

Corporate Sustainability Leadership Education Program Virtual Thematic Learning Program – Online Class

2016 Course Syllabus

Lead Instructors

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Course Description

Sustainability is becoming increasingly prominent on corporate agendas worldwide, as businesses across sectors and industries balance company goals with environmental, economic and social impacts. This course provides a broad overview of corporate sustainability and helps students gain a strong foundation. The goal of the course is to develop students' knowledge and understanding of how businesses foster economic prosperity, while also incorporating social well-being and environmental stewardship into their practices. The course will highlight areas such as corporate sustainability strategy, sustainable supply chains, environmental stewardship, and economic and legal issues

pertaining to sustainability. The course will consider global trends in corporate sustainability, highlighting innovations in different sectors and regions of the world.

Expectations

The Corporate Sustainability Leadership Education Program online class will provide a rigorous opportunity for students to enhance their knowledge and engage as members of an online learning community around themes of corporate sustainability. Participants are expected to log in to the Obaverse system and watch weekly videos, listen to slide decks, complete all weekly assignments and readings, view multimedia course materials, and contribute to discussion board forums. In addition, participants will complete a weekly quiz, as well as a pre- and post-class survey. The online course will be evaluated on a pass-fail basis. All participants in the course are expected to complete all assignments set forth in the syllabus in a timely manner and to the satisfaction of the expert team of instructors.

Participants should plan to spend a minimum of three to four hours per week preparing for and participating in the class. English language proficiency is required to engage fully in the class, though a supplementary vocabulary guide in Russian will be provided weekly.

Office Hours and Discussion Board

A central feature of the Corporate Sustainability online course is the ability of class members to interact with instructors via live office hours and consultations via the online learning platform Obaverse. In addition, a discussion board will be utilized to post assignments and also peer review others' assignments. It is expected that all students will use an appropriate, positive, professional tone when posting materials online or communicating with instructors.

Assessments

Class participants will be assessed on completion of course assignments, including:

- Weekly assignments
- Weekly quizzes
- Peer review of select assignments
- Submission of final survey

Course Credit

Students who successfully complete all three modules will receive a certificate of continuing education units (CEUs) from George Mason University. These continuing education units provide a record of professional development learning activity.

Overall Course Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this three-module program participants will be able to:

- Think strategically about corporate sustainability, including its role as a driver of innovation and profit
- Identify and describe mechanisms and best practices that foster corporate sustainability
- Develop the ability to think critically about the intersection of business, social and environmental issues as related to sustainability

Course Schedule

MODULE 1 – October 3 – 23, 2016

Week 1: Understanding the Challenge and Sustainable Development (Materials released October 3, 2016)

Learning Objectives

- Recognize major global social and environmental trends
- Understand the concept of “wicked problem” and give examples
- Define sustainable development and give examples of sustainable development goals
- Use the concept of the Triple Bottom Line to identify economic, social, and environmental trade-offs and overlaps

Required Video

- Understanding the Challenge and Sustainable Development, Dr. Michael V. Russo. Available on the course website.

Required Slide Deck

- Understanding the Challenge and Sustainable Development, Dr. Kate Reese. Available on the course website.

Required Reading

- [Green Economy: Realities, Prospects, and Limits To Growth](#), Boris Porfiriev, Carnegie Moscow Center, 2013. *Please pay special attention to the section “Green Shoots in the Russian Economy.” You can also access the reading in Russian [here](#).*

Supplemental Materials

Videos

- [What is Sustainable Development?](#), United Nations, 11 Sept. 2015.
- [Sustainability, The Triple Bottom Line](#), Dr. Karl-Henrik Robert, 30 Jun. 2011.
- [Business & the Value of Nature](#), World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 20 Nov. 2013.

Readings

- [The BRIC Nations’ Response to Climate Change is Critical to the Fate of the Planet](#), Matthew Wheeland, *The Guardian*, 4 May 2015.
- [With the wicked problems of sustainability come wicked opportunities](#), Andree Gosselin O’Meara, *Sustainability Matters Blog*, 31 Jul. 2014.
- [Facts and Trends to 2050](#), World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2004.

