
Business 9774 – Business Sustainability

Fall 2026

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[Course Dropbox folder](#)

Wednesdays 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm EST
September 16 to October 28
Room: 2120, Ivey Building

INTRODUCTION

The economic paradigm has helped business to amass enormous wealth and alleviate poverty worldwide – a central ambition of sustainable development. However, generating this economic wealth has also inadvertently undermined other tenets of sustainable development by contributing to issues, like climate change, biodiversity loss, and economic inequality.

In this 6-session course, we discuss these inconsistencies. We will first cover the basics of sustainable development and then discuss the taken-for-granted assumptions of most business theories, including: for whom are profits generated? Can growth be sustained? What governs the macro-organizational context? We will conclude the course by discussing more contemporary forms of theorizing that cut across the social and natural sciences.

Whereas other business courses have a strong disciplinary focus, this course has implications across business disciplines (e.g. strategy, operations, finance) and bridges into non-business disciplines, including ecology, geography, and sociology. This theoretical plurality provides fertile ground to push 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 course is not for you. If you are interested in big ideas that sometimes leave you with more questions than answers, you will enjoy the course.

I have been studying sustainable development since the early 1990s, soon after the WCED coined the term 'sustainable development' in 1987, which is economic "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987). A conventional approach to economic development focuses on short-term growth; sustainable development asks that economic activities serve not just the present generation, but future generations by ensuring that natural resources not be compromised. This aspirational ideal has been embodied in

the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). Although much of civil society has embraced these goals, businesses have been slow to adopt them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Our objectives for this course include:

- 1) to understand the assumptions of much contemporary business theorizing
- 2) to understand the challenges to contemporary business theorizing by business sustainability scholars
- 3) to theorize different ways in which the gaps in contemporary business theorizing can be closed
- 4) to construct and defend arguments in live scholarly conversation

There will be a lot of variance in the experiential and disciplinary foundations of students. Some students will be further along in their doctoral work at the business school, whereas others aren't even enrolled in a business program. This theoretical and experiential plurality is welcome and I have designed the course to benefit from diversity, as long as students engage deeply in the materials.

APPROACH

These 6 sessions cannot provide a complete understanding of business sustainability. Rather, it aims to sensitize you to inherent assumptions that are made in contemporary business theorizing. I will have achieved my objective if you start to see the world through a new lens, which can inform your own research. I hope that you will start to ask research questions that can inform your own theorizing and empirical work.

The boundaries surrounding this field are porous, given sustainability's broad disciplinary span. Sustainability can be seen within the boundaries of current management theorizing, or can be seen as challenging current management theorizing. I prefer taking the latter approach, using it to challenge my assumptions of business and management. It gets me to question not only the assumptions of existing theories, but the questions being asked. This course, then, while grounded in business strategy is relevant to students within any discipline – business or otherwise.

You will be expected to prepare the material prior to class, and within class, we will engage in debate and discussion. The direction of conversation won't be bilateral – from me to you – but multilateral with each other, as we all bring a unique and valued perspective. I will encourage active debate and thoughtful reflection. You need to feel comfortable drawing not only on the readings, but your own experiences. You are expected to come to class prepared to ensure not only that you learn, but you contribute to the learnings of others.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Activity	Grade	Due Date
Essays & Post-Class Reflections	30%	Every week
Classroom Contributions	30%	Every week
Final Exam – in person, no technology	40%	Saturday, Oct 31, 10 am-12:30 pm

The weekly preparation for this course is admittedly heavy, but the good news is that the content of this course is covered in the weekly preparations. There is no end-of-term essay, so the coursework takes place when the course is in session. Further, workload for this course is front-loaded. You won't be dipping in your toes into the content, but diving head first.

Essays

Each week requires that you submit an essay salient to the topic. Details of each essay are noted within the week's reading list. The essay should be emailed (tbansal@ivey.ca) to me by **Tuesday at 6 pm**. It should be labelled with 9774_<lastname>_wk<N>_essay, so it will be moved to a separate folder automatically. Please use Word (not pdf).

Post-class Reflections

By 9 am Thursday morning, you will email to me your reflections on the class. It should be labelled 9774_<lastname>_wk<N>_reflection. You can speak to your learnings and surprises from the readings or the class discussion, new connections you made, or any other interesting insights. This post-class reflection should be about 1-2 single-spaced pages.

