

PH131-H Business Ethics: The Philosophy of Work

Professor: Aaron Ancell

Class Time: M/Th 12:30 – 1:50

Office Hours: M/Th 2:30 – 3:30

Email: aancell@bentley.edu

Classroom: Smith 203

Office: Smith 108

What is this course about?

Is work good? Does it make our lives better and more meaningful? Or is it a just a necessary evil—just something we must do pay for the things we want and need? Do we work too much? What do justice and fairness require at work? When are workers exploited? How is work changing? And how can we harness and direct that change to improve our lives and our societies? Will automation create widespread unemployment? If so, is that a bad thing? In this course, we'll consider these and other questions about the value of work and the place of work in our lives and our society. Along the way we'll delve into contemporary debates about wages, sweatshops, universal basic income, economic inequality, the gig economy, and much else.

Course Objectives

This course aims to improve your ability to...

...understand and critically evaluate the changing world of work by integrating insights from multiple disciplines.

...cultivate a reflective attitude toward work by examining your own assumptions about the nature, meaning, and value of work.

...use ethical theories and concepts such as well-being, fairness, and autonomy to analyze the moral dimensions of work and work-related issues.

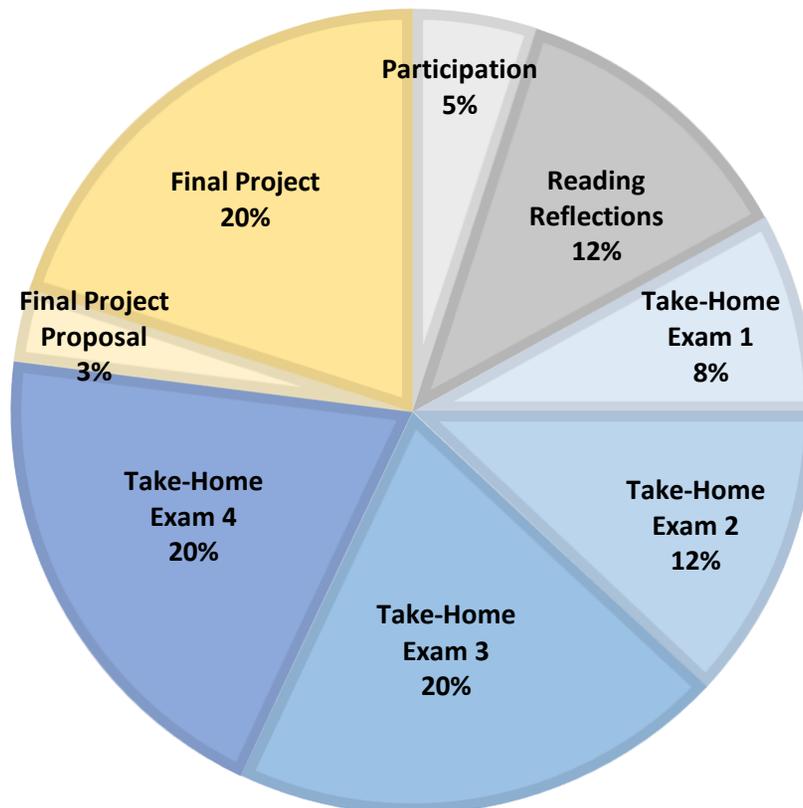
....recognize how demographic differences and social identities shape people's experiences and understandings of work.

...understand and critically evaluate different perspectives on issues like living wages, sweatshops, workplace democracy, economic inequality, and universal basic income.

Course Materials

You are not required to purchase any textbooks. All course materials will be available via Blackboard. Some of the materials are provided via links to websites. If you have difficulty accessing any of the materials, please let me know.

