



Introduction to Sustainable Business

Syllabus for MGMT 250 • Winter 2020 • CRN 23661 • 4 credits

REMOTE (by Zoom) Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:15-3:45

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Note: This document is a brief summary. Complete course details are on [Canvas](#).

Course Description

Human societies, and therefore businesses, face a number of integrated environmental and social challenges. We will refer to these concerns collectively, and the attempt to address them, as sustainability. For the business world, the challenge of sustainability represents immense danger, but also huge opportunity. Often these opportunities can be unlocked with small changes in technology or operations, but more often, it requires new thinking to uncover what can be different and better.

This course presents these challenges and this opportunity for a wide range of topics – including transportation, energy, apparel, and food – with a focus on the business context. That means understanding what businesses are doing to solve our biggest problems while being viable and even highly profitable.

After completing this course you should:

- Have a strong general sense – and lots of examples – of what “sustainability” and “sustainable business” can mean.
- Be able to draw on a body of examples in various areas to explain sustainable business concepts.
- See how different technologies, business models, and ways of doing things can be solutions to sustainability challenges.
- Understand how different ways of thinking open up opportunities in these areas.

Course Expectations

Everything is in Canvas – stay on track!

All content and work will take place on Canvas.

The most important thing for each of you is to stay on track. The course moves briskly and linearly throughout many small assignments. Don't fall behind!

Make-Up Work

In general, I simply won't accept late work. The number of students in the course makes it difficult for me to be flexible, except in extreme circumstances. My suggestion: stay ahead so you have some wiggle room.

All that said, if you have circumstances that intervene in your life in a significant way, just get in touch with me by e-mail or in office hours (see details on Canvas).



Due Dates

All assignments are noted in Canvas. There will be few extensions, and almost never if you don't contact me prior to the due date to discuss the issue.

Student Conduct and Academic Integrity

Although this is a remote course (i.e., by Zoom), students are still expected to behave in a considerate, cooperative, and professional manner. Students are expected to uphold the standard of conduct relating to academic integrity. Please refer to the corresponding content later in this syllabus.

Specifically, I ask that you show up every day, with your Zoom camera on as much as possible. If you have circumstances that make it difficult or impossible to have your Zoom camera on most of the time, please let me know.

Communication

The best way for us to communicate is "in person" by Zoom, both in office hours and during Q&A time during class meetings. The next best way is through email at jskov@uoregon.edu. You will receive the fastest response if you begin the subject line of your email with "MGMT 250" and follow it with your specific subject title.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with me about any questions or concerns that you have!

Course Delivery

Flipped Classroom: asynchronous content, Zoom meetings for reinforcement

Lectures are short, pre-recorded, and on Canvas. We will meet by Zoom to do everything else – and that will include only small bits of lecture. You will have a variety of small-group activities in class with Breakout Rooms on Zoom.

Why this format?

There's a reason for this format: scientific research on teaching and learning has shown us that it is more effective than lecture-dominated delivery. It's also generally more equitable, and it allows for more flexibility for different learning styles.

Interested in knowing more? See the sections of the "Background and introduction" video on Canvas, specifically the section titled *Why this format? Why so many tasks?* and the section right after it titled *What does the science of teaching and learning tell us?* These explain my rationale for delivering the course as I do. See me if you have further questions or comments.



Course Resources

You will need to have access to the following resources:

1. **Required Course Reading**

Winston, Andrew, *The Big Pivot: Radically Practical Strategies for a Hotter, Scarcer, More Open World*. 2014. This book is available from the U of O Bookstore, in Kindle and iBooks versions, and at online booksellers such as [Powells](#). This is the only material you must purchase; all other materials are free of charge (though a few will require a free registration).

2. **Canvas** – canvas.uoregon.edu

Canvas will be utilized for course information, readings, details about individual assignments, communication, updates, and posted grades.

3. **Netflix** – www.netflix.com

Course content includes two documentaries, one of which you can stream on Netflix. You can do a free trial if you don't have a Netflix subscription.

Individual Assignments (details in Canvas)

Activities

Each sub-module will have an activity in which you apply the material from the sub-module. Some of them will be *group* activities.

On-line Quizzes

Each sub-module will have a quiz on the material from the sub-module.

