

Syllabus

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EVPP 322 001 Business and Sustainability Fall 2012

“The green economy—one that is focused on more than just moving from fossil fuels to clean, renewable resources—is poised to become the fundamental economic catalyst of the 21st century. Its impact on how society will design, manufacture, sell, and even dispose of products will, in a very short-time, affect every industry and business around the world. But, are we ready for it? Do the leaders of today, or more importantly, tomorrow, have the foresight needed to fully understand the impending changes?”

Lois Quam, founder and CEO, Tysvar LLC

The push for a green economy represents an enormous opportunity for business, both domestically and globally. Public support for a cleaner environment is growing, and corporations are increasingly expected to consider the environment in their products and services. While evidence suggests that these expectations are beginning to be taken seriously, news sources report daily on environmental pitfalls demonstrated by corporations, and which have become the target of governments, activist groups, or simply the increasing demands of consumers for “greener” products. These stories illustrate that environmental awareness, sensitivity, and literacy are often lacking in the modern corporation. Still, as demonstrated at

Purpose:

The purpose of this course is to increase students’ capacity to promote sustainability in the private sector and, by extension, across our society and world.

Specifically, we aim to:

- Bring together students from varied backgrounds to appreciate how economic activity impacts the natural environment, as we ponder how to create a “green economy”
- Learn tools for how a firm can manage its way to better environmental performance.
- Develop skills and experience with analyzing and promoting business sustainability.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Develop a viable definition of what sustainability is.
2. Identify a set of widely recognized global ecological challenges which may result in part from inadequate sustainability values and practices in the private sector.
3. Describe global norms, standards and frameworks for measuring and advancing environmental stewardship in the private sector.
4. Apply participatory case study methods and other tools to examine current status and means to improve corporate sustainability, from mere compliance to modest corporate social responsibility to bold civic leadership.
5. Present poignant local and international stories of corporate environmental stewardship.

The course is designed to help students grasp the complexity of our current environmental situation, and its opportunities and limitations for

the modern corporate enterprise. It encourages students to critically assess taken-for-granted conceptions of basic products and processes and their relationship with the natural environment. We will examine both established industries and emergent companies employing cutting edge technologies, and consider both national and international implications. We will also meet with various sustainability practitioners including Mason's new President, Dr. Angel Cabrera, and engage in a variety of activities ("tasks") in support of students' knowledge and skills building.

Some particular questions we will address include:

- How has business interactions with the natural environment changed over time?
- Does the so-called "win-win scenario" really exist? Can production efficiency and bottom-line profits be increased through the introduction of new technologies and management systems that are sensitive to environmental considerations?
- How does one evaluate the technical, financial and political aspects of corporate environmental strategy?
- What effects do environmental concerns have on patterns of international trade, marketing, accounting, financial markets, public relations, product development and process design?

By the conclusion of the course, students will have gained an understanding of how they can assist organizations to respond proactively to the environmental imperatives that they face. In many cases, this response will lead to a "win-win" outcome, wherein companies can win in the marketplace *and* promote environmental quality. And maybe you will even begin to conceive a career role for yourself promoting sustainability as well!

All activities, assignments, readings and references will be posted to our course wiki site:

<http://evpp322f12.pbworks.com>

Access is restricted to course participants. Please email your professor if you cannot access it.

Readings:

The central textbook for the course, *Environmental Management: Readings and Cases, 2nd Edition*, by Michael V. Russo, is required. The text contains an edited collection of readings that are recognized in the field. Other materials will be distributed by the instructor

Readings, case preparation and task *are to be completed before* the class meets. Each session's reading assignments will present a variety of viewpoints. While reading these materials you should continually ask yourself: Do I understand the issue being discussed? Can I frame the issue in the perspective of both the environmental critic and the environmental proponent? How might this affect my decision-making as a manager? Specific questions related to each case follow.