Assignments and Grade Distribution



Participation: 5 points

Reading Reflections: 12 points (12 x 1 point each)

Take-Home Exam 1: 8 points

Take-Home Exam 2: 12 points

Take-Home Exam 3: 20 points

Take-Home Exam 4: 20 points

Final Project Proposal: 3 Points

Final Project: 20 Points

TOTAL: 100 points

Participation and Attendance

Participation: This is intended to be an interactive class with lots of opportunities for discussion and engagement. For that to work, you need to attend class and actively participate. To incentivize attendance and participation, I have made it worth 5% of your final course grade.

Beyond regular attendance, receiving a high participation score requires actively participating in class. Actively participating does not mean you have to say something every class, and you certainly should not try to talk as much as possible. I'll also do my part to make participating easy by inviting you to answer questions, discuss things with each other in small groups, and so on. **Ultimately, what I am looking for is evidence that you are keeping up with the readings and actively engaged in the class.**

Class Conduct: Class discussions will sometimes deal with controversial issues. Differing opinions and perspectives are encouraged, but everyone is expected to behave maturely and respectfully. Harassment and disrespectful conduct of any kind, whether directed to me or another student, will not be tolerated and may be subject to disciplinary action. **Students are expected to adhere to Bentley's standards of appropriate conduct, known as the Bentley Core Values. In-class conduct that is disrespectful toward me or your fellow students may result in a reduction in your participation grade.**

Attendance: Your participation grade will be based partly on your attendance. I expect you to attend class and be on time.

However, I also understand that things happen and you may need to miss class. So, **I will allow you to miss one class, for any reason, without negatively impacting your participation grade.**

If you need to miss more than one class, please email me to explain the situation and I will work with you to figure out an alternate form of participation. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to catch up by reviewing the recorded class session and ensuring that you complete any related assignments on time. If you miss more than one class session without a valid excuse, you will lose 1 point out of the possible 10 points for participation for each additional absence.

Attending via Zoom: Bentley's attendance policy requires you to attend class in-person. You can only attend via Zoom if you have a **legitimate medical reason** for needing to attend remotely, and, except in exceptional cases, you may only attend via Zoom for a **maximum of two classes**. To receive a Zoom link to attend remotely, **you must email me at least 30 minutes before class** and explain your reason for attending via Zoom

Assignments

Reading Reflections: I would like our class discussions to be driven partly by your questions. To that end, you will be required to submit **twelve** reading reflections by the end of semester. Each reading reflection should be **at least 100 words**—but need not be much longer than that—and should show that you’ve done the reading and thought a bit about it. Since there are more than fourteen classes, you do not have to submit a reflection every class. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that you submit at least twelve reflections.

Each reflection will be graded pass/fail. Each passable reflection is worth 1% of your final course, so the 12 required reading reflections comprise 12% of your final course grade. To receive credit for a reflection, **you must submit it before class on the day of the relevant class**. You should submit your reflections using the journal feature on Blackboard. There is a link to it—called “Reading Reflections”—in the side menu of our course Blackboard page.

Exams: There will be four take-home exams. Each exam will consist of a set of short-answer questions which you will complete on Blackboard. You will have roughly one week to complete each exam. The exams are open book. The first exam is worth 8%, the second is worth 12%, and the third and fourth are worth 20% each.

Final Project: The final project is an opportunity for you to demonstrate what you’ve learned and thought about. You can choose the topic of your project, though it *must* relate to the class. Your project can take a variety of different forms; it could be a paper, a recorded TED-style talk, a podcast episode, a movie, or something else entirely. The primary requirement is that the project demonstrates a significant amount of critical reflection on one of the topics of the course. You can complete the project alone or in a group of up to three people. You will be required to submit a project proposal outlining what you plan to do. Your proposal is worth 3% of your final grade, and your finished final project is worth 20%.

Late Work and Extensions

Late Policy: Assignments submitted after the deadline without an extension or documented excuse are subject to a penalty of 5% per day up to a maximum 40% penalty after 8 days lateness. For example, if an assignment is graded out of 20 points, you will lose 1 point per day that the assignment is late, and receive a maximum of 12 / 20 after 8 days.

