GENERAL MANAGEMENT: BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The single question most commonly asked in the area of business sustainability is: what is business sustainability? You will see in our first session that there is considerable debate about its definition, however, there is considerable agreement around the definition of sustainable development, which is industrial development that "meets the needs of today, without compromising the needs of tomorrow" (WCED, 1987). In other words, the resources business generates should be distributed equitably across people and over time to maintain the long-term integrity of those resources. If these conditions are not met, the resources needed to meet needs will not be met, compromising the long-term viability of business and society.

This approach to industrial development and business is arguably one of the most significant challenges to the existing business model, which currently anchors on profitability and growth. This course, therefore, raises fundamental questions relevant to all business disciplines, including: for whom are profits generated? Can growth be sustained? And are there alternative ways of organizing to serve both business and society?

There are few topics in management studies that have garnered so much attention so quickly. Yet, we are still grappling as a discipline because the concepts are so big, so challenging, and arguably, so disruptive. Sustainability is sometimes seen as a new research context for existing theory; sometimes seen as calling for new theories, and sometimes seen as a new paradigm that calls for new ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Whereas the other general management electives (e.g. BEPP, entrepreneurship, and international business) have a strong disciplinary focus, sustainability arguably cuts across all business disciplines, and bridges into other disciplines, including ecology, geography, and sociology. Furthermore, the insights it garners can be applied not only to business, but to distant fields such as art, architecture, and agriculture.

This theoretical plurality provides fertile ground to push our own intellectual boundaries. This course should appeal to any scholar, who wants to engage in cross-disciplinary dialogue. If you are looking for neat, methodical answers, this is not the course for you. If you are interested in big ideas that sometimes leave you with more questions than answers, we encourage you to participate in this course.
Our objectives for this course include:

1) to garner a broad understanding of the topics that are being discussed in business sustainability
2) to challenge some of the deeply held assumptions of existing business theories
3) to ask important research questions

APPRAOCH

In general, Tima will be facilitating the first half of the course, positioning the field and focusing on the dominant business paradigm vis-à-vis sustainability. Tima’s strengths are in topics pertaining to large corporations, ecological issues, and developed countries. Oana will be covering the second half of the course. She is generally interested in social change, social innovation and social enterprise, and developing countries. These boundaries are not hard and fast. In fact, the two instructors should provide interesting, often complementary, and sometimes even opposing perspectives, which should help to build your own ability to think critically and creatively.

The purpose of the course is not to provide you a complete understanding of sustainability, but with a taste of the possibilities. The boundaries surrounding this field are very porous, given its broad disciplinary span. Sustainability refocuses your attention not on extending existing theories, but on questioning the questions being asked. Through this course, we hope that you will start to ask research questions that will impact on both theory and practice. Your work, then, will be boundary spanning -- aiming to integrate across business and other disciplines to generate meaningful insights.

In keeping with this ambition, the class will be run in a ‘salon’ format. Born in the mid-1800s in revolutionary France, these social gatherings were intended to expand participants’ knowledge through polite conversation. We will facilitate this environment by initiating the class by selecting a few people to read aloud their personal reflections (see below). After this initiation, we will encourage active debate and thoughtful reflection. We will encourage participants to draw on materials from outside of the reading list (e.g. different disciplines, different sources, and even different media).

You are expected to come to class prepared. The workload for this seminar is relatively light, so that the material can be covered well, opening up time for reflection. Each participant is expected to be prepared and engaged.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS / EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Contribution</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Every week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Statements</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Every week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Program</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>December 15, 2015, 5 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classroom Contribution

You are expected to participate actively in every class. Comments should be inquisitive, thoughtful, insightful, and respectful. To make such comments, you will have to prepare
well for class and listen carefully to the discussion. You are encouraged to challenge ideas, not individuals. Classroom discussions should be fun, provocative and enlightening.

As well, only emergencies should keep you away from class. If you know you cannot make one of the class dates, then please let us know in advance. Although there will be a grade penalty for missing classes, there will be an opportunity to partially make up the grade.