- [Report On Implementing The Principles Of Sustainable Development In The Russian Federation](#), UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2012. Available in Russian [here](#).

Website

- [The Guardian: The New Bottom Line](#).

Assignment

Based on the required reading and your viewing of this week's video and slides, please post a response to the following question to the discussion board:

- In your opinion, what is the single most important sustainability challenge Russia faces?

Your response should be roughly 200 words in length. Be sure to read at least two of your fellow students' responses as well and provide comments on them (*refer to peer review guide*).

Week 2: The Concept of "the Commons" (Materials released October 10, 2016)

Learning Objectives

- Understand the concept of "the commons"
- Identify examples of both Hardin's theory and Ostrom's theory of "the commons"
- Apply the concept of "the commons" to business

Required Videos

- The Commons, Michael Sieng. Available on the course website.
- [Ending the Tragedy of the Commons](#), Elinor Ostrom, 23 Apr. 2012.
- [Tragedy of the Commons: The Problem with Open Access](#), This Place, 9 Jun. 2015.

Required Slide Deck

- The Commons, Michael Sieng. Available on the course website.

Required Readings

- [In Dramatic Statement, European Leaders Call for 'Immediate' Open Access to All Scientific Papers by 2020](#), Martin Enserink, *Science*, 27 May 2016.
- [The Commons: A Historical Concept Of Property Rights](#), Hartmut Zuckert, *Counter Solutions*, 19 Aug. 2016.

Supplemental References

Readings

- The Tragedy of the Commons, Garrett Hardin, *Science*, 13 Dec. 1968.
- Tragedy of the Commons, Elinor Ostrom, *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, 2nd edn., 23 Jun. 2010.
- A general framework for analyzing sustainability of social-ecological systems, Elinor Ostrom, *Science*, 24 Jul. 2009.
- The tragedy of the commons: twenty-two years later. David Feeny et al., *Human Ecology*, Mar. 1990.

Assignments

1. Based on the required reading and your viewing of this week's video and slides, please post your answer to the following question in the discussion forum.

- In your own words, what is "the commons"?

Be sure to include what Hardin and Ostrom claim about "the commons." Your response should be roughly 200 words in length. Please read at least two of your fellow students' responses as well and provide comments on them (*refer to peer review guide*).

Optional assignment

2. Register as an individual to play the [Fishbanks: A Renewable Resource Management Simulation](#) by the MIT Sloan School of Management. Be sure to [read the instructions](#) before starting.

Week 3: Sustainable Supply Chain Management and Life Cycle Assessment (Materials released October 17, 2016)

Learning Objectives

- Understand the concept of sustainable supply chain management
- Give examples of sustainable practices at each stage of a typical product life cycle
- Identify tools to assess supply chain sustainability
- Identify the steps in a life cycle assessment
- Understand and apply the concepts of cradle to grave, the circular economy, and closing the loop

Required Videos

- Sustainable Supply Chain Management and Life Cycle Assessment, Dr. Kate Reese. Available on the course website.
- [Re-Thinking Progress: The Circular Economy](#), Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 28 Aug. 2011.
- [Sustainability at Unilever](#), Unilever, 30 Aug. 2011.

Required Slide Deck

- Sustainable Supply Chain Management and Life Cycle Assessment, Dr. Kate Reese. Available on the course website.

Required Readings

- [Greening Global Supply Chains](#) (pages 5-11), The Sustainability Consortium, 25 Apr. 2016. *Please note that only pages 5-11 are required.*
- [Circular Economy System Diagram](#), Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

Supplemental Materials

Videos

- [The Story of Stuff](#), Story of Stuff Project, 22 Apr. 2009.
- [How This Town Produces No Trash](#), Seeker Stories, 8 Dec. 2015.