Reflections, and reflections on others' reflections

The largest share of your grade will come from your creativity in thinking and writing about the material. You'll have a reflection in each module, and also a required short reflection on

Midterm Exam and Final Exam

Multiple-choice and short-answer questions, all on Canvas.

Zoom call

Ten-minute chat with me for 1% of your grade. Just my way of making sure I can connect with each and every one of you.

Grading

Reflections (240)	24%
Reflections on others' reflections (80)	8%
Activities (200)	20%
Quizzes (200)	20%
Midterm (120 points)	12%
Final (150 points)	15%
Zoom call with me! (Josh, the instructor) (10)	1%

Total: 1,000 points (the percentages are precise; points are approximate and subject to small changes).



Module-by-Module Content – Brief Summary

The full content for the course, including details on all course readings, is located on Canvas. The following narrative provides a brief overview.

Module 1: Foundations

We start by immersing ourselves in Andrew Winston's *The Big Pivot*, a recent book on business and sustainability, and it is the closest thing we have to a textbook in this course. I think its basic frame is extremely useful, and overall it provides an excellent introduction to the field. Also, its author, Andrew Winston, is worth knowing about and following. We'll closely analyze a short video on MGM's sustainability efforts at its hotels in Las Vegas. This content provides a good way to start exploring *The Big Pivot*. We will also expand Winston's notion of "mega-challenges" by looking at the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Questions to ask about TBP:

- What is the main idea of the book? What does Winston mean by "the big pivot" that he asks business to undertake?
- What is the organization of the book? How do the various chapters relate to each other?
- Who is the audience for the book? Are there several distinct audiences?
- Why does Winston see no reasonable alternative to making this pivot? What is the likely unpleasant alternative?

Readings/materials:

- *The Big Pivot*, chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- MGM Goes Green (episode of *The C Suite with Jeffrey Hayzlett*, <https://csuitenetwork.com/tv/video/how-mgm-went-green>).
- United Nations SDGs: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

Module 2: categories of impact; short-termism; science-based targets

We'll combine two tasks in this module: looking at two different types of environmental impact (carbon and water footprints), and forging ahead into the meat of *The Big Pivot*, chapters 5 and 6.

We will look at, and make sure we understand, water footprinting and carbon footprinting, at the household level but with implications for business thinking. Although we won't have a lot of time to explore these quantitative results, we'll return to them a few times during the course, especially as we consider transportation, food, and apparel.

As you look at the results from the two calculators, ask yourself the following questions:

- Which results are most surprising or unexpected? Is there a reason those activities weren't in the front of your mind?
- Think about "tips" you've heard for improving your environmental impact. Do those tips align with the biggest impacts that these calculators show you?



- Look at the big impacts in each calculator. Are they related to the same activities or totally different activities, or is there some overlap? Can you explain why?

Readings/materials:

- *The Big Pivot*, chapters 5 and 6.
- Carbon footprint calculator: <https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/calculator>.
- Water footprint calculator: <https://www.watercalculator.org>.

Module 3: Transportation

The transportation world is full of change – new forms of mobility, and new thinking about cities. We'll look closely at some alternatives to car ownership, including ride-hailing, car-sharing, and bike-sharing. I'll ask you to draw on your personal experiences – everyone has some experience with transportation – but also to think beyond them to the advantages and features of emerging business models, and what they mean for personal consumption. We'll also read more of TBP.

Readings/materials:

- *The Big Pivot*, chapters 7 and 8.
- Various web materials on reconsidering the car:
 - ZipCar, the leading company of its kind in the U.S.
 - Uber and Lyft
- Materials on bikeshare systems
 - Capitol Bikeshare (DC) - <http://www.capitalbikeshare.com/pricing>
- "Three Revolutions in Urban Transportation" (<https://www.itdp.org/3rs-in-urban-transport/>)

Module 4: Big Goals and Big Ideas for Big Companies

We'll consider the frameworks that big companies use to set sustainability goals, and we'll look closely at Unilever and Starbucks. We will also explore chapter 13 of TBP that lay out distinctly different relationships between companies and consumers.

- Readings/materials:
 - Articles on Unilever and Starbucks
 - The podcast interview with Unilever CEO Paul Polman: <https://hbr.org/2012/06/captain-planet/ar/1>
 - *The Big Pivot*, Chapter 13, "Inspire Customers to Care and to Use Less"
 - Materials on circularity

The midterm exam will take place between Modules 4 and 5.