Extensions: If you want an extension, you should request it as soon as possible. Do not email me the night before an assignment is due asking for an extension unless you have a very good reason for suddenly being unable to complete it on time. The farther in advance of the deadline you request an extension, the more likely I am to grant your request.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

Do not cheat or plagiarize. Your work must be your own. I will report any cases of suspected academic misconduct—even *minor ones*—to the Director of Academic Integrity.

Plagiarism is representing another person's work or ideas as your own. It's fraud. And it's a serious academic offense. Note that plagiarism can be inadvertent. Something as simple as copying or paraphrasing from Wikipedia without citation is plagiarism. Good intentions or misunderstanding do not excuse plagiarism.

If you use the words of another person, or from an AI such as ChatGPT, those words must be enclosed in quotation marks and you must include an appropriate citation. If you use someone else's ideas, you must indicate it using an appropriate citation. Failing to do those things, whether negligently or intentionally, is plagiarism. In this course, you may either use parenthetical citations, e.g. (Author 2021), with a works cited section at the end, or footnotes that contain complete citation information. Either is acceptable. For more information on how to cite sources properly, please see the Bentley Library website (<http://libguides.bentley.edu/citingsources>). You will not be penalized for making small errors in the formatting of citations, but serious penalties may be imposed if you forget or intentionally omit needed citations.

Collaboration with other students inside or outside of class is encouraged. However, directly copying, or even paraphrasing, another student's answers or work is prohibited. You can and should discuss course materials and the assignments with your classmates, but the work you submit must be your own.

Students are permitted to seek tutoring help when they are struggling to understand course material. However, you must not ask or allow a tutor to complete any part of any assignment for you. Doing so constitutes a violation of Bentley's academic integrity policy.

Note that all course materials, including material uploaded to Blackboard, are for teaching purposes for this course during this term only. It is a violation of Bentley's academic integrity policy to reproduce or distribute these materials outside of class without the instructor's express written consent. Lectures and course materials, including presentations slides, outlines, tests, and similar materials are protected by copyright even if there is no copyright notice on the material. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own use.

Failure to adhere to Bentley's Academic Integrity policy can have serious consequences, including course failure, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

Bentley Resources

Library: The Bentley Library supports the research and learning needs of the Bentley community through our spaces, technology, collections, teaching, and expertise. Open 99 hours per week during the semester, the Library provides spaces for quiet study and group collaboration, as well as computers, printers and other equipment. Research assistance is available until 9:00 p.m. most nights in-person at the Reference Desk and via email (refdesk@bentley.edu), phone (781.891.2300), text (781.728.0511), and live chat (<https://www.bentley.edu/library/research/help>). Reference Librarians can help you develop research questions and topics, select databases and other resources, evaluate information, and properly cite sources. Research consultations for individuals and small groups are available in-person and via Zoom by appointment. For more information about the Library's hours, services, and resources visit our website library.bentley.edu.

ESOL Center: The ESOL Center offers online appointments for helping undergraduate and graduate students strengthen their writing and English language skills. Our ESOL faculty tutors specialize in working with international and multilingual students to provide one-on-one support for all courses writing at any stage in the writing process. Along with individualized help for writing, the ESOL tutors provide guidance and feedback for documenting sources, oral presentation practice, and pronunciation/fluency enrichment. The ESOL Center offers real-time video appointments Monday through Friday between 7:30 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. These can be reserved through our website: <https://bentley.mywconline.net/>. The complete information about booking appointments and uploading papers is clarified on the website's announcement page.

Writing Center: The Writing Center offers one-on-one tutoring for writing and presentations. We help students of all years and skill levels. Located on the lower level of the Bentley library (room 023), the Writing Center provides a welcoming and supportive environment in which students can work on writing or presentations from any class or discipline. Students are encouraged to visit at all stages of the process; they can bring a draft of a paper or come get feedback on a practice presentation. They can come in to brainstorm, work on an outline, or just discuss some initial thoughts and questions. Staffed by highly skilled student tutors, the Writing Center is open six days a week. Our conferences are available online or in-person. We take walk-ins, but we encourage students to make appointments in advance. Hours and additional information are available on the [Writing Center SharePoint site](#). Appointments can be made at bentley.mywconline.net.