Do not simply repeat back the discussion. Write down the ideas that stuck out, pushed your thinking, or even didn't make sense. Do not send to me your classroom notes. I'd rather have one paragraph of new ideas, than 2 pages that repeat the materials we covered.

The Essay and Post-class reflection will be given a grade based on the following rubric. Most students will receive a 3 in any given week. A 4 will be relatively uncommon.

Grade	Performance
0	Did not submit on time
1	Fair - Ideas are relatively simple - Readings not leveraged or understood - Typos and hard to follow
2	Good - Ideas show some novelty, but largely inside the box - Has demonstrated comprehension of the readings - Typos and weak grammar

3	Very good
	- Shows strong understanding of the readings - Novelty in some of the ideas - Few or no typos
4	Excellent
	- New ideas that demonstrate deep understanding of the topics and push the frontier - Goes beyond the readings

Classroom Contribution

Contribution will be measured by the degree to which you advance the conversation. This can come in the way of seeing anomalies in an argument, connecting arguments, identifying assumptions, or asking questions that might reframe the way we see things. To make such contributions, you need to be well-prepared for class by having completed the readings and thought through that week's material, while also listening attentively.

I want our seminars to feel safe to be wrong. No single comment is being scored; it is the accumulated set that matters. I will draw you in if you haven't spoken, not to put you on the spot, but because each of you has a point of view the rest of us need to hear. If speaking in a group is genuinely hard for you, come and see me early in the term and we will find a way that works.

Laptops are not used in seminar (see the AI policy below). I know they offer genuine benefit, but pen and paper keep our attention in the room, and this course is built on the premise that you learn as much from articulating an idea aloud as from reading one on the page.

Grade	Performance
0	Absent.
1	Unprepared or silent for multiple classes. The few comments show the reading wasn't done or wasn't thought about.
2	Has done the reading and participates when invited, but contributions mostly summarize, agree, or report rather than analyze. Comments tend to sit beside the discussion rather than push it.
3	Comes prepared and contributes substantively. Comments are grounded in the readings and build on what preceded them rather than restarting the discussion. Moves the conversation forward reliably, if not decisively. This is the expected standard.
4	Interventions change where the discussion goes. Surfaces an assumption the group was working around, names a tension between two readings, or asks the question that reframes the problem. Engages others' arguments directly, not just the text. Rare in any given term, and not achievable by volume.

Final Exam

The final exam will be in person and handwritten. You will have 2.5 hours. It will be held on Saturday, October 31 from 10 to 12:30.

You can use whatever notes or articles you want to bring to class, but no devices or AI-generated content of any sort will be permitted. The exam will not be based on memory, but on understanding the basic concepts learned in class. I will be looking for your understanding of the material and for your ability to build an argument.

MATERIALS/REQUIRED READING

All materials will be available in a dropbox folder located [Course Dropbox folder](#). Please copy the materials in the folder into your own private folder. Otherwise, there is a risk that you will inadvertently change files or the folder.

USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

A word before the rules. AI is an extraordinarily powerful tool. Used wisely, it will make you sharper; used improperly, it will offer you a short-term gain with a heavy long-term cost. Students who use it wisely will accelerate their learning and those who do not will be left behind. It's your choice.

What is permitted. You may use generative AI tools for only two uses. First, you can use it for background research when preparing your essays: identifying relevant literature, orienting yourself to an unfamiliar body of work, or identifying scholars and debates you should know about. Second, you may also use AI for minor copy editing of text you have already written, including spelling, grammar, and punctuation. AI can be used to flag errors, but you must make the edits yourself.

What is not permitted. There are three prohibitions in this course. First, all writing submitted in this course must be exclusively your own. You may not use AI to draft, paraphrase, restructure, expand, or generate any portion of your written work. Second, you may not use AI to read or interpret course readings, which includes summarizing an article, explaining its argument, extracting its contribution, or clarifying a passage you find difficult. Third, you may not use AI in class.