Module 5: Consumer Power and Ecolabels

To complement the previous focus on corporations and their actions, we look at one mechanism for consumer-driven change. Ideally, ecolabels connect consumer ambitions and values with new production



systems that match those values, but there are many moving parts to look at closely. We consider the organic standard and Rainforest alliance in detail, and look briefly at fair trade and animal welfare standards as well.

Readings/materials:

- What is an ecolabel? In particular, what makes an ecolabel effective? We have a few starting point: <http://www.triplepundit.com/2012/10/rainforest-alliance-certification/>.
- Greener Choices, a web site (maintained by Consumer Reports) that analyzes many ecolabels. <http://greenerchoices.org/2016/03/08/make-another-good-label/>
- Finally, we will dig a little deeper into the organic label administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA factsheet: www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Organic%20Practices%20Factsheet.pdf

Module 6: Apparel and Module 7: Food

These two modules will build on the foregoing foundation to consider two big areas with huge sustainability challenges and opportunities. Our apparel and food systems are fundamental to our wellbeing and daily lives; they are also full of economic injustice and environmental destruction and simultaneously full of change, opportunity, and examples of innovative sustainability models. In addition to short readings, we'll watch – and critique – two documentaries, Cowspiracy and The True Cost.

Readings/materials:

- The True Cost (documentary on the apparel industry)
- Selected materials on Patagonia and H&M
- Cowspiracy (documentary)

Module 8: Review and Final Thoughts

As we review for the final, we'll integrate the material a bit, pick up some loose ends, and generate possible final exam questions with an activity. We'll look at some interesting revelations and changes of stance in the corporate world, from the Business Roundtable and from Larry Fink of BlackRock.

General Policies

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

The University Student Conduct Code (available at <http://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct>) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting



to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.

- [Lundquist College of Business Code of Ethics](#)

Accessible Education

<https://aec.uoregon.edu/>

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if the instruction or design of this course results in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Help for Victims and Survivors

If you are a victim or survivor of sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating or domestic violence, gender-based harassment or bullying, and/or stalking and need help, start here: <https://safe.uoregon.edu/>. There are staff available 24 hours a day for confidential assistance. Even if you are unsure what to do, call 541-346-7233 (SAFE) and you'll be connected with somebody who will listen to you and help guide you as you figure out what you want to do next. We are here to support you and help provide the assistance and services you need.

Reporting: Bias Education and Response Team: <http://dos.uoregon.edu/bias>

The University of Oregon Bias Education and Response Team (BERT), based in the Office of the Dean of Students, works to provide those who have witnessed or themselves become a target of an act of bias an opportunity to be heard and supported. The fundamental role of the Bias Education and Response Team (BERT) is to respond to situations that affect the larger University of Oregon community through education about current and historical issues surrounding bias. Utilizing best practices in our field, the BERT provides services to witness(es), bystander(s), targeted individual(s), offender(s), or a member(s) of the community in order to create change in a timely, effective, and comprehensive way. It is through our education services and initiatives that we hope to eliminate acts of bias within our community. To report a bias incident: <http://dos.uoregon.edu/bias>

Title XI

How to Report: If you or someone you know (student, faculty, or staff) has experienced gender discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual violence, the university can offer assistance, support, and resources:

<http://titleix.uoregon.edu/how-report>

Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment Reporting

Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, gender-based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment may seek resources and help at safe.uoregon.edu. A student can also call either the UO's 24-hour hotline at 541-346-7244 [SAFE], or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator at 541-346-8136. From the SAFE website, students may also connect to Callisto, a confidential reporting site that is not apart of the University.

Students experiencing any other form of prohibited discrimination or harassment can find information at respect.uoregon.edu or aaeo.uoregon.edu or contact the non-confidential AAEO office at 541-346-3123 or the Dean of Students Office at 541-346-3216 for help. As UO policy has different reporting requirements based on the nature of the reported harassment or discrimination, additional information about reporting requirements for discrimination or harassment unrelated to sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment is available at [Discrimination & Harassment](#). Specific details about confidentiality of information and reporting obligations of employees can be found at titleix.uoregon.edu.