Course Title: "Morality and Markets"
Beyond Boundaries Disciplinary Link: Business and English
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Course Description:

What does it look like to live a moral life in today's market system? We know all too well what it does *not* look like. The news is filled with moral failures of leaders and executives at top firms. We like to believe that we would behave differently, but what kind of pressures inform our moral choices? What pulls us, what pushes us, and what persuades us to act one way rather than another? These are the questions that a course combining business and literature can open in unique ways, for the world of fiction helps open the ethical dilemmas of the market we inhabit everyday. In the following course, we use great books, classics of film and modern television, and the tools of modern psychology and business strategy to think critically about what is entailed in living a moral life in the midst of the modern market.

Dissecting Ethical Dilemmas:

This course starts with the assumption that ethical dilemmas emerge from a variety of different angles, some of which are tied to individual psychology, and some to system design. Specifically, there are problems of:

- DEALING WITH LIMITED AWARENESS -
  - *"I didn't know this was a moral dilemma"* -
  - Dilemmas that result from an inability to see a situation as having the appropriate moral complexity
- DEALING WITH LIMITED INSIGHT -
  - *"While I saw this as a moral dilemma, I thought the appropriate response was something else"*
  - Dilemmas that result from an inability to assess the "right" moral outcomes
  - RESPONDING TO MORAL COMPLEXITY
    - *"I am aware that any action taken will help some and harm others, and therefore it remains unclear what the right action ought to be."*
    - Dilemmas that result from an inability to clearly state right from wrong, causing us to examine the highest orders or priorities of our principles.
  - WORKING AROUND LIMITED COURAGE -
    - *"I know what I ought to do, but I was unable to do so."*
    - Dilemmas that result from an inability to enact moral courage, to overcome the system tendencies, and navigate the inertia of the system

At the system level, the assumption is that the systems we exist within (whether organizationally or societally) have a kind of internal logic and corresponding set of incentives that nudge us collectively toward more or less moral behavior. As a result, real moral leadership means considering what kind of awareness, insight, or courage our systems should cultivate, and how to supplement or redesign them as needed.

Course Method:

Pedagogically, the course explores moral dilemmas in the following ways:

- Providing exposure to complex moral dilemmas from literature that address business and broader markets
- Identifying related business "cases" that reflect similar ethical dilemmas
- Cultivating an understanding of core psychological mechanisms and sociological drivers that make particular behaviors (for ourselves or others) more likely
- Framing a typology of the drivers of ethical behavior at the individual (moral awareness, moral insight, moral courage, and responses with exit, voice, and loyalty) and system level (ethical systems design)

Course Assessment
1. **Individual Course Engagement**
   a. Class Participation (10%)
   b. Short Case Writes-Ups (20%) - A series of 1-page response papers asking students to reflect upon how they would respond to particular moral dilemmas within the course texts
2. **Individual Moral Analysis**
   a. Individual Self Assessment (15%) - Self-Assessment on Ethical Tendencies -
      i. Using a mix of reflecting on how responded in ethical scenarios and tools to assess ethical tendencies to identify one's moral tendencies and strategies to engage more reflectively in such act
   b. Individual Literature "Case" Analysis (20%)
      i. Working through a particular literature text to identify how one would respond to this scenario-- both in what they believe is the right approach, and how to cultivate the courage to act.
3. **Group Moral Analysis**
   a. Group Literature "Case" Analysis (20%) - Working through a particular literature text to identify how one would respond to this scenario-- both in what they believe is the right approach, and how to cultivate the courage to act.
   b. Team Ethical System Design (15%) - Work to outline the way to approach system design (of a particular organization) in light of the moral frameworks of the course

Course Structure

Section 1 (Week 1) - Course Introduction
- Weekly Topic / Materials
    - <u>Week 1 - Topic</u>
        - A - Review Syllabus
        - B - Selected Readings / Listening
            - Sandel, M. "How markets crowd out morals"
            - Selections from "The Dropout" Podcast on Theranos

Section 2 (Week 2 - 3) - Understanding Market Systems
- Weekly Topic / Materials
    - <u>Week 2 - Understanding Markets</u>
        - A - Walden, "Economy // Relevant Puritan Literature from Abram's Research
        - B - Fourcade & Healy "Moral Views of Market Societies"
    - <u>Week 3 - Understanding Markets, Continued</u>
        - A - Max Weber - Protestant Ethic" - Excerpts
        - A / B - Franklin, B. *Autobiography* - Excerpts
    - Week 4 - Shaping By / Seeing Outside Systems
        - A / B - Spufford, F. *Red Plenty*

Section 3 (Week 4 - 6) - Understanding Individual Behavior - Challenges of Awareness, Insight, Complexity, and Courage
    - Week 5 - Understanding Human Behavior - Motivation & Blindspots
        - A - Excerpts - Bazerman, M.H., & Tenbrunsel, A.E. (2011). *Blind spots*
        - B - Raymond Carver, "A Small Good Thing" --
    - Week 6 - Understanding Human Behavior - "Weird" Moral Psychology
        - A - Adam Smith - Theory of Moral Sentiments
        - B - Excerpts - Haidt, J. (2012) - *The righteous mind*
    - Week 7 - Judging Action Within Systems
        - A / B - Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette*

Session 3 (Week 8 - 10) - Sources of Responsibility
- Weekly Topic / Materials
    - 8 - Topic -- Personal Action, Reaction, and Moral Responsibility
        - A - Charles Brocken Brown, *Edgar Huntly*
        - B -Charles Brocken Brown, *Edgar Huntly*
    - 9 - Topic -- Legacies, Traditions, and Racial Systems in American Culture
        - A - Charles Brocken Brown, *Edgar Huntly*
        - B - James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*
    - 10 - Topic - TBD
        - A - James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*
        - B - James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*

Session 4 (Week 10 - 13) - Spaces for Reform
- Weekly Topic / Materials
    - 11 - Response to Market Failure - Exit, Voice, and Loyalty

- - - ■ A - Excerpts -
          - ● Hirschman, A. (1970) *Exit, Voice, or Loyalty*
          - ● For Class Discussion - Selections from "[The Wire](#)"
      - ■ B - "[Why I am leaving Goldman Sachs](#)"
  - ○ 12 - Supplementing the Market: Moral System Design / Cultural Formation
      - ■ A / B - *Nudge* or Excerpt on Moral Systems Design /
      - ■ A / B - Herman Melville, 'Bartleby, the Scrivener" --
  - ○ 13 - Supplementing the Market: Wearing "Second Hats" and Building Moral Courage
      - ■ A / B - William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*

Session 5 (Week 14) - Conclusion
- ● Description -
- ● Weekly Topic / Materials
  - ○ 14 - Defining Victory or Defeat?
      - ■ A / B - Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*