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BMGT 410.01: Sustainable Business Practices

Eva Rocke

University of Montana - Missoula, eva.rocke@umontana.edu

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BMGT 491: Sustainable Business Practices

Fall 2017: Three credits, Traditional Grading

Course Pre-requisites: Junior standing

Available for Graduate Credit

T/H 2 – 3:20 PM GBB 119

Instructor: Eva Rocke, Director of Sustainability
Office: 129 University Hall
Office hours: By appointment only. Please email the instructor to schedule a time.
Phone: 406-243-4323
Email: eva.rocke@umontana.edu

School of Business Administration Mission Statement

The University of Montana's School of Business Administration is a collegial learning community dedicated to the teaching, exploration, and application of the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a competitive marketplace.

School of Business Administration / Assessment and Assurance of Learning

As part of our assessment process and assurance-of-learning standards, the School of Business Administration (SoBA) has adopted seven learning goals for its undergraduate students.

- Will possess fundamental business knowledge
- Will be able to integrate business knowledge
- Will be effective communicators
- Will possess problem solving skills
- Will have an ethical awareness
- Will be proficient users of technology
- Will understand the global business environment in which they operate

Course Summary and Objectives

This course explores how changing perceptions around environmental and social issues influence current business practices. Through this exploration, we discuss the impact these influences have on business and how adept firms can gain competitive advantage through embracing and integrating them into their core strategies. Though environmental and social issues have gained prominence in recent years and have even spawned conversations around concepts – e.g., sustainability, sustainable strategy, sustainable development - many firms remain ill-equipped to successfully address these issues through their actions. This course focuses on developing your understanding of these opportunities, what you can do to develop more sustainably aware action in your personal and professional lives, and how firms can profitably integrate environmental and social issues into their strategies and actions.

The specific objectives of this course include:

1. Developing an understanding and appreciation of the complex interaction of economic, regulatory, technological, and social factors that shape how businesses react and respond to sustainability
2. Applying concepts from our readings, discussions, and case studies in ways that create value for organizations who adopt these sustainability perspectives into their actions
3. Analyzing and developing effective strategies for gaining competitive advantage
4. Developing an individual perspective on how these issues impact you as you engage in your personal and professional lives

Course Format and Expectations:

- Our class time will be devoted to lecture, discussion, guest speakers, and case analysis.
- Preparation expected before class:
 - All reading and assignments for the day have been completed

- You have given thought to the topics to be discussed
- You are prepared with questions about *relevant* issues you want to discuss, explore, or challenge
- All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php
- Laptop computers may be used for note taking in class, but not for e-mailing, stock trading, gaming, or other non-class activities. If not used appropriately, a student risks losing the privilege to use electronics for the rest of the semester. Students are expected to abide by the SoBA Code of Professional Conduct <http://www.business.umt.edu/Soba/SoBAethics/CodeofProfessionalConduct.aspx>.
- Electronic devices must be turned to silent during class time.
- The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification. Please contact me within the first couple of weeks to arrange for accommodations.

Course Materials

Nearly all of the readings are available through the Moodle course site. We will use a combination of book chapters from several texts, online media, recordings, and films. In addition to what is provided in Moodle, we will use:

The New Sustainability Advantage: Seven Business Case Benefits of a Triple Bottom Line, by Bob Willard, New Society Publishers. ISBN# 978-0-86571-712-1 paperback.

Deliverables

Participation and Department

Class participation is a function of preparation, skills, attitude, and a willingness to share one's ideas with the class. Frequent and ongoing evaluation will be made in this area, and credit will be given for progress over the term. It is difficult to score well in Participation if a student misses more than a couple of classes.

Comments in Class

Simply attending class is necessary but not sufficient. This course has a large case component and thus requires more of students than a conventional, lecture-based course. Not only should you be familiar with the fundamental concepts presented in the accompanying text for each class, but even more importantly, you should also be intimately familiar with the details of the case. You should identify the critical problems presented in the case, calculate and assimilate appropriate financial figures, generate and evaluate alternate courses of action, and be able to select and defend your choice. Please bring all case materials, including notes, calculations, and/or outlines you've generated during your preparation, to class. Keep in mind while analyzing cases that there is no single right answer, but some answers are better than others. To find those, apply strategic concepts and critical thinking to the situations presented.

You may be 'cold called' upon to state your major conclusions and then to provide evidence and analysis in support. Even if the situation appears ambiguous, it is important to examine data, reasons, and assumptions that make some answers better than others. Managers usually have limited information or face ambiguous situations when making decisions. For class discussion, you will be expected to draw from all the relevant readings and class discussions to date. Also, please respectfully listen to your classmates and suggest supporting or alternative views. Thoughtful debate is highly encouraged.

Email Communication

Your communication with each other and with your professors is the perfect opportunity for you to develop the professional communication skills that are **critical** in the workplace. Emails directed to me (and, perhaps, your peers) should include, at a minimum, the following: a greeting (with my name), an introduction (who you are, which class you're in), a thoughtfully written question or request, and a sign off. Please do not treat emails like text messages.

