Ray C. Anderson
Center for Sustainable Business

Georgia Tech | Scheller College of Business

Sustainable Business Consulting Projects (MGT8803-F)

Location: COB Room #102
Time: M 6:00 – 9:00 pm
Professor: Michael Oxman / Jay Cranman
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Availability: By Appointment
Course Site: MGMT8803
Course Pack: HBR Course Pack

Learning Objectives
After completing this course, students will be able to:
- Apply management consulting skills to execute and deliver an end-to-end consulting engagement
- Identify how to integrate environmental and/or social dimensions into a strategy for creating corporate value
- Communicate clearly and professionally in a real-world business setting (with primary focus on client interactions and consulting project deliverables)

Note: **Accommodations for Learning Needs**: If you have learning needs that require some adaptations for you to succeed in this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services on campus (http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/). I am happy to arrange to accommodate your learning needs based on their recommendations.

This Course is also subject to Georgia Tech's honor code, particularly with respect to sourcing materials from the internet for inclusion in client deliverables. (http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code)

Course Overview
A valuable skill that companies seek is the ability to solve problems. The purpose of this course is to present students with a set of management consulting tools and approaches for doing just that. Students will work in teams on a real-world consulting project focused on a sustainability related challenge, which for the purpose of this course, refers broadly to the environment, social and economic aspects of a business. At the completion of the course, students will have successfully scoped, planned and delivered a consulting engagement.

As students work through each project, they will share insights with each other. On occasion, the class will examine the broader trends and market dynamics at work that led to these projects and explore other relevant business and sustainability topics.

In-class time will be focused on a combination of lectures, guest speakers, and course work with a significant portion reserved for teams to work on their projects. In addition to readings and assignments, outside of class time will be spent on project meetings, research, analysis, work planning and will require visits to the project site. Students should plan to spend a considerable amount of time working with their teams outside the classroom on the consulting projects.

Through this class, students will develop a working knowledge of problem solving tools and techniques which can be leveraged no matter what career path they take.

About Your Professor

Michael joined Scheller College in 2016 as the Managing Director of the Ray C. Anderson Center for Sustainable Business where he teaches business sustainability courses and oversees industry outreach, partnerships, and educational initiatives. Prior to joining Scheller, Michael spent over twenty-five years working at the intersection of international business, sustainability, and risk management including serving in leadership roles at Acorn International LLC and Business for Social Responsibility (BSR). In these roles, he advised a broad range of international energy and mining companies at corporate and asset levels on local content, social impact/performance, sustainability strategy, reporting, and human rights topics. Michael has also worked for Chevron, Price Waterhouse, and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) in risk management, financial/fiscal analysis, and in strategic planning functions. Michael's work has brought him to an extensive range of international locations including two overseas assignments in Kazakhstan. Michael has an MBA from Rice University, an MIA from Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), and a B.A. from Trinity College in Russian Area Studies. He is also an active member of the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) Sustainable Development Technical Section.

Helping to teach this course will also be Jay Cranman, whom brings an eclectic background to the classroom. Jay has worked for large companies, early-stage start-ups and nonprofit organizations. He currently serves as the President & CEO of Hands On Atlanta (handsonatlanta.org). Prior to his nonprofit career, Jay worked for several consulting organizations including Accenture and Technisource. He co-founded the Civic Accelerator (www.cvcx.org), and is active in the Atlanta startup and nonprofit community. In addition to being an adjunct professor with the Ray C. Anderson Center for Sustainable Business, Mr. Cranman is also a Nonprofit Fellow in Residence for the Institute for Leadership & Entrepreneurship. Both centers reside within the Scheller College of Business.

Course Outline

The initial weeks of the course will focus on readings, lecture, class activities, project "pitches" from the sponsor companies, and the consulting deliverables students will encounter at the beginning of their projects (i.e. letter of engagement, work plans, team contract, etc.).

The next several classes will cover the full problem-solving lifecycle from framing the problem through presenting the solutions. Additionally, the class will cover meta-concepts to help students manage the client and team effectively.