Counseling Center: The Counseling Center is available for all students who are struggling and seeking mental health support. The Counseling Center staff are available for an initial consultation, which will be used to assess and determine the best course of action to help a student. If appropriate, staff can schedule students for short-term therapy. Should it be determined that more long-term, intensive, specialized or local support is necessary, Counseling Center staff will assist with connecting students with those resources. Please call our main number ([781-891-2274](tel:781-891-2274)) to make an appointment. For students in crisis, we also offer mental health support outside of regular business hours. Should you need to connect with one of our afterhours clinicians, please call our main number and follow the prompts.

Bentley Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend every class session. For full semester courses, students (whether currently registered in the course or not) must start attending classes by the first class meeting after the add/swap period ends.

If you become ill (Covid or otherwise) this semester, are injured, or have another serious personal or family issue that warrants you missing a class, please contact your faculty members individually. Faculty are generally accommodating in making alternative arrangements for students on a short-term basis.

Going to an internship, attending family celebrations, or taking a vacation are not good reasons for missing classes.

Religious Accommodations: Bentley University is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive campus culture. We recognize the diversity of religious traditions represented in the campus community and affirm the rights of students to receive accommodations for academic absences due to religious observances in accord with Massachusetts state law and Bentley core values.

Non-Discrimination and the Bias Incident Report Team:

Bentley University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital status, age, national origin, citizenship status, disability, genetic information, military or veteran status. Bentley University's policies and practices reflect the university's commitment to nondiscrimination in all areas of employment. The university complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Revenue Procedure 75-50 prohibiting such discrimination. The Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) provides students affected by bias or bias-related incidents with access to appropriate resources. More information about BIRT and how to file a bias incident report can be found at <http://www.bentley.edu/offices/student-affairs/birt>.

Disability Services: Bentley University abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which stipulate no student shall be denied the benefits of an education solely by reason of a disability. If you have a hidden or visible disability which may require classroom accommodations, please call Disability Services within the first 4 weeks of the semester to schedule an appointment- **781.891.2004, Jennison 336**. Disability Services is responsible for managing accommodations and services for all students with disabilities.

| Course Schedule | | | |
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| Day | Topic | Reading | Deadlines |
| Mon. Jan. 23 | Welcome to PH131 | | |
| Thur. Jan. 26 | Keynes's Prophecy | Read: Excerpts from "The Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren" by John Maynard Keynes | |
| Mon. Jan. 30 | Where did Keynes go wrong? | Read: Excerpts from <i>Revisiting Keynes</i> by Richard Freeman, Robert Frank, and Benjamin Friedman Read: "Why Do We Buy What We Buy?" interview of Juliet Schor by Emily Stewart | |
| Thur. Feb. 2 | Work, Money, and Happiness | Watch: "Happiness: What Your Mother Didn't Tell You," By Daniel Gilbert | |
| Mon. Feb. 6 | Happiness and the Good Life | Read: "Happiness and the Good Life" by David Louzecky | |
| Thur. Feb. 9 | What is the Good Life? | Read: "How will you measure your life?" by Clayton Christensen Read: "Tennis with Plato," by Mark Rowlands | Take-Home Exam 1 Due |
| Mon. Feb. 13 | Meaningful Work | Read: "Important, Worthwhile, and Valuable Employment" by Blake Allen Read: "Meaningful Work" by Andrea Veltman Read: "Why it doesn't pay to be a banker" by Rutger Bregman | |
| Thur. Feb. 16 | Choosing a Career | Read: "The Ethics of Choosing Careers and Jobs" by Michael Cholbi | |
| Mon. Feb. 20 | Hustle Culture | Read: "Workism is Making Americans Miserable," by Derek Thompson Read: "Working Less is a Matter of Life and Death," by the NY Times Editorial Board | |
| Thur. Feb. 23 | Responses to Hustle Culture | Read: "If your Co-Workers Are 'Quiet Quitting,' Here's What That Means" by Lindsay Ellis and Angela Yang Read: "The Backlash Against Quiet Quitting is Getting Louder" by Kathryn Dill and Angela Yang Read: "Work is a False Idol" by Cassady Rosenblum | |

