

COURSE INFORMATION

Course title:	Ethics and Sustainability	Credits:	1.5
Course code:	BA560	Class location:	DLAM 125 (002), ANGU-132 (001)
Session, term, period:	2022W	Class times:	M/W 8AM-10AM (002) 10AM-12PM (001)
Sections:	001 and 002	Program:	MBA
Course duration:	Sept 6 to October 5		

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor:	Justin G. Bull, Lecturer – Sustainability and Ethics Group	Office location:	Henry Angus Tower, HA664
Phone:	(604) 822-8372	Office hours:	Book at calendly.com/jgbull
Email:	justin.bull@sauder.ubc.ca		

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines trends in sustainability that are shaping the future of business, government, and society. Using a variety of conceptual frameworks, students will understand the challenges and opportunities that sustainability presents and how to play a leadership role in navigating these issues. Social sustainability and ethical issues around responsible business, inequality, racial justice, and decolonization are also discussed. Students will learn how to manage the complexity of sustainability, identify how it motivates different stakeholders, and be exposed to frameworks that foster leadership and innovative thinking. Completing the course will leave students equipped with the tools to effectively apply sustainable thinking and leadership skills to a wide variety of professional opportunities.

COURSE FORMAT

This course will consist of lectures and in-class discussions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Evaluate and articulate the competitive advantage sustainability offers.
- 2) Identify leadership challenges and innovation opportunities related to sustainability across a range of industries.
- 3) Navigate complex decision-making contexts and ethically challenging scenarios.
- 4) Recognize tools, concepts, standards, and frameworks used in sustainable business.
- 5) Synthesize and apply sustainability knowledge to leadership strategies.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

At UBC Sauder, we are committed to responsible business practices that can have transformative impacts on society. One of the ways we are reinforcing our commitment to responsible business is by showcasing relevant content in our courses via the lens of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In this course, we will touch on almost all of the SDGs, but there will be a particular focus on:



Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

In Class 9, we will have an extensive conversation about the investment landscape and incentives that are influencing the global energy transition and efforts to decarbonize our energy networks in an equitable and economical way.



Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

In Classes 1 and 7, we will discuss the responsibilities and limits of current stakeholder capitalism, and potential alternative models of economic development.



Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

In Class 6, we will extensively discuss how current trends in technology and be leverage to support more sustainable and equitable social and environmental outcomes.



Goal 13: Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

In Class 8 and 9, we will review the moral, ethical, cultural, political, economic and financial dimensions of the climate crisis and how they are shaping business strategies.

ASSEMENT SUMMARY AND SCHEDULE

Due Date	Topic	Weight
Ongoing	Professionalism and Participation	10%
Ongoing	In-Class Activities & Lecture Responses	20%
September 16	Memo: Decision Traps and the Climate Crisis	10%
September 23	Memo: Sustainability at Scale	10%
September 30	Memo: Disruptive Sustainability	10%
Exam Week	Final Group Project	40%

ASSEMENT DETAILS

Professionalism and Participation (10% of Grade)

Participation is a vital part of the learning experience. Students will need come to each class prepared to discuss assigned readings and respond to the ideas and comments of others. Interactions are expected to be respectful, informative, and well-reasoned. Participation is evaluated on the quality (not quantity) of in-class contributions, interactions with the instructor outside of class, and active engagement with and support of peers during in-class activities.

In-Class Activities and Lecture Responses (20% of Grade)

On several occasions, students will be asked to submit responses to discussion questions, complete worksheets, or submit their findings based on assigned activities during class time. These activities will allow students to apply course concepts in real-time and learn from group members and class peers about how to apply and adapt these tools to various sustainability and leadership challenges. These assignments will be due at 11:59PM PDT the day after class.

Memos (30% of Grade; 10% each) (Note: Full Description Available on Canvas Course Website)

Memo: Decision Traps and the Climate Crisis: The objective of this assignment is to examine the impact of decision-making traps on a manager's ability to navigate the climate crisis. In this assignment, you will identify and discuss a series of decision-making traps and apply them to a corporate decision-making environment. To complete this task, you are encouraged to select a professional environment that you know well, such as a previous position or employer.