As the course progresses into the second half of the semester, in-class time will be primarily used by teams to work on their projects and practice their final presentations. The class will metaphorically transform into a boutique strategy consulting firm -- with the students acting as consultants and the Professor as Managing Director.

Guest speakers relevant to the projects, sustainability, or consulting in general will be inserted throughout the course. Additionally, each project team will work closely with a project coach from either Accenture (accenture.com) or Jabian Consulting (jabian.com). The Project Coach will serve as a "consulting advisor" to help students bridge the gap between learning the theory in class and applying it during their engagement.

Once projects are fully underway, students will begin four regular activities:

- **Status Reports**: Students will submit a weekly project status report to their client with a copy to the Professor, project coach and graduate assistant. Status reports will be due by noon on Fridays.
- **Client Meetings**: Students will schedule bi-weekly meetings (in-person or by phone) with their client liaison to review key deliverables, discuss the direction the project is going, and identify issues and insights. In the best situations, the client liaison will be treated like a member of the team.
- **Project Coach Meetings**: Students will schedule weekly or bi-weekly meetings with their assigned project coach, to receive feedback on key deliverables and discuss next steps.
- **Professor Meetings**: Students will schedule executive update meetings with the Professor every 2 weeks or as otherwise required. These meetings should reflect the Professor's assumed role as "Managing Director".

Course Materials and Texts

- Required
  - The McKinsey Mind, by Ethan Rasiel & Paul N. Friga (please purchase, may be available in the bookstore – if not order immediately)
  - HBR ARTICLES (Course pack)
    - Creating Shared Value
    - The Truth About CSR
    - The Performance Frontier
    - CASE: Dow and the Circular Economy: Trash to Treasure
    - Don't Tweak Your Supply Chain-Rethink It End to End
    - CASE: Employee Engagement and CSR: Transactional, Relational, and Developmental Approaches
    - Measure Your Team's Intellectual Diversity
    - Curse of Knowledge
  - Additional assigned readings include will be publically available or uploaded to T-square
- Recommended readings for students wanting more on Business Development & Presentations
  - Made to Stick (Heath)
  - Let's Get Real or Lets not Play (Khalsa)
- Recommended readings for students wanting more on Sustainability
  - The Big Pivot (Winston)
  - Business Lessons from Radical Industrialist (Ray Anderson)
  - The Upcycle (McDonough)
  - Winning the Story Wars (Sachs)
  - Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution (Hawken & Lovins)

Note – Stop by anytime at The Center for Sustainable Business (COB 4426) to check out a book from the growing collection; see Arianna Robinson for information. In addition, the Managing Director for the center, and the associated staff, should be used by students as "in-house" sustainability experts and can support the project, general learning, or provide career advice.

A Note on Weekly Status Reports & Meetings

- **Status Reports**: Once projects begin, teams will submit weekly project status reports to the client liaison via email, with a copy to the Professor, project coach, GRA, and other team members. Status reports are due by 12pm noon on Fridays but can be sent earlier. Weekly status reports summarize the work completed that week, work planned, questions needing answers, insights sought, and any issues, concerns or requests. These should be written so that the collection of weekly status reports, on their own, clearly and concisely summarizes the major project work, changes and activities. Students should imagine that this is the only document that the client liaison may share with their boss each week during the project. The goal is not to report "everything is fine"; the goal is clear understanding and "eyes wide open" across the project team and stakeholders.

- **Weekly Meetings w/ Project Coaches:** The objective of the Project Coach is to expose students to the expertise of a practicing consultant as they work on a real-world consulting engagement. The Project Coach will serve as a "consulting advisor" to help students bridge the gap between learning the theory in class and applying it during their engagement. The Project Coach will hold teams accountable for progress against set milestones and provide feedback on key deliverables. It is estimated that each coach will spend ~1 hour per week (on average) advising their assigned team. This time can be virtual or in-person and will be scheduled to accommodate the coach and student's other work commitments. It is the role of the team, not the Project Coach, to schedule these meetings at a time that is convenient for the entire group. If handled properly, the Project Coach will be a working, active and engaged member of the team.