Laptops in class. To support the learning environment, laptops will not be used in seminar. Bring your readings and take notes on paper. I recognize this means printing more than I would like, and I have made my peace with the trade-off. Students with an accessibility accommodation requiring a device should speak with me; accommodations will of course be honoured.

Why these rules. Doctoral training builds mental muscles that take years to develop: the ability to read a difficult text closely enough to see what it actually claims and where it is vulnerable, and the ability to write in a voice that is recognizably your own. Both are built through struggle. AI removes that struggle. It is also a convergence machine. It pulls everyone toward the same language, the same framings, the same critiques, the same literatures. And, it does so invisibly. Success in our field is determined by independent thought and voice. I want you to build the mental muscles that will set you up for success.

Disclosure. If you use AI for background research or copy editing, include a brief note at the end of your essay stating which tool you used and what for (e.g., "I used Claude to identify literature on polycentric governance; all searching decisions, reading, and writing were my own."). I will not penalize disclosure, but I will penalize the failure to disclose.

Consequences. Use of generative AI outside these boundaries constitutes a breach of academic integrity and will be handled under Western's academic misconduct policies, in the same manner as plagiarism or unauthorized collaboration.

ENROLLMENT RESTRICTIONS

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Ivey PhD Program, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES: PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the Scholastic Offences policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a [Scholastic Offence](#).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

GENDER-BASED SEXUAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

"Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts on the [Wellness and Wellbeing website](#). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca."

HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

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. See <https://www.uwo.ca/health>.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health Support at Western](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with [Accessible Education \(AE\)](#), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AE and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations may include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

A FINAL WELCOME AND REQUEST OF STUDENTS

I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability, and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS

The readings are available in this dropbox:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/g7z597t7xpg6tzcbylhew/AEfKMMsDg0io-eLCfLyHF5k?rlkey=n7sqo4la0y5z0bt6v1bq95w8s&dl=0>

Date	Topic
1. Sept 16	Economic Theories of Sustainable Development
2. Sept 23	Mainstream Management Approaches to Sustainability
3. Oct 7	Criticisms of Mainstream Management Approaches to Sustainability
4. Oct 14	New Theorizing: Real and Constructed Tensions, Tradeoffs and Synergies
5. Oct 21	New Theorizing: Time, Space, Place & Scale
6. Oct 28	New Theorizing: Systems Approaches to Business
Oct 31 (10 am – 12:30 pm)	Final Exam – for registered students

DETAILS OF SESSIONS
WEEK 1: Economic Theories for Sustainable Development: The Classics

This first class is exceptionally heavy (especially the essay), so please be prepared.

To understand sustainable development, you need to not only understand what it is, but also its genesis and what problems it was intending to fix – specifically to neoclassical economics and neoliberalism (e.g. Hayek, Veblen, Friedman). If you don't understand the foundations of neoclassical economics, you won't fully appreciate the paradigm shift with sustainable development. In this class, you will see the evolution of economic thinking that preceded the ideas pertaining to sustainable development.

1. Essay

Before you start this week's readings, I recommend that you write the essay. I would like you to answer:

Essay topic: What is neoclassical economics and what are its basic assumptions?

The essay should be no longer than 1200 words (about 4 pages), not including references. You will be simply synthesizing what you read on the web, not forging new ground. I recognize there are easy shortcuts to write an essay of this sort, but please read widely on the web and write the essay by synthesizing what you read. Learning these concepts is critical to the business school experience, as the assumptions of neoclassical economics shape most business disciplines (e.g. strategy, marketing, operations) and the approach of business more generally.

2. Powerpoint presentation on a 'critical' body of work

In addition to the readings and essay, each of you will be assigned to a body of work by now famous critics of neoclassical economists. Please reach out to the person to whom you have been asked to collaborate to prepare a presentation. Each of you will have 10 minutes to describe the seminal ideas on the topic. Focus on ensuring that what you say is clear. Your slides will be shared with all of your classmates.

- Behavioral Economics: <to be decided who delivers>
- Environmental Economics: <to be decided who delivers>
- Ecological Economics: <to be decided who delivers>
- Amartya Sen and Development Economics: <to be decided who delivers>
- Elinor Ostrom and Governing the Commons: <to be decided who delivers>

3. Readings

The first reading is simply a repeat of neoclassical economics, but it is referenced often in business schools. It's an easy read and well worth it.

