What are the benefits and risks of turning public services over to private corporations and markets? Give examples, and discuss the criteria that would apply.
Due 2/8/12, 400 words

Cycle 1, Journal 3:
Andrei Shleifer, in “State versus Private Ownership,” presents criteria for deciding whether the government or the private sector should provide public services. When a public service has been privatized, what role should government play in ensuring that the public interests are being served and protected? What criteria should be used to evaluate the performance of public service corporations, or justify higher degrees of government control?
Due 2/15/12, 400 words

Cycle 1, Final Assignment:
Identify a situation where you believe the respective roles of government and corporations should change: either to privatize public services now provided by the government, or a privately operated public service that you believe should come under more government control or ownership. Consider the full range of possibilities in the relationship between government and the private sector. Discuss the arguments for and against the change, and explain your own position. Defend your position with evidence and support from the first cycle's readings and plenary speakers.
First draft due for workshop in class: Week of 2/20/12

FINAL DUE FEBRUARY 26, 2012 (1,500 words)
CYCLE TWO: (Research Paper)

Analysis of Corporate Responsibility for Public Goods

As corporations produce the goods and services society needs, in the process they may consume, degrade, or contaminate public and common goods. Limited resources such as clean water, fisheries, and forests are polluted or depleted; air quality and public infrastructures are impaired or damaged. Harm to public goods from the side effects and byproducts of corporate activity also impose costs on society at large. If a corporation doesn't internalize the social costs of its negative externalities, the burden falls on society.

In this paper you will research a public good or common resource that is threatened by corporate operations and/or their negative externalities. Whether you choose to look at environmental damage, depletion of public resources, degradation of public infrastructure, or negative impacts on social structures, workers and communities, you will analyze the contributing factors and consider how to address the costs imposed on society.

Cycle 2, Journal 1:

Garret Hardin, in “The Tragedy of the Commons,” argues that producers view common resources with rational, self-interested calculations: their private gain from consuming one unit of commons is less than their shared cost of the public loss. Hardin suggests that when the goods at stake are open to all takers and users, tragedy ensues. Is that always true?

First, choose a public or common good under threat that you want to analyze. Identify whether the impairment comes from negative externalities, over-consumption, or other causes. How are the public costs quantified and calculated? Analyze the factors affecting costs and benefits in terms of market failure or market dysfunction.

Due 3/7/12, 400 words

Cycle 2, Journal 2:

When corporate operations work against society’s interests in sustaining and protecting public goods, stakeholder groups and public institutions are challenged to find effective responses.

For the public good threat you’ve chosen, identify the key stakeholders who are most affected. How do they respond? What are their options? Analyze the effectiveness of their strategies and approaches in terms of protecting stakeholder rights and interests, and addressing the market inefficiencies.

Due 3/21/12, 400 words

Cycle 2, Final Assignment:

Write a paper that combines your research from the journals and analyzes the problem.

• What are the main options for protecting the public or common good?
• What roles should other societal institutions take?
• Discuss any ethical issues that are raised.
• Identify the best strategies, and discuss the risks and benefits from multiple perspectives.
• Consider whether the public costs can be balanced against public benefits or positive externalities.
• What do the various responses and strategies imply about the obligations of corporations to stakeholders and societal institutions?

First draft due for workshop in class: Week of 3/26/12

FINAL DUE APRIL 1, 2012 (1,500 words)
CYCLE THREE: (Advocacy Position Paper)

Advocacy for Corporate Social Action

For cycle three, you will explore how businesses can benefit society by addressing pressing societal issues or taking initiatives to develop solutions for nascent social problems. Your paper will have a specific target: choose a societal issue you care about and identify a corporation that could play a role in ameliorating the problem. You can propose your own original solution, or argue for an existing solution developed by social entrepreneurs, innovators, third parties or advocacy organizations. Select a contemporary situation where new approaches, innovative ideas, and committed corporate involvement can make a strong impact.

You will research the context and history of your chosen issue to evaluate the effectiveness of existing efforts and analyze your proposed plan. Your final paper should present well-reasoned and persuasive advocacy for action. Successful papers will address the complexities of relationships between businesses and societal institutions, and examine how a corporation can work with outside stakeholder groups to benefit society.

Cycle 3, Journal 1:
Michael Porter and Mark Kramer, authors of Strategy and Society: The Link Between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility, suggest that the unmet needs of disadvantaged communities represent opportunities for corporations to become involved in ways that create shared value. Innovations, investment and new approaches can also produce positive externalities – byproducts of sustainable business operations that improve social and economic conditions in their communities.

What societal issues and problems do you care about? Do you believe that corporations can become involved to make positive impacts? Discuss the experiences and interests you have that lead you to become concerned about those problems.

Due 4/4/12, 400 words

Cycle 3, Journal 2:
Choose a contemporary societal issue, unmet need, or problem; specify a corporation to take actions and the outline of your proposed solution. Identify the potential benefits and beneficiaries. How can your idea generate shared value or positive externalities?

In a brief synopsis, discuss the:

• Historical and contemporary context. Review the roster of groups and corporations involved, describing their roles and their relationships.
• Reasons why the proposed action should be undertaken and why it could succeed.
• What, if anything, has been tried before? Why haven't other ideas been successful, or even tried? What is new or different about your proposal?
• From the perspective of affected stakeholders, what is risked if no action is taken?

Due 4/11/12, 400 words

Cycle 3, Journal 3:
Discuss the challenges your proposed action faces from the corporation's perspective.

• How will success be measured?
• What factors could reduce the corporation's willingness to take this action?
• How would this action serve the corporation's short-term goals and/or its larger, longer-term goals?
• What external hurdles must be overcome for the corporation to succeed?

Due 4/18/12, 400 words

Cycle 3, Final Assignment:
Doing Something About It: Corporate Social Action
Expand on your journals to produce a comprehensive paper that identifies the best option for addressing the problem and advocates for the specific corporate social action you have proposed. Your advocacy for the proposed actions should incorporate arguments based on utility, practicality, and ethical concerns. Provide compelling arguments why it should be implemented, citing support from the semester's readings and plenary speakers. Be sure to include a full and clear analysis of the present situation, the issue and the stakes. Describe the interests and positions of the assorted key players and stakeholders. Write the essay in the form of a white paper for a corporate audience: a professional report that combines research with analysis to make recommendations.

First draft due for workshop in class: Week of 4/30/12

FINAL DUE MAY 7, 2012 (2,000 words)