

BOOK REVIEW

## **Review of *Business and Human Rights: Ethical, Legal, and Managerial Perspectives*, Florian Wettstein. (Reviewed by Michelle Westermann-Behaylo)**

Florian Wettstein's textbook arrives at a pivotal moment, when universities are increasingly offering courses specifically on business and human rights (BHR) and integrating the subject into broader curriculums of business ethics and business law. Wettstein's interdisciplinary approach makes this work uniquely comprehensive, weaving together ethical philosophy, legal frameworks and managerial perspectives with insights from political science, international relations and social sciences. This textbook offers valuable insights for scholars and students across academic disciplines.

The initial sections of the book challenge readers to reconsider their understanding of human rights and the role of business in society. Wettstein articulates the need for a cross-disciplinary approach to fully grasp the complexities of BHR. Part I of the textbook meticulously outlines the history of the human rights movement, the evolving role of business in this arena and the academic research that has shaped current understanding. Part II explores the mechanisms through which businesses may become involved in human rights violations, distinguish between direct and indirect violations and examine the concept of corporate complicity. These distinctions are key for students to understand the multifaceted ways in which businesses can impact human rights. Part III builds on this by providing a robust justification for corporate human rights obligations from ethical, legal and managerial perspectives. Wettstein bridges theory with practice, offering insights into the challenges businesses face in implementing their human rights responsibilities.

Part IV delves into the accountability mechanisms for corporate human rights obligations. Starting with broad notions of global governance, a very clear explanation shows how the United Nations Global Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) is the authoritative standard in this field. Then, Wettstein details how the UNGPs are being taken up in various international soft-law initiatives and hard-law requirements. Detailed material addresses concepts more familiar to law students, citing caselaw and statutes and explaining how BHR is relevant to jurisdiction, choice of law and dispute settlement mechanisms. The content remains accessible for management students, bridging the gap between complex legal concepts and their broader implications in a corporate context.

Part V delves into industry-specific human rights issues, offering detailed insights into sectors such as extractives, finance, technology, apparel and agribusiness. Wettstein's explanations link human rights to management concepts including business models, supply chains, labour practices and marketing practices. The concluding chapters address the connection between business, human rights and broader societal concerns like the UN Sustainable Development Goals, climate change and conflict contexts, challenging students to engage with current global issues.

The textbook is further enhanced by its ancillary features, which are invaluable for both instruction and learning. The inclusion of grey-scale boxes within each chapter is particularly helpful. These boxes provide material that enriches classroom discussions—

short cases, biographical sketches, and explanations of principles and statutes. While some of the short discussion cases were novel, many others will be familiar to veteran BHR educators (e.g., Rana Plaza, the Bhopal disaster, Nike's supply chains), underscoring their foundational value in the field. The case discussion prompts are expertly crafted to foster debate and critical thinking. Further, each chapter concludes with study and reflection questions, facilitating student engagement with BHR material. An extensive glossary, detailed index and thorough references cater to both ease of use and deeper research. Additional resources, such as websites and blogs, are thoughtfully included to broaden the scope of learning.

For educators, this textbook represents an invaluable tool for course design, whether for semester-long courses dedicated to business and human rights or for brief segments within broader business ethics or legal courses. Its logical structure and accessible writing make it suitable for advanced undergraduate and master's level students. Individual chapters can also serve as standalone readings, offering flexibility in curriculum development and the opportunity to delve into specific BHR topics within a wider course. It provides a thorough foundation that is crucial for fostering engaging and thought-provoking discussions in the classroom.

'*Business and Human Rights*' provides comprehensive coverage of corporate human rights obligations, from the philosophical and legal underpinnings to the practical implications. Wettstein's textbook serves as a call to action for today's students to engage in the issues of the day and build back better, assuring them that their engagement can contribute to positive change. Through its interdisciplinary approach and insightful analysis, the book not only educates but also inspires readers to think deeply and develop informed opinions about BHR. Its practical relevance is underscored by detailed case studies and real-world examples that bring the theoretical discussions to life, making the abstract tangible. Wettstein's expertise and thoughtful analysis have resulted in a textbook that is both informative and transformative, setting a new standard for BHR education.

**Competing interest.** Author declares none.

Michelle Westermann-Behaylo   
Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Amsterdam,  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
[M.K.Westermann-Behaylo@uva.nl](mailto:M.K.Westermann-Behaylo@uva.nl)  
[doi:10.1017/bhj.2024.12](https://doi.org/10.1017/bhj.2024.12)