- **Professor Meetings:** Teams will meet with the Professor a minimum of once every 2-3 weeks to discuss current efforts, clarify issues or questions, and – if appropriate – work on a particular element of the project. These meetings will be scheduled during class time wherever possible. Additional time can be scheduled with the Professor as required on an appointment basis. See "role of professor" below.

- **Client Meetings**: Each team is required, at a minimum, to have a verbal (phone or in-person) status update and content discussion with the client liaison every two weeks. Meetings will cover project deliverables, analysis, key insights, and plans for the next several weeks. It is the role of the team, not the client, to schedule these meetings at a time that is convenient for the entire group. In-person is preferred, but teams can do phone or video calls to accommodate schedules, travel, or client preferences. If handled properly, the project liaison will be a working, active and engaged member of the team (not simply a check-in point). At a minimum, teams should plan to visit the client site at least 2 times during the course (for clients that are local).

Role of Project Coach & Professor

The Project Coach for this course should be used for counseling, advice, and brainstorming. The Project Coach will NOT create content, do analysis, or serve as the liaison or representative to the client during the project. In addition, students will have access to the Professor for the course, but should acknowledge that the Professor will be managing a portfolio projects, and will therefore have a limited understanding of each individual project. Students will meet with the Professor every few weeks during the project to ensure things are moving forward and the course objectives are being met.

Role of Team

Each team will consist of 3-5 students, although more or less can be possible depending on project needs, class size, and student interest. In addition to class time and client meetings, successful projects will require extensive independent or client-guided research and engagement outside of class. Teams should be mindful of their client's time and goals (e.g. be prepared, clarity of team roles and responsibilities, take notes, follow-up with next steps, coordinate and communicate clearly). Teams should manage their client's expectations and ensure they are engaged, informed and aligned. Over-communicating is better than under-communicating. Meeting with the client at their location could be a valuable and insightful experience. It is suggested that teams explore this where it is conducive to the project needs and convenient for the team and client liaison.

Grading:
Final grades will be based on the following. Guidance regarding what constitutes excellent, good, fair and poor versions of each of these will be provided and/or discussed in class.

Area	Percent	Grading Considerations
Quality of work product and overall project management (LOE, client briefing, status reports, meetings, mid-point review, and in-class presentation)	40%	Professors to Grade. Coach perspectives will be solicited as an input into determining mid-point review grade.
Final Deliverables (Final Deliverables Deck per LOE and Presentation to Liaison)	25%	Professors to Grade Client liaison Feedback will be important variable.
Final Presentation to Client	10%	Liaisons Determine Grade
Your teammates assessments of your contributions and engagement	15%	Teammates to grade
Class participation & attendance	10%	Present & Engaged
Total	100%	

Writing & Communications
Excellence in communication is both incredibly valuable and incredibly rare in business. Writing that is articulate and concise delivers the most value with the least effort to your audience. It is also a critical and sometimes invisible factor in persuading people to your cause and enlisting their support. As such, students will receive feedback on structure, style, grammar and clarity of their written and verbal communication. Many great managers, project leaders and most successful partners in consulting firms are adamant about professional communications. Students should strive for excellence in their writing and communications (email, LOEs, project plans, periodic status updates, deliverables).

Course Schedule

Key / Notes:

- The schedule is subject to change based on in-class and project progress
- The back 2/3rds of the course has been left open to accommodate project work days, meetings with the professor, guest speakers and additional topics and lectures as deemed appropriate based on student progress.
- Guest speakers will be included throughout the course. Students will be expected to prepare (with minimal advance warning) for their involvement in the class (may include the creation of questions, reading bios, reviewing website or watching short videos)
- Abbreviations - MM = McKinsey Mind, HBR = Harvard Business Review
- Readings may be added or substituted – any updates will be provided in class (and on PPT presentations posted at end of class)

