

Lesson Suggestion 2: Ethical Analysis of Issues

Course(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This activity could be adapted for all courses identified (see Appendix A for related courses and policy document expectations)
Resources required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video of <i>The Corporation</i> (you may wish to select specific sections to view based on topics of interest to the class or the community)• BLM 1: Ethical Analysis Sheet• BLM 2: California Academic Press Holistic Critical Thinking Rubric• Access to a computer lab with Internet access, and a copy of the “Electronic Resources” provided in this package.
Background and/or prior learning	<p>The Corporation provides a variety of ethical issues for discussion. Providing students with a framework for ethical analysis will allow for reflective and critical analysis. A number of frameworks for ethical analysis exist. BLM 1: Ethical Analysis Sheet requires students to have an understanding of deontology and utilitarianism. Further information on these constructs can be researched by students on the Internet. Alternately, an introduction to ethics and these concepts in the form of a handout is available in the Introduction to Information Technology in Business (ITT) course profile available at: http://www.curriculum.org/occ/profiles/9/business_c.shtml</p>
Suggested learning strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students with an overview of the activity prior to viewing <i>The Corporation</i> so that they can take appropriate notes. Consider providing a template to assist them in recording relevant information.• After viewing <i>The Corporation</i>, discuss the nature of ethics as a class. Be sure to discuss the difference between “ethical” and “legal” issues. You may wish to provide relevant pre-reading for students prior to viewing the film.• Generate a list of ethical issues raised by the film. Issues might include (but are certainly not limited to):<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ “Free agency” of corporate CEOs – individuals such as Noam Chomsky remind us that we must differentiate between the institution and the individual. Is there a problem when a “nice” person is involved in a company that engages in some unethical practices? What responsibilities do people have to call attention to or try to stop practices that they view as unethical.○ A stockbroker in the film said “in devastation, there is opportunity,” and gave examples of the positive market outcomes of tragedies such as 9/11 and wars. Are there any implications for this attitude, or is it simply looking for the “silver lining”?○ Michael Moore felt that corporations and their CEOs are “out of touch” with what the majority want, because the majority of citizens are women and the working poor. Does it matter whether or not CEOs know who the “majority” are and what they want? (Note: encourage students to look at <i>National Post Business</i> magazine’s November 2003 “CEO Scorecard” to investigate the gender and ethnic composition of Canadian CEOs).○ Is it a conflict of interest for corporations to determine what constitutes socially responsible behaviour?○ Is it fair for those who own media (e.g., book publishers, newspapers, television station owners, etc.) to be able to decide what is said? Is it fair for advertisers to exert influence over how they are portrayed in the media?○ What, if any, responsibility do corporations have to the environment?○ One CEO stated that export processing zones (low-wage labour in developing countries) allow people in those countries to

contribute to their economies and make a living. Others describe this as “sweatshop” labour that violates human rights. To what extent do either or both of these positions have merit?

- What responsibility do corporations have to provide consumers with the risks associated with their products? What are their responsibilities for testing products? Is there a difference between what is legally required, and what is ethically required?
 - Who should own “commons” such as natural resources and services for citizens (e.g., healthcare, police, education)? Who should make the decision about ownership? Is it the case that only those who own such commons can have an interest in maintaining them?
 - Many arguments for privatization focus on the belief that corporations can run operations more efficiently (and therefore minimize waste of public funds). Is this true a valid position? Should economic efficiency be the primary concern for commons and public services? Are there other criteria to determine who should own or operate them?
 - One individual in the film stated “when organizations go international, governments lose power.” What are the implications of such a shift in the balance of power? Is balance of power in favour of transnational corporations ethical?
- Have each student select an ethical issue for analysis. Distribute BLM 1: Ethical Analysis Sheet to use as a guide. Consider using BLM 2: California Academic Press Holistic Critical Thinking Rubric to assess their responses. If it is to be used, it should be distributed and discussed before students begin the activity.
 - Provide adequate time to complete the analysis. Students should be encouraged to work in pairs so that they can share ideas and perspectives.
 - When students have completed the analysis, allow them to share their findings in a large group.

Assessment/evaluation

Formative

- Completion of BLM 1: Ethical Analysis Sheet using BLM 2: California Academic Press Holistic Critical Thinking Rubric
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