



BUSINESS SCHOOL

Course Outline 2017

MGMT 309: Organisational ethics and sustainability (15 POINTS)

Semester 1 (1173)

Course Prescription

Considers how organisations and individuals can responsibly negotiate the complex demands of changing cultural values, ethical perspectives and real world conditions. Particular emphasis will be placed on strategic planning for a sustainable future that moves beyond 'Business as Usual'.

Programme and Course Advice

Prerequisite: BUSINESS 200 or MGMT 211 or MGMT 231 or any 30 points at Stage II in Ethics

Restriction: MGMT 331

Goals of the Course

This course aims to empower students to build a clearer perspective on the challenges facing business and modern society as we look towards a future characterised by declining resources, growing populations, shifting climates and faltering economic and political structures. As most major international reports on the state of the world agree, 'business as usual' will compound these problems rather than alleviate them and this course aims to explore the range of possible options that we have to create more adaptive arrangements for future thriving. The course itself will model these shifts by moving beyond 'education as usual' to challenge students to create for themselves, the vision, commitment and practical thinking necessary to contribute to a genuinely progressive world.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course it is expected that the student will:

1. Have a more discerning view of the 'big picture' of contemporary economy, culture, society and ecology and of how contemporary trends in each are converging and impacting each other.
2. Have an enhanced understanding of why current trends are emerging as they are and the historical forces that are driving change.
3. Have a greater appreciation of what is, and what can be done to improve prospects for future thriving and of what is required for these strategies to be enacted.

4. Have clearer insight into the nature of their own ethical beliefs, assumptions and values and be able to see how these impact upon their own daily lives and on the lives of those around them.
5. Be empowered and inspired to consciously act in more considerate and sustainable ways as business people and citizens.

Content Outline

The specifics of course content will depend upon the nature of the group and the particular dynamics inherent in the class. This responsiveness means that themes will be kept flexible to ensure that the emerging learning needs of the group are uppermost at all times. Thus there is no concrete set of readings or list of topics to be discussed on set dates as this would violate a more adaptive flexibility.

During the course however, we will certainly be looking at current and future trends in finance, politics, resources, climate and society and explicitly looking towards how these will impact global well-being in 10-15 years' time. This focus on the medium term future allows for a very practical and meaningful framework to be applied to our deliberations.

We will also be looking in depth at a range of psychological, philosophical and spiritual views on ethics from a variety of cultural traditions. This moves the course beyond the limitations of many comparable courses which consider only secular theories in the rational western tradition and ignore much of the historical and cross-cultural wealth of other traditions.

We will study developments in contemporary business that offer useful models for change and that recognise the deeper aspects of that appear increasingly necessary if we are to build a better future for ourselves and others. We will look to inspiring examples and consider the potential we all have to contribute to an improving world as business people and everyday members of society.

Throughout all of this learning, we will spend a large amount of time building perspective around these themes and the expectation of students is that you move out of passive modes to become active learners meaning that all ideas are tabled for discussion, debate, argument, rejection, expansion and ultimately integration into a meaningful personal perspective.

Learning and Teaching

As implied above, this course is not designed for the passive learner who wishes above all for 'truth' to be presented to them in non-negotiable form and in signing up for the course, it is expected that students will have a mature perspective on the contentious nature of values and ethics.

Although the class will involve lecture, much of our time will be spent in discussion – either in small, medium or large groups – as we seek to expand, deepen and broaden our mutual understanding. This class is founded on the assumption that a roomful of young adults contains a wealth of perspective and that the best learning comes from bringing this wisdom forth. We will then be engaging what is known as 'co-creative learning' and although this might sound a little daunting at the start, experience shows that this is usually greatly appreciated by students who find this mode of education liberating, empowering and deeply meaningful.

The discussions we will engage will often connect to simple exercises that aim to place theory in the context of your own personal lives and experiences. In these reflective exercises you might be asked to act generously, analyse your media habits, take a fresh look at your consumption, have conversations with friends/flatmates on values, or any of a wide range of similarly creative engagements. These will provide the basis for subjective writing and these will form part of your assessment for the course.

The specifics will again be tailored to the learning needs of the group as these emerge and the reflective writings will require a different mode of engagement than that used in more conventional courses where you are encouraged to report others ideas and not your own. In this course there is lots of opportunity for introspection and for developing your own deeply-considered perspective.

All in all, this course offers a unique blend of formal theory, collective discussion and personal reflection that gives the learner an opportunity to explore key contemporary issues in ways that are meaningful, relevant and personally empowering.

Teaching Staff

The course is taught and coordinated by Dr Ross McDonald of the MIB Department. Contact details are:

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Learning Resources

A wide range of mixed media resources will be posted on Canvas tailored to the on-going discussions we are having and the learning needs that these reveal. Students are expected to keep up with these and there will be occasional spot-tests in class to reward those who are. The resources used will come in a range of forms including documentaries, web-sites, the press and formal academic sources. They will be chosen for maximum relevance, rigour and accessibility. The hope is that students will not be bored by pretentious and turgid academic writing that brings little in the way of reward or relevance.

Assessment

This course does not have a final examination as it is inappropriate to the learning outcomes sought. The final grade will be based up a mixture of spot-tests (short in-class tests over resources), reflective writings (short statements of personal positions on a variety of issues), a formal essay and a group assignment which will challenge students to develop business ideas that can meaningfully contribute to building a more sustainable and just world.

Spot tests = 20%

Reflective Writings – 20%

Essay – 30%

Group Project – 30%

Final details and dates for each component of assessment will be formalised in the first few weeks in consultation with the class. Taken together, these assessments will all contribute to achieving the stated goals of the course.

Learning Outcome	Spot-Tests	Reflective Writings	Group project
1			
2	1-5	1-5	1-5
3			
4			
5			

Inclusive Learning

We recognise that in any given class there will be a diverse range of students. Interests and abilities. This diversity is a strength which allows us to understand the subject matter at hand from a range of different perspectives and bringing these to the fore is an important aspect of our work in this course.

Student Feedback

This course is designed to be highly responsive to student input both in terms of content and process. It is a limited entry class with a maximum of 69 participants and is taught in a case room in order to maximise the opportunities for collaboration and open exchange of views. It is then a format that allows students to have considerable input into the learning dynamics and to help target the flow of learning in ways that are constructive and helpful. A formal evaluation will be conducted at the end of the semester and the feedback used to shape future offerings of this course.