Readings

- [Sustainability through the Value Chain](#), Diana Wilkinson, Strategic Sustainability Consulting, Mar. 2013.
- [Dividing and Conquering the Trash](#), David Zax, New York Times, 25 Oct. 2014.
- [Using the material choking Russian lakes for sustainable water technologies](#), Bernie Bulkin, *Guardian Sustainable Business* 3 Jul. 2014.
- [The journey towards more sustainable rubber leads to Russian dandelions](#), Hannah Gould, The Guardian, 6 Nov. 2015.

Websites

- [Life Cycle Initiative](#)
- [GreenBiz: Supply Chain](#)

Assignment

Over the course of two days, make a note of the items you throw in the garbage. Answer the following questions, using examples from your own garbage.

1. Are there any items that might be composted and returned to the biosphere? (Examples might include food waste or paper products.)
2. Are there any items which, instead of selling products to end consumers, companies could rent out to consumers and then collect and repair when broken? (Examples might include electronics or textiles.)
3. Are there any items that could be returned to the company, cleaned or modified, and reused in their current form? (Examples might include glass bottles or other sturdy packaging.)
4. Are there any items that could be broken down into parts and recycled for their materials? (Examples might include soda cans or other metal objects.)
5. Do you see any potential business opportunities for making any of these items part of a cradle to cradle system?

Please post your answers to the discussion forum under Week 3.

MODULE 2 (October 31 – November 20, 2016)

Week 4: Climate Change (Materials released October 31, 2016)

Learning Objectives

- Define climate change
- Understand what causes climate change
- Describe the impact of climate change on business

Required Videos

- Climate Change, Michael Sieng. Available on the course website.
- [My Country Will Be Underwater Soon – Unless We Work Together](#), Anote Tong, TED, Oct. 2015.

Required Slide Deck

- Climate Change, Michael Sieng. Available on the course website.

Required Readings

- [Agriculture and Horticulture Poland](#), *ClimateChangePost*.

- [Agriculture and Horticulture Czech Republic](#), *ClimateChangePost*.
- [Business Emission Reduction Tips](#), *ClimateCare blog*.

Supplemental Materials

Videos

- [The 11th Hour](#), Warner Brothers, 2007.
- [New Thinking on the Climate Crisis](#), Al Gore, TED, 2008.

Reading

- [Global Climate Projections](#), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007.

Websites

- [Carbon Calculator](#), Carbon Footprint Ltd.
- [What's My Carbon Footprint?](#), Nature Conservancy
- [Footprint Calculator](#), Global Footprint Network

Assignment

In your own words, summarize some ways a business can reduce their carbon footprint. Your response should be about 200 words. Post your answer to the discussion board forum for Week 4.

Week 5: International Standards and Sustainability Reporting (Materials released November 7, 2016)

Learning Objectives

- Define the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)
- Explain the history and basics of corporate sustainability reporting
- Describe the value of company reporting about its sustainability practices
- Explain how sustainability reporting is done using standard frameworks from the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC)
- Define the GRI G4 Guidelines
- Identify introductory concepts for using reporting frameworks
- Explain the basics of international law and trade, and international certificates

Required Videos/Podcast

- International Standards, Dr. Brooke Lahneman. Available on the course website.
- Sustainability Reporting, Dr. Brooke Lahneman. Available on the course website.
- International Law and Certificates, Dr. Brooke Lahneman. Available on the course website.
- [Interview with Elaine Cohen](#), *Beyond Reports Podcast*, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), 30 Jun 2016. *Listen to the interview from 03:30 to 09:00 in this audio file.*

Required Slide Deck

- International Standards and Sustainability Reporting, Dr. Brooke Lahneman and Jane Meacham.

Required Readings

- [Value of Sustainability Reporting](#), Ernst & Young and Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship, 2016.

- [ISO 14001 Certification Shows Sustainable Businesses are More Competitive](#), Robert Fenn, *Triple Pundit*, 22 Jul. 2016.

Supplemental Materials

Videos

- [GRI Empowering Sustainable Decisions](#), GRI Secretariat, 9 Jun. 2015.
- [Fair Trade: Protecting the Environment](#), Fair Trade Certified, 9 Jun. 2011.
- [Wholesome!™ The Heart of Fair Trade Sugar](#), Wholesome!™, 30 Apr. 2015.