Class Schedule & Readings

Week	Topic	Activity / Lecture	Reading Assignments
Week 1 8/22	**Course Intro & Team/Project Management**	Discuss the course, material to be covered, arc of the class, syllabus, and grading efforts. Discuss elements that make up a high-performing team and successful projects, including team contracts.	• Reading/Video (due 8/29) o Watch TED Talk: The business logic of sustainability o Read MM – Team Ch.6 o Read HBR – Team's Intellectual Diversity o Read Harvard Kennedy School – Cost of Company - Community Conflict
Week 2 8/29	**Project Pitch Day**	Clients will present their organization and the problem they are trying to solve to student teams.	• Reading/Video (due 9/12) o Read MM –Ch. 1 Framing Problem & Ch. 7 Managing Client o Read HBR – Curse of Knowledge o Read LGRLNP – Yellow Lights/No Guessing excerpt o Read HBR – Shared Value
Week 3	**No Class 9/5 – Labor Day**		

Week	Topic	Activity / Lecture	Reading Assignments
Week 4 9/12	**Client Management & Framing The Problem**	Discuss consulting deliverables and review best practices for involving and communicating with clients. Discuss consulting tools and techniques to quickly build structured and logical arguments (logic trees, issue trees, MECE, Week 1 hypothesis, QDT); develop day 1 hypothesis and begin project issue trees. In-class review of sustainability readings to understand overall scope of business/sustainability domain including both risk and opportunity.	• Reading/Video (due 9/19) o Read Verlander – Kickoff & Interview Questions p64/72-93 o Read MM – Ch. 2 Analysis Design & Ch. 3 Gathering Data o Read HBR – The Truth about CSR
Week 5 9/19	**Analysis Design & Gathering Data**	In-class activities and discussion on how to build a ghost deck and work plan that will drive the problem solving and analysis process. Working on professional client interviewing; discuss meeting facilitation and sources of data for researching sustainability projects.	• Reading/Video (due 9/26) o Read MM – Ch. 4 Interpreting Results o Read HBR – The Performance Frontier
Week 6 9/26	**Interpreting Results & Communicating Ideas**	Discuss 80/20 rule, charts, tables, waterfalls, lists; work on developing the "so what" of each slide and key messaging. Discuss difference between presentation and deck; in-class activity and discussion on how to present and structure PowerPoint decks with a clear and logical structure. In-class review of sustainability readings to assess sustainability integration issues and challenges.	• Reading/Video (due 10/3) o Triple Pundit o Environmental leader
Week 7 10/3	**Project Work Day & Guest Speaker**	Guest speaker on a special topic plus team time for projects and working meetings with Professor.	• Reading/Video (Due 10/17) o IFC Performance Standard 1 & Equator Principles

Week	Topic	Activity / Lecture	Reading Assignments
Week 8	**No Class 10/10 – Fall Break**		
Week 9 10/17	**Project Work Day & Guest Speaker**	Guest speaker on a special topic plus team time for projects and working meetings with Professor. In-class review of sustainability readings with a focus on management system essentials.	• Reading/Video (Due 10/24) o Read HBR - Dow and the Circular Economy
Week 10 10/24	**Consulting Hacks**	Discuss killer presentations, public speaking hacks, and other tips and tricks for being a top-notch consultant.	• Reading/Video (Due 10/31) o Read the UN Guiding Principles
Week 11 10/31	**Sustainability Topic (Human Rights)**	Discuss emerging sustainability focus area – human rights and business; plus time for project work.	• Reading / Video (due 11/7) o Read HBR – Don't Tweak the Supply Chain
Week 12 11/7	**Building Buy-in**	Discussion on how best to involve the client, pre-wiring and gaining buy-in	• Reading/Video (due 11/14) o Read HBR – Employee Engagement
Week 13 11/14	**Peer Feedback on Deliverables**	Class time for teams to present a draft of their final deliverable, current issues/struggle points, and gain feedback from their peers. Discuss sustainability readings with focus on supply chain and employee engagement topics.	• Reading / Video o Read Culture Eats Strategy for Lunch (due 11/21)
Week 14 11/21	**Transitioning to the Client & Dress Rehearsals**	Review strategies for ensuring the client is able to successfully take over project at the conclusion.	
Week 15 11/28	**Dress Rehearsals and Project Work**	Dress rehearsal of final presentation to Professor, fellow students and project coaches.	
Week 16 12/5	**Final Presentations**	Final in-class presentation Last Day of Class	

