

Economics and Ethics (F000648)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 6.0

Study time 180 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 1)	Dutch, English	Gent	seminar	0.0h
			group work	0.0h
			lecture	
			peer teaching	0.0h

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Albrecht, Johan	EB21	lecturer-in-charge
Peferoen, Ludo	EB25	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Science in Economics	6	A
Bachelor of Science in Economics (Double Degree)	6	A
Master of Science in Economics	6	A
Master of Science in Economics (Double Degree)	6	A
Exchange programme in Economics and Business Administration	6	A

Teaching languages

English, Dutch

Keywords

Ethics, economic systems, free market, moral progress, distributive justice, corruption, democracy, rule of law.

Position of the course

Economic activities are an important part of life in a society. The current free market economy is a relative newcomer in the organization of economic life, which has historically taken very different forms. This course examines a wide range of ethical questions about the way in which economic life has taken shape in our society. These questions arise at different levels: there are ethical questions about the role of the individual as a participant in economic activities, about the role of companies and other economic actors, and finally about the way in which a society can or should regulate some of the effects of a free market. In order to be able to provide answers to these questions, we first investigate on what basis we can or want to make statements about our ethical expectations. For, at the same time, ethics has also taken different forms over time. The aim is not to provide conclusive answers to all the questions that are raised, but to reflect on them actively and critically, through various forms of participation. Regular and active participation of all students in these activities is therefore essential.

Contents

General topics will include:

- 1 Economic systems, their context, their justification
- 2 The multiplicity of ethics
- 3 The moral caliber of the free market
- 4 The idea of moral progress
- 5 Principles versus feelings in ethics
- 6 The origins of ethics
- 7 Distributive justice

8 Forms of corruption
9 The place of democracy and the rule of law in a free market
10 The ethics of dealing with ethics in organizations
Depending on student interests a selection of more particular topics will be studied:

- 1 What if anything is wrong with insider trading?
 - 2 A satisfactory ethics of lying?
 - 3 Self-regulation: the case of advertising, and beyond
 - 4 The role of trade unions
 - 5 Use or abuse of whistleblowing?
 - 6 How to make ethics a topic within an organisation?
 - 7 Privacy of employees
 - 8 Hiring out one's body or selling some of its parts
 - 9 Doing business under authoritarian regimes
 - 10 The idea of a co-operative economy
 - 11 The idea of a social economy
 - 12 The idea of fair trade
 - 13 Does a free market corrode moral character?
 - 14 Fair taxation
 - 15 Responsible investment
 - 16 Must companies pursue good causes?
 - 17 The virtues of virtue ethics
 - 18 Can moral attitudes be represented in economic models of human behavior?
- Students can propose their own topics as well.

Initial competences

The student should be able to grasp particular situations in broader terms in order to reflect on fundamental questions in a structured manner. The student must be willing to share his or her opinions with others and to actively discuss them.

Final competences

- 1 To analyse the ethical character of situations
- 2 To design and evaluate arguments
- 3 To produce a text in a structured manner
- 4 To try to understand someone else's reasoning
- 5 To be courteous in a discussion
- 6 To look up a variety of sources and to be critical of their value
- 7 To work on an assignment in a small group
- 8 To talk and write in English
- 9 To conduct a conversation with AI about a question in ethics

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Seminar, Lecture, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

A number of themes are researched by the students themselves and shared with the other students through a participatory activity. Some of this work is individual, some is in groups. Active and constant participation in these forms of work is essential.

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Slides

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

Course content-related study coaching

The students discuss their proposal and initial elaboration of their theme with the teacher

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

Regular and active participation in the course activities is necessary to pass the periodic evaluation. Attendance from the first week of lessons, at the latest the second week of lessons, is essential as the work already starts then. Absences for legitimate reasons must be reported in advance by e-mail.

Calculation of the examination mark

The final score is determined:

50% by periodic evaluation

50% by non-periodical evaluation