Readings

- [G4 Guidelines Part 1 - Reporting Principles and Standard Disclosures](#), GRI. (In Russian)
 - *Part 1 of the G4 Guidelines ("Reporting Principles and Standard Disclosures") contains the Standard Disclosures that all organizations use to report their sustainability impacts and performance. It also details the Reporting Principles that enable effective reporting, and the criteria to meet for reporting "In Accordance" with the Guidelines. Review the Table of Contents and Preface (Pages 2-3) of this brochure for corporate reporters to learn how the GRI G4 Guidelines are set up and used.*
- [Gazprom Sustainability Report 2015](#). (In Russian)
- [Vnesheconombank Group Sustainability Report 2014](#).
 - *Optional: After looking through Gazprom Sustainability Report 2015 and Vnesheconombank Group Sustainability Report 2014, prepare a few basic questions about the reports and their structure. Share your questions on the Week 5 discussion forum or in office hours.*
- [Tsogo Sun Integrated Annual Report](#), Tsogo Sun, 2015.
- [Social and Environmental Sustainability in the Clothing Industry: A Case Study of a Fair Trade Retailer](#), *Social Responsibility Journal*, 7(2), 74-86.
- [A Role of Fair Trade Certification for Environmental Sustainability](#), Rie Makita, *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 2016.
- [Sovereignty, Jurisdiction, & International Law](#), S. Jayakumar & Tommy Koh, *The Straits Times*, 25 Jun. 2016.

Assignment

1. Complete the required reading mentioned above:

- [ISO 14001 Certification Shows Sustainable Businesses are More Competitive](#), Robert Fenn, *Triple Pundit*, 22 Jul 2016.

2. Reflect on this question:

- The reading states that "68% of companies that use the ISO 14001 standard" have gained advantages in business, leading to financial success. Reflecting on this reading, and the concepts we discussed in the videos and slides for this week's Module, answer these questions:
 - What is 1 way in which a company would gain financially from using an environmental certification program to "benchmark their current performance and set out ways to improve upon it"?
 - How would this "benchmarking" help the company to gain a competitive advantage relative to competitors?

3. Write your original post.

- Write a response to the questions posed above, connecting points discussed in the reading to concepts we discuss in this module. This part of the reaction post should be approximately one paragraph in length.
 - At the end of your post, pose one question that your reflection on the reading made you think of to ask your classmates. This question is meant to spark discussion among your classmates on how course concepts relate to the reading.
 - Submit your written post to the Discussion Board.
4. Respond to one of your classmates' posts – focusing on the questions they have posed.
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Week 6: Sustainability and Innovation (Materials released November 14, 2016)

Learning Objectives

- Identify characteristics of green consumers
- Identify strategies for building a sustainable brand
- Describe trends in developing green markets
- Give examples of innovative product design and business models

Required Videos

- Green Markets: Innovating for Sustainability, Dr. Michael Russo. Available on the course website.
- [The Business Logic of Sustainability](#), Ray Anderson, TED, Feb. 2009.

Required Slide Deck

- Sustainability and Innovation, Michael Sieng. Available on the course website.

Required Reading

- [Knowing Cradle to Cradle Manufacturing and the Best Products for a Safe and Eco-conscious Home](#), EcoFriend.Org, 8 Jul. 2016.

Supplemental Materials

Videos

- [Cradle to Cradle Design](#), William McDonough, TED, Feb. 2005.

Websites

- [The Sustainability Consortium](#)
- [BSR](#)
- [Center for Climate and Energy Solutions](#)
- [Ceres](#)
- Green Indexes
 - [NASDAQ® Clean Edge® Green Energy Index \(CELS\)](#)
 - [NASDAQ® Green Equity Indexes](#)
 - [Sustainable Business 20 \(SB20\)](#)
 - [Dow Jones Sustainability Index Family](#)
 - [S&P ESG Index Family](#)
 - [S&P ESG Sovereign Bond Index Family](#)

Assignment

Interview five people, asking the following questions about their green consumer attitudes and documenting their responses.