Project Deliverables

***Note –** All deliverables are due by 5:00pm EST unless otherwise stated

#	Assignment	Submitted To:	Purpose	Due*
1	Break Into Teams	Professors	Set team expectations	26-Aug
2	Team Contract	Professors	Each team will develop a document outlining the team's agreed preferences, needs, and expectations regarding how, when and where project work will be completed as well as how conflicts or escalations will be handled.	31-Aug
3	Project Bidding Sheet	Professors	Bid on desired projects Assignments by Labor Day	31-Aug
4	Client/Liaison Briefing	Professors & Coaches	Teams will research information on their client organization, industry and issue area and synthesize into a document (Word) that serves to get the entire team (specifically a less-engaged stakeholder like the Project Coach & Professor) up to speed as teams start becoming "experts".	9-Sep
5	Initial Letter of Engagement	Coaches, Professors	As soon as clients are assigned, teams will draft a document that articulates the goals and deliverables of the engagement. Teams will share an initial skeleton draft with the Project Coach, get feedback, and then share strong drafts with the client, discuss with them, and have him/her actively comment/make revisions. This document should include the problem hypothesis and be accompanied by any relevant analysis. A template and example will be provided. The document should include the following: • What the team will accomplish • Methods to be used including anticipated levels of interaction and communication • Resources required and high-level approach for completing engagement (e.g. budget, interview schedule) • The Deliverables and output of the project (presentation, report, briefing, analysis, data) • The Roles & Responsibilities for the client as well as the team	16-Sep
5	Hold First Liaison Meeting	Liaisons (with confirmation to Professors)	Confirm scope of work, approach, methodology	Week of September 19
6	Final Letter of Engagement	Liaison, Coaches, Professors	Finalize Project Expectations	By 30-Sep
7	Issue Tree	Professors & Coaches	Tools to Frame Analysis (to be discussed in class)	As completed

#	Assignment	Submitted To:	Purpose	Due*
8	Ghost Deck	Professors, Liaison, & Coaches	A ghost deck – also referred to as a shell or skeleton – is an early draft of the Final Deliverable Deck. A ghost deck will include the title and headline (one or two lines of text that encapsulate the main point of the slide). The majority of the deck pages can be left blank or contain some rough sketch of the exhibits – tablet, graph, etc. – that the team intends to eventually complete. Consultants use ghost decks to align on the approach and direction for a deliverable and the work plans to get to the final version while minimizing wasted work.	7-Oct
9	Interview Script	Professors	Prep for Interviews – usually a set of draft questions to send to organize thoughts and to send in advance to interviewees	7-Oct
10	Midpoint	Professors & Coaches	The midpoint check-in ensures the project is on track, the team, liaison, and other stakeholders are aligned on remaining activities, any changes from the original LOE or work plan are clear, and the insights and anticipated deliverables will meet expectations. Client preferences regarding content, tone, and location should be honored as much as possible. Ideally, enough insights will have been developed at this point to discuss what the final results and output may look like with the liaison. The written deliverable will be the post-meeting summary notes (Word or PowerPoint).	28-Oct
11	Final Client Liaison Presentation	Liaisons	The final presentation to the client will use a subset (summary) of the deliverable deck but enough substance to effectively transition deliverables to client. Teams will augment it with any slides needed to deliver a complete yet concise executive presentation to the client liaison, and possibly other stakeholders. Feedback from client can also be integrated into final deliverables.	By 2-Dec
12	Final In-Class Presentation	Liaisons, Professors & Coaches	Executive Summary Presentation of Final Deliverables	5-Dec
11	Final Deliverables	Liaisons, Professors, & Coaches	Deliverables as specified in LOE - The final deliverable deck is an extended PowerPoint file containing the entirety of the project from team formation through final recommendation and all the analysis in between. It is not a presentation but rather a reference document used by those that will validate, implement and revisit the teams work after you have left. Teams should assume this deliverable will be used by someone who was never engaged directly as part of the project. The class will discuss presentation structure and format a great deal during the class. The final deliverables should include feedback offered by clients in the presentations.	By 9-Dec
14	Status Reports	Professors, Liaisons, and Coaches	Maintain alignment with Liaison, Team Members, and Professors	Weekly by Friday at noon