# Corporate social responsibility and business ethics (SECS-P/07)

## Prof. Riccardo Torelli

***COURSE OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

In this teaching, issues of ethics at the individual, corporate and systemic levels will be addressed. However, not only the ethical dilemmas of business will be analysed within a cross-cultural and global framework, but also critical thinking in relation to the economic/business world and its impact will be developed through an in-depth study of the notion of corporate social responsibility and the stakeholder approach. Through classroom discussions and debates, environmental and social issues affecting the corporate world will be explored. The programme is structured in such a way as to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of corporate social and environmental responsibility with reference to the different theories and strands of thought behind it as well as its founding principles. Students will be provided with the cognitive and methodological foundations to be able to apply and analyse the concepts of social and environmental responsibility, stakeholder engagement and responsibility-oriented strategy in the various fields of application. Particular attention will be paid to stimulate a good autonomy of judgement and elaboration of the available scenarios and data, in order to enable students to move autonomously where skills related to corporate social and environmental responsibility are required.

The course aims to provide students with

- a clear understanding of the nature of ethics and social responsibility in the corporate context;

- the tools and skills to identify, analyse and critically discuss issues of ethics and social and environmental responsibility in the context of business decision-making;

- the ability to think critically and express their own ideas, opinions and reasoned choices.

At the end of the course, students will be able to

- identify and analyse issues related to business ethics;

- identify basic ethical theories and apply them to business issues;

- discuss and apply the concept of corporate social and environmental responsibility and the stakeholder concept in different areas;

- map and move within strategic/operational dynamics linked to specific social and environmental outputs/outcomes;

- propose and evaluate corporate strategies aimed at addressing the concept of corporate responsibility in its different facets;

- grasp the different nuances of corporate practices with reference to their impact on the market, on profit, on corporate development, on the outside world, on people;

- analytically analysing corporate behaviour, external pressures and possible responses;

- develop critical thinking about existing or expected conditions with regard to the consideration and evaluation of natural and social capital aspects;

- prepare a communication strategy that is appropriate and consistent with international standards on social, environmental and ethical commitments;

- develop an analytical reflection of the relationship between companies and civil society actors;

- examine the implications of corporate citizenship and brand activism.

***COURSE PROGRAMME***

The course covers the following topics:

* Introduction to business ethics and ethical dilemmas
* Individual and group responsibility
* The evaluation and application of ethics in business contexts
* The process of decision-making and action in the presence of ethical-moral judgements
* Introduction to corporate social and environmental responsibility (CSR)
* The role of the company, external pressures and stakeholders
* The social field and the ecological environment: new challenges and opportunities
* CSR strategies and partnerships
* The future of CSR and business ethics

***BIBLIOGRAPHY***

Course materials will be uploaded onto the Blackboard platform. Detailed instructions on the study of the materials will be provided in the course Syllabus and shown by the lecturer during the first lesson.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course includes theoretical lectures, case study discussions and analysis of realistic scenarios. These teaching methods are combined to develop students' ability to analyse and interpret the implications of different aspects of socio-environmental responsibility and business ethics.

* Lectures: students are presented with the content and are motivated and challenged to reflect on the proposed issues.
* Classroom discussions and debates: analysis of documents, videos, case studies, exchange of ideas and cultural perspectives.
* Independent readings: selection of reading material in different areas of business ethics and CSR.
* Case studies: opportunities to study real life situations and the reactions of the actors involved.
* Videos: documentaries and films related to business ethics and CSR to be viewed independently and discussed in the classroom.

***METHOD AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA***

Attendance at the course is strongly recommended, as the aim of the course is to develop analytical and critical thinking skills.

The overall assessment is based on the performance of some classroom Debates, periodic Assignments to be carried out independently and a final examination (Debate 10%, Assignment 20%, Examination 70%).

* Assignment: production of written documents, presentations or answers to specific questions relating to assigned readings, viewing of videos, in-depth studies and research to be carried out.
* Debate: students will form teams and competitively debate ethical or CSR issues with the support of videos/documents/websites.
* Final exam: the final exam will be based on the lectures, the required readings, the teaching materials provided and will use different formats to assess students' progress towards the learning outcomes of the entire course. Question formats will include open questions, multiple choice questions, short answer questions, True/False questions with explanation of the answer and analysis of a case study. The duration of the examination will be 1.5 hours and will be graded on a 30 points basis.

***WARNINGS AND PREREQUISITES***

The course assumes that students already have a good knowledge of basic business economics concepts.

***TIME AND PLACE OF RECEPTION FOR STUDENTS***

The timetable and reception arrangements are available online on the teacher's personal page, which can be consulted at <http://docenti.unicatt.it/> .

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