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| Mon. Feb. 27 | Should we shorten the work week? | Read: "A 15-Hour Work Week," by Rutger Bregman Read: "Five Reasons Why The Four-Day Week Won't Work" by Wim Nuadé Read: "The 4-Day Week is Flawed. Workers Still Want it" by Caitlin Harrington | |
| Thur. Mar. 2 | What is fair pay? | Read: "What's in a Wage? A New Approach to the Justification of Pay," by Jeffrey Moriarty | Take-Home Exam 2 Due |
| Mon. Mar. 6 | Markets and Wages | Read: Excerpts from "On the Very Idea of a Just Wage," by Joseph Heath | |
| Thur. Mar. 9 | Living Wages | Read: "Should Employers Pay a Living Wage?" by Jason Brennan | |
| SPRING BREAK MARCH 13 – 17 | | | |
| Mon. Mar. 20 | Exploitation and Sweatshops | Watch: "Blood, Sweat, and T-Shirts" Episode 1 Watch: "Three Reasons Sweatshops are Good for the Poor" Matt Zwolinski | |
| Thur. Mar. 23 | Gamification, Monitoring, and Control | Read: "Gamified Life," by Vincent Gabrielle | |
| Mon. Mar. 27 | Freedom at, and outside of, Work | Read: "A Chill Around the Water Cooler: First Amendment in the Workplace" by Jeannette Cox Read: "Noncompetes Depress Wages and Kill Innovation" by Lina Kahn | |
| Thur. Mar. 30 | Do employers have too much power? | Read: "How bosses are (literally) like dictators," by Elizabeth Anderson Read: "Workers on Corporate Boards?" Germany's Had them for Decades," by Susan Holberg | Take-Home Exam 3 Due |
| Mon. Apr. 3 | Discrimination and Bias at Work | Read: "Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias," by Daniel Kelly and Erica Roedder Read: "This is How Everyday Sexism Can Stop You From Getting That Promotion," by Jessica Nordell | |
| Thur. Apr. 6 | Gender Norms and the Pay Gap | Watch: "Why Women Are Paid Less," by Netflix Read: "The Devaluation of Care Work is By Design," by Angela Garbes | |

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| Mon. Apr. 10 | Automation and the Future of Work: The Complementarity View | Read: “Why Robots Won’t Steal Your Job” by Nahia Orduña Watch: “Will Automation Take Away All Our Jobs?” by David Autor | |
| Thur. Apr. 13 | Automation and the Future of Work: The Replacement View | Read: “The Autumn of Humanity” and “The Case for Technological Unemployment” by John Danaher | |
| Mon. Apr. 17 | NO CLASS: Patriots Day | | |
| Thur. Apr. 20 | Employment Polarization and Income Inequality | Watch: “What will the future of jobs look like?” by Andrew McAfee Read: “The Spread” and “The Biggest Winners” from <i>The Second Machine Age</i> by Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee | Final Project Proposal Due |
| Mon. Apr. 24 | Universal Basic Income: In-Class Film Screening | | |
| Thur. Apr. 27 | Universal Basic Income | Read: “Why We Should Give Free Money to Everyone,” by Rutger Bregman Read: “Universal Basic Income May Sound Attractive But, If It Occurred, Would Likelier Increase Poverty than Reduce It” by Robert Greenstein | |
| Mon. May 1 | NO CLASS: Instead of having a class session on the final Monday, we will use the time for extra office hours for the final project. | | Take-Home Exam 4 Due |
| Fri. May 5 | EXAM PERIOD | We will not have an in-person final exam. The only thing you need to do this day is submit your final project via Blackboard (or email). | Final Project Due |