The memo should outline at least three decision-making traps and explain how they manifest in a manager's role. You should also provide potential strategies for avoiding these traps. While you can identify more than three traps, it is important to ensure that your analysis of each trap is thorough and offers examples and context. This may require you to conduct background research and provide citations where appropriate. To ensure the accuracy and validity of your analysis, you should not rely solely on press releases or corporate reports. Instead, you should seek external validation (scholarly articles or peer reviewed journals) of all claims made in your assignment.

Memo: Sustainability at Scale: The purpose of this assignment is to challenge students to identify and describe a large-scale sustainability initiative that has been adopted by a major organization. This is an opportunity to explore a sustainability initiative that has already proven successful in terms of product-market fit and implementation, without the risk of new technology. Think big and identify a sustainability initiative adopted by a well-known organization, such as Nike, Nestle, IKEA, or others. Once you have identified the initiative, provide a brief summary of what it entails, and explain how it addresses a significant problem.

Finally, build a compelling business case for why this initiative is of high value. This may include the benefits of the initiative for the organization, the environment, or society as a whole. Be sure to provide supporting evidence and external validation for your claims.

To complete this assignment successfully, significant background research is expected, and students should not rely on press releases or corporate reports. Find external validation, if possible, for all the claims being made. This assignment provides an opportunity to explore and showcase your research skills and ability to build a strong business case for sustainability initiatives.

Memo: Disruptive Sustainability: The purpose of this task is to challenge you to identify and describe a sustainability innovation that is in its early stages (nascent) but **has the potential to be massively disruptive** in the current context. This could be a technology, business model, or even a social movement that has the ability to radically alter the status quo. As a result, this assignment will require you to conduct extensive background research, which may be challenging, but it will provide an opportunity for you to exercise your creativity and critical thinking skills. Due to the significant risk and uncertainty surrounding this innovation, it is essential to find ways to validate or offer skepticism about some of the claims being made.

Once you have identified the initiative, provide a summary of what it entails, and explain how it addresses a significant problem. Finally, build a compelling business case for why this initiative is of high value. This may include the benefits of the initiative for the organization, the environment, or society as a whole. Be sure to provide supporting evidence and external validation for your claims. Remember to focus on an innovation/business model/movement that is nascent.

Final Group Project (40% of Grade)

In lieu of a final exam, students will complete a major project in groups. Teams will be self-selected by students and should contain between 4 to 6 students. Each group will select a company and prepare a “Sustainable Breakthrough Pitch.” The audience will be the executives of a chosen company, and the team will critically evaluate their current corporate sustainability strategy and make recommendations about how and why it should change its approach. Groups will be evaluated on a pre-recorded “webinar”, simulating an online presentation environment. Students are advised to select companies that they feel are currently struggling to become more sustainable, as opposed to companies that are already considered sustainability leaders.

As a team, you have two goals:

- To persuasively communicate the business case for sustainability, using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods

- To expand the mindset and ambitions of your audience, helping them better grasp the scale of challenge and opportunity that sustainability offers

While creativity is important this assignment, so is rigour. You have to conduct extensive primary and secondary research, come up with specific and credible recommendations, and stress-test all of your assumptions and proposals.

COURSE-SPECIFIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Late Assignments: Late submissions will not be accepted and will receive a zero.

Regrading Assignments: Students can appeal an assigned grade within 24 hours of receipt. Any appeal must detail in writing why a grade adjustment is deserved and should cite specific examples.

Academic Concessions: If extenuating circumstances arise, please contact the RHL Graduate School program office as early as reasonably possible, and submit an [Academic Concession Request & Declaration Form](#) <https://webforms.sauder.ubc.ca/academic-concession-rhlee>. If an academic concession is granted during the course, the student will be provided options by RHL, or by the instructor in consultation with RHL, per [UBC's policy on Academic Concession](#).

Use of Artificial Intelligence: For this course, students are encouraged to use generative artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance and expedite their learning. However, they should be fully aware of its limitations. Gen AI and large language models in particular, and prone to “hallucination”; that is, they confidently make things up. Students must fact-check and cite all statements of fact, and should not rely on Gen AI for the accuracy of any of its claims. Gen AI also has a distinct, and at times verbose, writing style. Students should be aware of this, and use the tool not to replace their writing efforts but to enhance the quality, rigour and depth of their submissions.

When a student does use GenAI, they are obligated to include a separate statement in their assignment detailing how they used the tool, the limitations they confronted, and the corrections or adjustments that they made. This statement should be stand-alone, and not part of the body of the assignment or appendix. This statement does not count towards the page total of any assignment.