According to University policy, faculty may only communicate with students regarding academic issues via official UM email accounts. Accordingly, students must use their umontana or umconnect emails. Email from non-UM accounts will likely be flagged as spam and deleted without further response. To avoid violating the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, confidential information (including grades and course performance) will not be discussed via phone or email.

Guest Speakers

It is critical to engage with the guest speakers in a meaningful manner. Preparing relevant and interesting questions ahead of class greatly increases the probability this will occur. The **4 quizzes you will take over the course of the semester** may focus entirely on the readings or may ask you to synthesize concepts from the readings and those addressed by guest lecturers. Taking notes during presentations is recommended.

Pecha Kucha Presentation

Sustainability is a broad and ever deepening field. It is nearly impossible for one individual or resource to be familiar with all areas. To further your own understanding of sustainability issues and to educate your fellow students, teams will present a Pecha Kucha style presentation. Pecha Kucha style presentations have **20 slides, shown for 20 seconds each**. The topic must be related to environmental sustainability. You will present in pairs, with 7 of the teams presenting on Thursday, Sept. 7 and the remaining teams presenting on Tuesday, Sept. 12. Once everyone has signed up for a topic, I will post the teams, topics, and presentation dates on our Moodle page.

Critical Analysis Debate Team presentations

In October you will be asked to again partner with one of your classmates to research and represent one side of a contentious sustainability issue. Each issue will have two sides, each side being represented by 2 students, and we will spend two classes in mock debate. Your assignment will be to review the stance offered in *Taking Sides* (Taylor 2014, available on Moodle), build upon the arguments presented in the book, and engage in a 10 minute "debate" on the topic with the students presenting the opposing view. We will discuss these debates in greater detail in class as we get closer, including structure of the debates and more specific guidelines.

Sustainable Solutions Project

Your final project this semester will be to synthesize the sustainable management principles and strategies we've covered and apply them to a hypothetical business that is seeking to integrate sustainability into their operations and culture. I will provide each team of four students with a description of a realistic business or organization. Your assignment will be to identify the sustainable management principles and actions the firm should take to accomplish your identified business and sustainability goals. The assignment includes both a written document and oral presentation, both to be completed as a team. More details and guidelines will be shared before the end of October.

Peer Assessed Participation

Team members are required to evaluate each other on group participation. Each student will have 100 points to distribute among the members of their group including themselves, based on how they felt the other members of the group participated in the group process. This evaluation is due

by **5 pm on Thursday, December 14** and will be assessing your teammates' work on your Sustainable Solutions project.

Finally, if a team member is not performing, the group may agree to remove that member. This may be done only after consulting with the professor and making repeated attempts to motivate the team member. A team member who is removed from a team must complete the assignments individually and forfeits one-half of the possible course participation points.

Grade Calculation

Requirement	Points
1. Participation	20 points
2. Quizzes (4 x 5 pts each).....	20 points
3. Pecha Kucha Presentation.....	20 points
4. Sustainability Issue Debates	20 points
5. Sustainable solutions presentation.....	20 points
6. Sustainable Solutions report.....	20 points
Total points possible	120 points

Graduate Reflection Paper

If a student is taking this class for graduate level credit, a final reflection paper is required in addition to the other course work. The paper is due by **5 PM on Thursday, December 14, 2017**. The Reflection Paper entails writing an 8-10 page (normal margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced) paper that describes and discusses what you learned from each speaker and the corresponding readings. The paper should include specific quotes from speakers and a critical evaluation of what you learned. Students should demonstrate an understanding of the seminar's assigned readings by integrating these readings with what the speakers say in the seminar. To accomplish this, students must take good notes during speaker sessions and complete all assigned readings. Papers are expected to be specific, detailed, and clear, and to provide direct examples from any relevant class materials and presentations. Papers that focus on only one or two speakers will not receive as high marks as those that demonstrate integration across all speakers. The rubric by which the papers are graded is posted on the Moodle site. Please talk to the professor to receive the instructions.

Requirement	Points
1. Participation	20 points
2. Quizzes (4 x 5 pts each).....	10 points
3. Pecha Kucha Presentation.....	10 points
4. Sustainability Issue Debates	20 points
5. Sustainable solutions presentation.....	20 points
6. Sustainable Solutions report.....	20 points
7. Graduate Reflection Paper.....	20 points
Total points possible	120 points

Attendance

Students who are registered for a course but do not attend the first two class meetings may be required by the instructor to drop the course. This rule allows for early identification of class vacancies to permit other students to add classes. Students not allowed to remain must complete a drop form or drop the course through CyberBear to avoid receiving a failing grade. Students who know they will be absent should contact the instructor in advance. Attendance is not required, however, missed or late work will not be accepted. I may excuse brief and occasional absences for documented reasons of illness, injury, family emergency, or participation in a University sponsored activity. (Field trips, ASUM service, music or drama performances, and intercollegiate athletics.) I will excuse documented absences for military service and mandatory public service.