Assignments:

1. Class Participation (56% of grade)

The environment is a topic on which everyone has an opinion. It is pervasively covered in the news, movies, TV etc. However, class discussion should be grounded in rational debate and avoid the tendency towards extemporaneous philosophizing. Excellent comments possess one or more of the following attributes: (1) they offer an original and relevant perspective on the issue, (2) they move the analysis forward by building on previous contributions or by revealing fresh insights, (3) they transcend the "I feel" syndrome by including evidence that is based on more than personal experience — in other words, your thinking should reflect and integrate examples from other contexts. Our discussions will be guided by specific questions designed for each class session (and detailed in the pages that follow). You are expected to have reviewed those questions in advance of each class and be prepared to discuss your responses.

Certain "tasks," such as determining your own ecological footprint (see <http://evpp322f12.pbworks.com/myfootprint> by the second class), are not graded, but serve as inputs into a subsequent class session. If you do not due these on schedule, you will not be able to participate as effectively as your peers will.

Daily participation grades will be assessed at the end of each class. Non-attendance earns 0 points. **Three or more unexcused absences will result in a 0 for your participation grade overall.** Excused absences consist of those that accompany a notice from the dean, your doctor, the police, or another emergency official indicating that you were incapacitated and therefore unable to attend class.

Each session you can earn a maximum of 2 participation points based on the following breakdown:

- 0 = non-attendance
- 0.5 = attended without participation
- 1.0 = attended and offered some commentary unrelated to the assigned questions
- 1.5 = correctly answered at least one assigned question and participated in other class discussions

2 = demonstrated leadership and/or scholarship, e.g., served as team spokesperson, correctly answered multiple questions and participated in other class discussions

So if you attend each class and offer some commentary unrelated to the assigned questions your participation grade will be 1/2 or 50%. This translates into earning only 28 of the 56 possible percentage points towards your grade. I want this to be clear so that you can prepare for the accordingly. Of course, my goal is to get you all involved in an active way in the classroom and to think critically about the readings.

2. Written Assignments (32% of grade)

There will be four assignments (8% each) that are **due at the beginning of class on the specified day**. Late papers are not accepted without an excused absence. Excused absences consist of those that accompany a notice from the dean, your doctor, the police, or another emergency official indicating that you were incapacitated and therefore unable to complete the assignment by the specified time.

1. The first is an individual [corporate sustainability profile](#). The deliverable is a 3–4 page single-spaced paper (double-spacing between paragraphs), based on the model presented in Chapter 1.
2. The second, an [individual case study assignment](#) from Russo, answering the questions that will be on our wiki.
3. The third, an individual or group assignment, is a review and gap analysis for one corporation'. Option to present in class.
4. The fourth, a [group assignment](#), is an assessment of another Russo case, answering the questions posed in the attached sheet. The deliverable is a 4–7 page, single-spaced paper (double-space between paragraphs) answering the questions that will be on our wiki.

3. Final Examination (12% of grade)

The final exam will be *comprehensive*, covering the entire course, including readings and lectures. Areas of emphasis on the exam will have been discussed in class during the course of the semester. The structure of the exam will be short answer/essay and analysis of case-based situations.

Honor Code

Students are required to be familiar and comply with the requirements of the GMU Honor Code:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this:

Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. (see <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode>)

I strictly enforce Mason's Honor Code. Students must NOT collaborate on assignments or exams without explicit prior permission from the instructor.

I HAVE A ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR CHEATING. If you are caught cheating, you WILL be brought before the Honor Committee.

Booth, Colomb, and Williams (1995) state in their book, *The Craft of Research* (University of Chicago Press):

"You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else's words or ideas but fail to credit that person. You plagiarize even when you do credit the author but use his exact words without so indicating with quotation marks or block indentation. You also plagiarize when you use words so close to those in your source, that if you placed your work next to the source, you would see that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow" (p. 167).

Semester Overview

- I The Big Picture (September)
- II Managing to be Environmentally Responsive (October)
- III Technical Perspectives (November)
- IV Next Steps (December)

PLEASE SEE SYLLABUS AND [SCHEDULE](#) ON OUR WIKI FOR UP TO DATE SESSION PLANS

<http://evpp322f12.pbworks.com>

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