Your contribution grade will be made based on the thoughtfulness of the comments and your ability to engage the readings and other materials. You are not being judged on quantity of contributions, only quality. But, a minimum level of quantity is necessary for us to judge quality. No single comment will determine your grade; rather a gestalt of your ability to contribute meaningfully and positively to the classroom environment.

Personal Reflections

Prior to class, you will have to write a personal reflection and upload it to a shared website by 2 pm. Several people will be asked to read their statements at the beginning of class. The length of the statement should not exceed 2 minutes of reading time (about ½ page, single space).

After class, you will be permitted to adjust your statement. The final version must be uploaded by 7 pm onto the shared space, so that all statements are available to all students throughout the term.

Each reflection paper will be worth 5%. The quality will be judged based on the creativity, thoughtfulness, provocation, and insight. This is an opportunity to engage personally and publicly with the theories and the methodologies included in the readings. It is intended to create a community, so that you learn from each other. Our aim is not to achieve congruence in insights, but to share provocations, so that each of us helps to push the others’ thinking.

Research Program

At the end of the course, you will be expected to develop a research question, a synthesis of why that question is important, and a research program (i.e. the methods that will answer the question). The novelty and important of the research question should be evident. The research program must include enough detail to convince us that it is doable. Max 8 pages double-spaced.

Plagiarism

According the University guidelines:

Plagiarism, may be defined as "The act of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts or passages of his writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the product of one's own mind." Excerpted from H.C. Black, Black's Law Dictionary, West Publishing Co., 1979, 5th Ed., p. 1035. This concept applies with equal force to all assignments including laboratory reports, diagrams, and computer projects and is considered at major Scholastic Offence.
Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

Graduate Course Health and Wellness Insert for Graduate Course Outlines

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western’s Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page http://www.music.uwo.ca/, and our own McIntosh Gallery http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at
http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html

To help you learn more about mental health, Western has developed an interactive mental health learning module, found here: http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/module.html. This module is 30 minutes in length and provides participants with a basic understanding of mental health issues and of available campus and community resources. Topics include stress, anxiety, depression, suicide and eating disorders. After successful completion of the module, participants receive a certificate confirming their participation.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sept 14</td>
<td>Key Concepts and the Classics</td>
<td>Tima</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Sept 21</td>
<td>Sustainability as Context</td>
<td>Tima</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Sept 27*</td>
<td>Sustainability 2.0</td>
<td>Tima</td>
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<td>note: this class is on a Sunday</td>
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<td>4. Oct 5</td>
<td>Resilience &amp; Systems Thinking</td>
<td>Tima</td>
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<td>5. Oct 19</td>
<td>Time &amp; Sustainability</td>
<td>Tima</td>
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<td>6. Oct 26</td>
<td>Paradoxes in Sustainability</td>
<td>Tima</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Nov 2</td>
<td>The Human Side of Markets: Inequality and Inequity</td>
<td>Oana</td>
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<td>8. Nov 9</td>
<td>Organizations 2.0</td>
<td>Oana</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Nov 23</td>
<td>Social Innovation</td>
<td>Oana</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Dec 7</td>
<td>Leadership and Legacy: Positive, Prosocial, Ethical and Moral Lenses</td>
<td>Oana</td>
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DETAILED SESSION SCHEDULE (DRAFT)

WEEK 1: Key concepts and the classics (Tima)
Bansal, P and Song, Discriminating between Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Sustainability, Working paper.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

WEEK 2: Sustainability as Context

ORG LEVEL

MACRO LEVEL

Revision: 23 August 2015
WEEK 3: Sustainability 2.0


WEEK 4: Resilience & Systems Thinking


Natalia Ortiz and Pratima Bansal (forthcoming), Building Organizational Resilience through Social And Environmental Practices. Strategic Management Journal.

WEEK 5: Time & Sustainability


**WEEK 6: Paradoxes in Sustainability**


**WEEK 7: The Human Side of Markets: Inequality and Inequity**

**WEEK 8: Organizations 2.0**

**WEEK 9: Governance: Failures and Possibilities**
WEEK 10: Social Innovation

WEEK 11: Enterprise and Entrepreneurship: Impact on the Environment and Society

WEEK 12: Leadership and Legacy: Positive, Prosocial, Ethical and Moral Lenses