AP/ADMS 4970 3.00
MANAGING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

School of Administrative Studies, Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, York University

Fall 2021, Section A, Tuesday 14:30
- *This section will meet weekly at the time indicated via Zoom. You are required to be available during class time for lectures, meetings, and group presentations. Please see below for technology requirements for this course.*
- *This course depends on remote teaching and learning. There will be no in-person interactions or activities on campus*

Instructor:
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Office Hours:
    Tuesdays 13:00-14:00; See eClass for details

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sustainability issues are a central and defining feature of the environment within which managers currently operate. The interrelated effects of climate change, social unrest and market instability impact organizations of all types and sizes, in virtually all industries and geographic locales, and across all levels of operations. Because these stressors are projected to intensify, the search for new ways of doing business and new economic models that appropriately balance ecological, social, and economic interests over the long term is arguably the major management challenge of our time. Adopting a sustainability mindset involves reassessing traditional management objectives, and reframes organizational vision, strategy, products and processes as a rich opportunity for multi-form value creation.

This course focuses on management practices designed to advance environmental, social, and economic sustainability within an ethical framework. Sustainable management concepts, models, and methods are explored within the context of global trends (climate change, resource constraints, population growth, inequality, market instability, etc.) shaping the managerial environment. We employ systems thinking to highlight the dependency of economy and society on nature, and seek to identify emerging practices and future opportunities that align economic actors, entities and systems within vibrant societal and ecological systems. Using a variety of media (cases, videos, group discussions/debates, assignments, etc.) and with attention to real-time current events, the course adopts an applied, forward-looking, and solutions-oriented perspective, and aims to equip upper-level students with the critical thinking and reflective management practice skills necessary to respond effectively to the widespread sustainability challenges facing managers today.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should be able to:
- Describe how global environmental, social, and economic trends are shaping the context for management practice
- Demonstrate familiarity with a range of sustainability concepts, models, practices, and measures
- Comprehensively evaluate current sustainability efforts within organizations along the dimensions of vision, strategy, products, and processes
- Apply integrative systems thinking in a creative manner to identify opportunities and develop practical managerial solutions that foster sustainable outcomes

COURSE READINGS

Course readings are listed in the course calendar along with other media content used in this course, including video, websites, podcasts, etc. *There is no required text for this course that you need to purchase*. The majority of materials are freely available online or through the York library system. You may need to purchase some materials (e.g. streaming videos) for a nominal fee.

This course has a strong focus on current affairs and the real-time events we are living through. Subsequently, you can expect materials to be added, dropped, modified throughout the course with some regularity, and I welcome student contributions to these materials as we go through the course. In essence, the reading list is not fixed, but rather a launch pad for exploring the key themes, concepts, and real-world activities within the broad realm of management and sustainability.

COURSE WEBSITE

https://moodle.yorku.ca/

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR TAKING THE COURSE

Several platforms will be used in this course (e.g., Moodle, Zoom, etc.) through which students will interact with the course materials, the course director/TA, as well as with one another. Please review this syllabus to determine how the class meets (in whole or in part), and how office hours and presentations will be conducted.

Students shall note the following:
- Zoom is hosted on servers in the U.S. This includes recordings done through Zoom.
- If you have privacy concerns about your data, provide only your first name or a nickname when you join a session. Please be sure to email your instructor the name you intend to use online for course identification purposes.
- The system is configured in a way that all participants are automatically notified when a session is being recorded. In other words, a session cannot be recorded without you knowing about it.

Please review the technology requirements and FAQs for Moodle.

To fully participate in this course, you are required to:
- Participate in weekly online Zoom sessions with your video turned on
- Coordinate remotely with group members to prepare and deliver presentations with video

To fully participate in this course, please ensure that you have the following tech capabilities:
- Stable, higher-speed internet connection
- Computer with webcam and microphone, and/or smart device with the same

Computing resources:
> Student Guide to Moodle
> Zoom@YorkU Best Practices
> Zoom@YorkU User Reference Guide
> Computing for Students Website
> Student Guide to eLearning at York University

ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE

This course has both synchronous and asynchronous components.

1. <u>Synchronous components</u> include:
   - Weekly class Zoom meetings at the time scheduled by the Registrar's Office and indicated above, which will include:
     - Class discussions
     - Breakout group sessions
     - Group and individual activities
     - Presentations

Just like in-class courses, you are expected to be attend all online classes at the designated time.

2. <u>Asynchronous components</u> include:
   - Posted readings and supplementary materials (e.g. videos, news articles)
   - Projects and assignments; both group and individual

You can complete asynchronous components on your own time and at your own pace <u>providing you meet all submission deadlines.</u>

COURSE COMPONENTS & EVALUATION

Learning log and reflective assessments	30%
Book report & presentation	15%
Sustainable enterprise report & presentation	35%
Class contribution / Participation	20%

Learning log and reflective assessments (30%)

You will maintain a learning log throughout the semester as an ongoing record of your work in the course. The log is a place to record and synthesize key ideas, themes, concepts, and so on. You can think of it as a detailed set of class notes. Inspiration for the log can come from a wide variety of sources including course readings, lecture content, conversations with classmates and/or instructor, or even the nightly news. Learning logs will be submitted for initial review in week 3, and for grading in weeks 6 and 12. The latter submissions will be accompanied by a reflective assessment detailing what you have learned and key takeaways from the course.