The second reading is also seminal. The Brundtland Commission's report is the basis of sustainable development. Before 1987, it's hard to find any references to it. Even though the Brundtland Commission's reading is old, it was amazingly prescient.

The third reading provides you the history of the development of the field since 1987.

Friedman, M. (1970). [The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits](#), *New York Times Magazine*.

Brundtland, G., Khalid, M., Agnelli, S., Al-Athel, S., Chidzero, B., Fadika, L., ... & Okita, S. (1987). [Our Common Future](#), 'Brundtland report'. [Read only Chapters 1 and 2](#)

Bansal, P & Song, H (2017), Similar but not the Same: Differentiating between Corporate Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility, *Academy of Management Annals*: 11(1): 105-149. <Read primarily to (a) understand what is corporate sustainability; and (b) its differences with corporate responsibility.>

WEEK 2: Mainstream Management Approaches to Sustainability

1. Readings

In this week's readings, we shift the conversation from economics to business – which reflects a shift in the 'actor'. Choosing readings for this day was like identifying six pieces of straw that reflect the whole haystack. Ultimately, I chose high quality articles that are either well cited or well crafted. Even though we are focused on management articles, they reflect differences in levels of analysis.

The overview readings are important. The one on levels of analysis is important in your work, as it illuminates why there are different disciplines. Within management, we see organizational behavior (micro), strategy (organizational), and economics (macro). Across disciplines, we see psychology (micro) and economics and sociology (macro). Seeing levels of analysis will help you in your work, but also spot

patterns in new ways. This will be a theme throughout the course. This reading will stay with you in all of your courses.

Read the readings after Kozlowski and Klein in light of the following questions (**You do not need to know the details of these readings**): (a) what part of the jigsaw puzzle of sustainability is this type of article illuminating; (b) what are the assumptions being made in the arguments; (c) what are the strengths and limitations of the empirical approach, if there are data.

Levels of Analysis

Kozlowski, S. W., & Klein, K. J. (2000). A multilevel approach to theory and research in organizations: Contextual, temporal, and emergent processes. **<Read to “levels of measurement” on page 32. This is a critical reading, so please spend considerable time on this reading. The other readings are less critical.>**

Individuals

Jones, R.G. (2020). The Applied Psychology of Sustainability (2nd ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429488382>. **<Read chapter 3 for this class, but I also encourage you to skim chapters 1-2>**

Organizations

Flammer, C. (2015). Does corporate social responsibility lead to superior financial performance? A regression discontinuity approach. *Management Science*, 61(11), 2549-2568.

Stakeholders

Lazzarini, S. G., Boehe, D. M., Pongeluppe, L. S., & Cook, M. L. (2026). The normative core of relational stakeholder strategies: Explaining open buyer-supplier relations in the context of the Amazon rainforest. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 36(1), 69-111.

Industry

Barnett, M. L., & King, A. A. (2008). Good fences make good neighbors: A longitudinal analysis of an industry self-regulatory institution. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51(6), 1150-1170.

Institutions

Ansari, S., Wijen, F., & Gray, B. (2013). Constructing a climate change logic: An institutional perspective on the “tragedy of the commons”. *Organization Science*, 24(4), 1014-1040.

Supply Chains

Villena, V. H., & Gioia, D. A. (2018). On the riskiness of lower-tier suppliers: Managing sustainability in supply networks. *Journal of Operations Management*, 64(1), 65-87.

2. Essay

In this essay, I want you to focus your analytical skills on a wicked problem (or grand challenge) of your choice. A wicked problem is a business-related issue that is very difficult (impossible) to solve because of its complex interactions.

Essay topic: Describe a real wicked problem and the implications to business

The aim here is to describe the problem and the interactions with what you would study in a business school (recognizing that you come from different disciplines). Do not simply talk about world hunger or climate change, but be more specific. 'Climate change' or 'world hunger' are just too big. Please:

1. Describe the problem
2. Describe why it's important to you
3. Describe the implications to business

I encourage you to move beyond rhetoric and hyperboles. Use stories and support with data. Each of you will describe the issue that engages you in class. I hope that, in this process, you will see the range of sustainability issues in business.