POLICIES APPLICABLE TO COURSES IN THE ROBERT H. LEE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Attendance

Excepting extenuating circumstances, students are expected to attend 100% of their scheduled class hours. Absent students limit their own academic potential, and that of their classmates, and cause unnecessary disruption to the learning environment. Students missing more than 20% of the total scheduled class hours for a course (including classes held during the add/drop period) without having received an academic concession will be withdrawn from that course. Withdrawals, depending on timing, could result in a “W” or an “F” standing on the transcript.

Punctuality

Students are expected to arrive for classes and activities on time and fully prepared to engage. Late arrivals may be refused entry at the discretion of the instructor or activity lead. Students arriving later than halfway through a scheduled class will be treated as absent for that class.

Electronic Devices

Devices such as laptops, tablets, and cell phones are not permitted to be used in class unless directed by the instructor for in-class activities. Students who do not follow the School's policy in this regard may be required to leave the room for the remainder of the class, so that they do not distract others. Research shows that students' use of laptops in class has negative implications for the learning environment, including reducing their own grades and the grades of those sitting around them.

Citation Style

Please use the American Psychological Association (APA) reference style to cite your sources.

Details of the above policies and other RHL Policies are available at:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=12,199,506,1625>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on the UBC Senate website at <https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>.

Respect for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The UBC Sauder School of Business strives to promote an intellectual community that is enhanced by diversity along various dimensions including status as a First Nation, Metis, Inuit, or Indigenous person, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs, social class, and/or disability. It is critical that students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives be valued in and well-served by their courses. Furthermore, the diversity that students bring to the classroom should be viewed as a resource, benefit, and source of strength for your learning experience. It is expected that all students and members of our community conduct themselves with empathy and respect for others.

Academic Integrity

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences.

COPYRIGHT

All materials of this course (course handouts, lecture slides, assessments, course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline and could be subject to legal action. Any lecture recordings are for the sole use of the instructor and students enrolled in the class. In no case may the lecture recording or part of the recording be used by students for any other purpose, either personal or commercial. Further, audio or video recording of classes are not permitted without the prior consent of the instructor. Students may not share class Zoom links or invite others who are not registered to view sessions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Date	#	Topic, Readings, and Prep
Sept 6	1	<p>The Next Normal Business Roundtable Redefines the Purpose of a Corporation to Promote 'An Economy That Serves All Americans by Various Authors (Business Roundtable) The Illusory Promise of Stakeholder Governance [Presentation Slides] by Lucian A. Bebchuck and Roberto Tallarita (SSRN)</p>
Sept 8	2	<p>Sustainability in Context Creating Shared Value by Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer (Harvard Business Review)</p>
Sept 11	3	<p>Towards Better Decisions: Traps, Pyramids and Frameworks How to Make Values Count in Everyday Decisions by Joel E. Urbany, Thomas J. Reynolds and Joan M. Phillips (MIT Sloan Management Review)</p>
Sept 13	4	<p>The Social Question Better Decisions Through Diversity, by Katherine W. Phillips, Katie A. Liljenquist and Margaret A. Neale (Kellogg Insight) Why diversity matters, by Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton and Sara Prince (McKinsey)</p>
Sept 18	5	<p>Systems and Units The Sustainability Spectrum and the Sciences of Sustainability by Thomas P. Seager (Business Strategy and the Environment)</p>
Sept 20	6	<p>Breakthroughs: Sustainability and Technology A Theory of Rapid Transition: How S-Curves Work and What We Can Do to Accelerate Them by Laurens Speelman and Yuki Numata (Rocky Mountain Institute)</p>
Sept 25	7	<p>Breakdowns: The Race to the Bottom Big Business Has a New Scam: The 'Purpose Paradigm' by Maria Hengeveld (The Nation) Paul Polman: 'Businesses cannot succeed in societies that fail' by Deonna Anderson (GreenBiz)</p>
Sept 27	8	<p>The Uninhabitable Earth Climate tipping points — too risky to bet against by Various Authors (Nature) The Uninhabitable Earth by David Wallace-Wells (New York Magazine)</p>
October 2	9	<p>Climate is Eating Everything Pathways to Net Zero: The Decisive Decade by Various Authors (EDF, Deloitte)</p>
October 4	10	<p>Original Sin No assigned readings.</p>