- On a scale of 1 to 5 (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, and 5-Strongly Agree), how much do the following categories influence your behavior to reduce your personal environmental impact?
 1. Financial incentive/reward
 2. Financial penalty (e.g., fines)
 3. See people I know taking action
 4. People I know encourage me to take action
 5. I hear someone talking about the dangers of not taking action
 6. I hear someone promoting the benefits of taking action
 7. I see news media coverage encouraging me to take action
 8. Government officials encourage me to take action
 9. A non-profit organization encourages me to take action
 10. I see advertisements or public notices encouraging me to take action
 11. A celebrity I respect encourages me to take action

Document the results for each person interviewed and write a short (one paragraph up to half page) summary on your findings.

MODULE 3: Corporate Sustainability Leadership & Implementation (November 28 – December 18, 2016)

Week 7: Corporate Governance, Leadership, and Change Management (Materials released November 28, 2016)

Learning Objectives

- Understand what corporate governance is, how is it measured, and why is it important to corporate sustainability
- Explain basic concepts of ESG and how corporate governance is important both to sustainability-minded investors and for financial/stock market performance
- Discuss how company and board leadership affect corporate sustainability
- Understand basics of change management, its history and its place in corporate sustainability

Required Videos

- Corporate Governance, Role of Leadership in Change Management, Dr. Brooke Lahneman
- [King Report on Corporate Governance](#) (audio), King Committee on Corporate Governance, 21 Oct. 2015.

Required Slide Deck

- Corporate Governance, Leadership and Change Management, Jane Meacham

Required Readings

- [How Corporate Governance Affects Corporate Sustainability and Why It Matters](#), Alliance for Research on Corporate Sustainability, *Huffington Post*, 7 Oct. 2015.
- [Seven Guiding Principles for Sustainability Leaders](#), Nigel Nicholson, *Guardian Sustainable Business*, 29 Apr. 2013.
- [The Impact of Corporate Sustainability on Organizational Processes and Performance: Executive Summary](#), Robert G. Eccles et al., Harvard Business School, 11 Nov. 2011.

Supplemental Materials

Readings

- [Impact of Corporate Governance on Performance of Companies](#), Igor Todorović, *Montenegrin Journal of Economics*, May 2013.
- [How Corporate Governance Affects Performance](#), Alan Lavine, *Financial Advisor*, 1 Apr. 2005.
- [Corporate Sustainability Climbs Corporate Ladder](#), Andrea Vittorio, *Bloomberg BNA*, 27 Jun. 2016.
- [Why sustainability reporting is a key tool for savvy managers](#), Jennifer Klie and Sarah Corrigan, *GreenBiz*, 5 Apr. 2016.

Assignment

After completing the reading assignment [How Corporate Governance Affects Corporate Sustainability and Why It Matters](#), write an original post that answers the following question:

- How can corporate governance and self-monitoring of corporate activities for their impact on society and the natural environment create tension for corporate executives and boards of directors?

Respond to another student's post on the same question with an idea for reducing this tension for CEOs.

Week 8: Implementing Sustainability & Stakeholder Management (Materials released December 5, 2016)

Learning Objectives

- Identify ways a sustainability is implemented into key organizational systems
- Identify internal and external company stakeholders
- Describe forms of stakeholder management, how companies do it, and why it is important
- Identify types of shareholder activism, including managing proxy voting in Russia, the United States, and elsewhere

Required Videos

- Implementing Sustainability into Key Organizational Systems, Dr. Brooke Lahneman. Available on the course website.
- Stakeholder Management, Dr. Brooke Lahneman. Available on the course website.
- [Nike Furthers its Commitment to Open Innovation and Sustainability](#), Business Wire, 30 Nov. 2010.