Book report & presentation (15%)

This assignment gives you the opportunity to work with another student in the class (i.e. in pairs) to explore and analyze a book of your choosing that relates to course themes. There are many recent texts that provide inspiration in this direction, and even some older classics. I will provide a list of books to choose from. You are free to examine a book not on the list providing another student is also interested – just discuss it with me first. Be prepared to share a short presentation and to moderate a discussion of your book with the class – this allows us to learn from each other and cover a very broad range of material.

Sustainable enterprise case study. Report & presentation (35%)

This group project is an opportunity for students to discover, research, and report back to the class on an enterprise that is at the forefront of managing-for-sustainability. The purpose of the project to use the concepts and tools learned in the course to conduct an in-depth case study of real-world organization or industry, and as a class, to find examples of business models and initiatives that move meaningfully towards true sustainability. The choice of enterprise is quite broad, but should:

1. Provide a rich context to explore and apply the themes, concepts, and methods from the course;
2. Be unique to each group (Initiatives will be awarded on a first come first served basis, so submit your proposals early!).

The proposed initiative must:
3. Represent a significant departure from business as usual (this can be interpreted quite widely and could refer to innovation with respect to the business model, organizational form, operational design, and/or product/product design, etc.);
4. Be designed for simultaneous value creation across the environmental, social, and economic domains.

Within these guidelines you may wish to engage with an entrepreneurial startup, a long-standing entity, an integrated network or industry, etc. The initiative may be small-scale locally focused, globally oriented, or anything in-between. Legal form is open to both for-profit and not-for-profit, private- and publicly-held enterprises providing criterion 4 above is met.

Class contribution/Participation (20%)

This class rests heavily on discussion-based learning - engaged class discussions are essential to individual and group learning in this course. All present are expected to actively participate by asking relevant questions, contributing novel insights, providing provocative (and respectful) critique, etc. Given the nature of the course design and the focus on applied, experiential learning, class attendance is particularly important.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Assignments

You are expected to submit assignments on time.

Grade Reappraisals

Students may, with sufficient academic grounds, request that a grade in the course be reappraised. A written request for reappraisal must be submitted to the course director within one week of receiving your grade, and must specify (a) what the student would like re-graded (i.e. specific questions, entire exam, etc.) and (b) a clear justification for why re-grading is necessary. The course director may refuse to reappraise if sufficient academic grounds are not demonstrated. Students need to be aware that a request for a grade reappraisal may result in the original grade being raised, lowered or confirmed. For further information see: http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/2014-2015/policies/petitions/index.htm

Turnitin

In this course all electronic submissions to Moodle dropboxes will be screened using turnitin prior to evaluation. turnitin is a plagiarism detection service that faculty use on a voluntary basis. Additional student information can be found at https://moodle.yorku.ca/students/documentation/turnitin.html

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY/LA&PS/SCHOOL REGULATIONS

There are a number of important policies that apply to all ADMS courses. As a student in this course it is your responsibility to carefully review, understand, and follow these regulations. These policies cover the following topics:
- Deferred exams
- Academic Honesty
- Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy
- In-Class Tests and Exams – the 20% Rule
- Reappraisals
- Accommodation Procedures
- Religious Accommodation
- Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities (Senate Policy)

Complete details can be found here: http://sas.laps.yorku.ca/students/.

COURSE CALENDAR & READINGS

Note: The detailed calendar/readings will be posted on eClass in the form of a 'living document.' To maximize the applied and experiential aspects of the course, the schedule will be flexible to allow for in-depth explorations of emergent issues and/or to take advantage of timely opportunities for engaged and immersive learning. Specification of class content and assigned readings (etc.) will be provided in an ongoing manner throughout the term. Changes, modifications, additions should be expected.

ACT I: PANORAMA (Weeks 1-4):
A high-level overview of the current context and status of sustainability management and introduction of key concepts, themes, and tensions. The gap between mainstream sustainability practice and a truly sustainable future will be highlighted.

ACT II: DIGGING IN (Weeks 5-10):
We will take a topical approach to explore select sustainability management issues in greater depth, including environmental and social breakdown, sustainability frameworks and metrics, design and the circular economy, leading exemplars in corporate sustainability, and alternative economic models. These topics will be paired with and facilitated by Book Report Presentations.

ACT III: PATHS FORWARD (Weeks 11-12):
In the final two classes groups will present their Sustainable Enterprise Case Studies, spotlighting business initiatives that offer the greatest promise for reversing course to secure a viable and hopeful future.

Sample materials:

. Video: The Corporation – Feature, Documentary

. Marcus, Joel, Elizabeth C. Kurucz, and Barry A. Colbert. 2010. "Conceptions of the Business-Society-Nature Interface: Implications for Management Scholarship." Business & Society 49(3):402–38.

. 2020. Corporate Knights Magazine 19(1)

. Wu, Tim. 2020. "That Flour You Bought Could Be the Future of the U.S. Economy." NYTimes.Com Feed, July 24.

. Video: The Ebony Project (Taylor Guitars)

. Global Reporting Initiative

. Sorensen, Chris. 2016. "Peåk Stüff." Maclean's 129(5):36–38.

. Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations)

. Chouinard, Y., Ellison, J., & Ridgeway, R. (2011). The Sustainable Economy. Harvard Business Review, 89(10), 52–62.

. IPCC website

. Planetary Boundaries