This essay should be no longer than 750 words (about 2-3 pages), excluding references.

WEEK 3: Criticisms of Mainstream Management Approaches to Sustainability

Whereas the first week's readings raised criticisms against economics, this week's readings show that business scholars also raise criticisms against business sustainability research. These readings reflect different paradigms, one in which the purpose of business is for profits and another in which the purpose of business is sustainable development.

1. Readings

Paradigms

You need to understand paradigms to fully appreciate the radical shift that sustainability is asking of business school researchers. Many of you will have already studied paradigms in other courses/classes. If so, this reading will be straightforward. If you haven't come across these ideas before, you will likely spend quite some time on it.

Gioia, D. A., & Pitre, E. (1990). Multiparadigm perspectives on theory building. *Academy of management review*, 15(4), 584-602.

Mainstream Business

Purser, R. E., Park, C., & Montuori, A. (1995). Limits to anthropocentrism: Toward an ecocentric organization paradigm?. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(4), 1053-1089.

Ergene, S., Banerjee, S. B., & Hoffman, A. J. (2021). (Un) sustainability and organization studies: Towards a radical engagement. *Organization Studies*, 42(8), 1319-1335.

Gualandris, J., Branzei, O., Wilhelm, M., Lazzarini, S., Linnenluecke, M., Hamann, R., ... & Chen, C. M. (2024). Unchaining supply chains: Transformative leaps toward regenerating social–

ecological systems. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 60(1), 53-67

Marquis, C. (2024). In defense of degrowth. *Harvard Business Review*,
<https://hbr.org/2024/06/in-defense-of-degrowth>

Point-Counterpoint series for the *Journal of Management Studies* <Each of you will be assigned to different readings to debate in class>

Wickert, C., & Muzio, D. (2024). What is the Strategy of Strategy to Tackle Climate Change?. *Journal of Management Studies*.

Bansal, P., Durand, R., Kreutzer, M., Kunisch, S., & McGahan, A. M. (2024). Strategy can no Longer Ignore Planetary Boundaries: A Call for Tackling Strategy's Ecological Fallacy. *Journal of Management Studies*.

Foss, N. J., & Klein, P. G. (2024). Do we Need a 'New Strategy Paradigm'? No. *Journal of Management Studies*.

Davis, G. F., & DeWitt, T. (2024). Can strategy address the climate crisis without losing its essence?. *Journal of Management Studies*.

2. Essay

This essay intends to help you cement the ideas that pertain to the two different paradigms to business sustainability. I encourage you to read a bit more broadly than the readings assigned and reflect on your own perspectives/opinions of what you have read.

Essay topic: Synthesize what you feel are the main criticisms to mainstream business approaches to sustainability

This essay should be no longer than 750 words (about 2-3 pages), excluding references.

WEEK 4: New Theorizing: Real and Constructed Tensions, Tradeoffs and Synergies

1. Readings

Sustainability scholars are attracted to conversations about tensions. The ambiguity and complexity that comes with sustainability research is comfortable ground for sustainability scholars. A junior scholar said to me recently that almost all the doctoral students attending a sustainability consortium were undertaking paradox research. For these reasons, I have included a set of readings that both speak to directly to tensions and paradox and some areas of research that can generate paradox.

Paradoxes

Van der Byl, C. A., & Slawinski, N. (2015). Embracing tensions in corporate sustainability: A review of research from win-wins and trade-offs to paradoxes and beyond. *Organization & Environment*, 28(1), 54-79.

Robust Action & Pragmatism

Ferraro, F., Etzion, D., & Gehman, J. (2015). Tackling grand challenges pragmatically: Robust

action revisited. *Organization Studies*, 36(3), 363-390.

What is Pragmatism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_SDL07BmVo

Prospective Theorizing

Gümüşay, A. A., & Reinecke, J. (2024). Imagining desirable futures: A call for prospective theorizing with speculative rigour. *Organization Theory*, 5(1), 26317877241235939.

Industrial Ecology

Corvellec, H., Stowell, A. F., & Johansson, N. (2022). Critiques of the circular economy. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 26(2), 421-432.