Required Slide Deck

- Implementing Sustainability and Stakeholder Management, Dr. Brooke Lahneman and Jane Meacham

Required Readings

- [The Greening of Petrobras](#), José Sergio Gabrielli de Azevedo, *Harvard Business Review*, Mar. 2009.
- [Shareholder Activism: Who, What, When, and How?](#) (pages 2-10), PwC Investor Resource Institute/Center for Board Governance, Mar. 2015.
- [Russia and Kazakhstan Proxy Voting Guidelines](#) (pages 14-15), Institutional Shareholder Services, 18 Dec. 2015.
- [Proxy Preview 2016](#) (pages 5-6, 9-12), Heidi Welsh and Michael Passoff, 8 Mar. 2016.

Supplemental Materials

Readings

- [Coca-Cola European Partners' Sustainable Supply Chain](#), Tom Wadlow, *Supply Chain Digital*, 15 Jul. 2016.
- [Embedding Sustainability in Organizational Culture](#), Stephanie Bertels et al., Network for Business Sustainability, 2010.
- [Designing and Implementing Corporate Social Responsibility: An Integrative Framework Grounded in Theory and Practice](#), François Maon et al., *Journal of Business Ethics*, 07 Jun. 2008.
- Using a Balanced Scorecard to implement sustainability. *Environmental Quality Management*, 11(2), 1-10.

Assignment

1. Complete the required reading [The Greening of Petrobras](#).
 2. Reflect on this question:
 - Petrobras, a large multinational corporation specializing in offshore drilling, went from harming the environment to a global sustainability leader in 8 years.
 - What is 1 example of how leadership implemented changes toward sustainability within the *corporate culture*?
 - What is 1 example of how leadership implemented changes toward sustainability within *corporate strategy and partnerships*?
 - Why do you think it was important for Petrobras to implement changes toward sustainability in both corporate culture and corporate strategy in order to become a global leader of sustainability in only 8 years?
 3. Write your original post.
 - Write a response to the question posed above, connecting points discussed in the reading to concepts we discuss in this module. This part of the reaction post should be approximately one paragraph in length.
 - At the end of your post, pose one question that your reflection on the reading made you think of to ask your classmates. This question is meant to spark discussion among your classmates on how course concepts relate to the reading.
 - Submit your written post to the Discussion Board.
 4. Respond to one of your classmate's posts – focusing on the questions they have posed.
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Week 9: Emerging Technology & Career Development (Materials released December 12, 2016)

Learning Objectives

- Identify different types of emerging technology
- Identify job possibilities in corporate sustainability
- Recognize skillsets required for jobs in corporate sustainability

Required Videos

- Emerging Technology and Career Development, Michael Sieng. Available on the course website.
- [Programming Bacteria to Detect Cancer](#), Tal Danino, TED, Mar. 2015.

Required Slide Decks

- Emerging Technology and Career Development, Michael Sieng.
- Corporate Sustainability in Russia: Emerging Trends and Technologies, Career Development Resources and Opportunities, Mariya Chetyrkina.

Required Reading

- [Five Nanotechnology Research Projects that Could Deliver Big Results](#), *Nanowerk News*, 5 Aug. 2016.

Supplemental Materials

Video

- [This Tiny Particle Could Roam your Body to Find Tumors](#), Sangeeta Bhatia, TED, Nov. 2015.

Reading

- [‘Mind the gap’: science and ethics in nanotechnology](#), Anisa Mnyusiwalla et al., *Nanotechnology*, 13 Feb. 2003.

Assignment

Think about different career opportunities available in the field of corporate sustainability, and decide upon one that you might be interested in pursuing. Develop and practice a 30-second career ‘pitch’ speech that you could use when looking for a job in the field. Imagine that you are using this speech at a career fair or networking event to make a strong first impression on a hiring manager. For inspiration, see Columbia University Center for Career Development’s [30-second Introduction](#). If you would like your pitch to be reviewed by course experts, please submit it to the Week 9 discussion board.

Note

All assignments and quizzes shall be completed by **December 22, 2016**, in order to receive consideration for a certificate with continuing education credits.