The Anthropocene and Planetary Boundaries

Hoffman, A. J., & Jennings, P. D. (2021). Institutional-political scenarios for Anthropocene society. *Business & Society*, 60(1), 57-94.

Indigenous Knowledges

Doshi, V., Peredo, A. M., Spiller, C., & Bapuji, H. (2026). Indigeneity and Indigenous Peoples around the world: expanding the intersections of business and society. *Business & Society*, 65(4), 775-801.

2. Essay

Tensions are everywhere, but we have a tendency to not see the tensions. This essay will help you surface inherent tensions and see them as entry points to research. In fact, my own research is often catalyzed by unresolvable tensions, such as the tension between been different and yet conforming, or the tension between wanting change, yet seeking stability. This essay will not only help you see tensions, but understand the difference between tensions and paradox.

Essay topic: Describe a tension in business or management theory or practice and how that tension can be viewed as a paradox

This essay should be no longer than 750 words (about 2-3 pages), excluding references.

WEEK 5: New Theorizing: Time, Space, Place & Scale

1. Readings

This topic takes us to what I believe is at the frontier of sustainability research and can address the current inability for businesses to pursue sustainable development. The reason why mainstream business is unable to accommodate sustainability is because there are under-theorized dimensions. Once we incorporate these dimensions into our theorizing and constructs, we can provide the motivation for organizations, within the business paradigm, to meet the needs of business and society, today and tomorrow.

Time

Bansal, P., & DesJardine, M. R. (2014). Business sustainability: It is about time. *Strategic Organization*, 12(1), 70-78.

Space and Place

Guthey, G. T., Whiteman, G., & Elmes, M. (2014). Place and sense of place: Implications for organizational studies of sustainability. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 23(3), 254-265.

Scale

Bansal, P., Kim, A., & Wood, M. O. (2018). Hidden in plain sight: The importance of scale in organizations' attention to issues. *Academy of Management Review*, 43(2), 217-241.

Chatterjee, A., Ghosh, A., & Leca, B. (2023). Double weaving: A bottom-up process of connecting locations and scales to mitigate grand challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, 66(3), 797-828.

2. Essay

This essay may be the most challenging so far to most of you, as it will test your analytical muscle. You not only have to grasp some business theories, you have to think about how the absence/presence of time, space, or scale has led to unsustainable outcomes. In other words, you have to think about time, space or scale either as causal conditions, mechanisms, outcomes, or a metatheory of some sort. If you do overcome the challenges, you will likely see the world in a new way. If you do not, you will see examples from your peers, which is also part of the learning process.

Essay topic: Why does the omission of time, space, place and scale in mainstream economics or business research contribute to sustainability related tensions or paradox (possibly borrowing heavily on readings from Weeks 1, 2 and 4)?

This essay should be no longer than 900 words (about 2-3 pages), excluding references.

WEEK 6: New Theorizing: Systems Approaches to Business**1. Readings**

This week's topic takes us the furthest on the frontier of sustainability thinking in the business curriculum. Yet, those of you with a cross-disciplinary background may not find this week's topic that challenging or interesting. This essay, being your last, requires you to integrate systems thinking with business thinking. It will, hopefully, offer something new to each of you.

Systems Theory

Ackoff, Russell. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqEelG8aPPk> (approx. 12 minutes).

Sterman, J. D. (2001). System dynamics modeling. *California Management Review*, 43(4), 8-25.

Risk & Resilience

Hardy, C. et al, (2020) Organizing risk: Organization and management theory for the risk society, *Academy of Management Annals*, 14(2): 1032-1086.

Holling, C. S. (2001). Understanding the complexity of economic, ecological, and social systems. *Ecosystems*, 4(5), 390-405.

Tima's Book chapter: To be distributed in Week 5

Sustainability Transitions

Geels, F. W., & Schot, J. (2007). Typology of sociotechnical transition pathways. *Research Policy*, 36(3), 399-417.

2. Essay

The essay will hopefully push your thinking: for business students, systems thinking will be new; for non-business students, current approaches to business may be new. In any case, I am hoping that you will each learn something from writing the essay that you can share with the class.

Essay: Identify some ways in which systems approaches to sustainability differ from more mainstream approaches to business (possibly borrowing from Week 2 readings).

This essay should be no more than 750 words, not including references.