**UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT DENVER**

**The Business School**

**MGMT 6826**, Instructor: John Byrd

**Business for a Better World (pending)** john.byrd@ucdenver.edu

Fall 2020 Phone: 970-247-9182 (before 9:30 pm)

**COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION (3 credit hours) (pending)**

Introduces the main concepts and tools of sustainable business, such as life-cycle analysis, circularity, Context-based sustainability, carbon footprinting, market failure, closed-loop systems, DfE (Design for the Environment), corporate sustainability reporting then examines how companies can move from doing less bad to actually making the world a better place.

**COURSE OVERVEW**

Initially, sustainable business was mostly about reducing waste and becoming more efficient. More recently companies are becoming increasingly concerned about their long-term impact on resources, communities, people and the environment. In this class we will introduce some of the ways that companies are improving their social and environmental performance. Along the way you will learn some tools that companies are using, the key concepts of sustainable business and a few of the cutting-edge actions that companies are taking. The class ends with everyone posting a presentation of special interest to them, which will broaden the set of topics covered and/or add depth to some of the things we have talked about in the class. There is also a comprehensive case that asks you to develop a sustainability plan for a small company.

This year, 2020, I am adding a new topic. I want to explore how business can be a force for good. After teaching this class for more than 10 years, and other related courses longer than that, I think it is time we shift from *doing less bad*, to finding ways that **businesses can make the world better.** Regeneration is one of the approaches that is emerging, and it is becoming the new favorite word in sustainability circles. Applying the regenerative notion beyond agriculture, and moving to doing good is difficult, but we’ll try to figure it out a bit.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

* Understand how to make a case for sustainable business practices.
* Understand the primary concepts of sustainability – life-cycle thinking, green design, closing the loop, carrying capacity and context.
* Understand the common types of market failure and possible solutions.
* Understand the current state of sustainability reporting.
* Learn about how climate change may affect business.
* Learn about current best practices in corporate water use and reporting.
* See some examples of best practice in public and private companies.
* Begin to think critically about some sustainability conventional truths.
* Learn how some companies are part of the Brands Taking Stands movement.
* Understand about regenerative agriculture and how the regenerative concept might be applied elsewhere.
* What does it means to shift from Doing Less Bad to Being a Force for Good?
* Apply class tools to a case study to develop a sustainability plan.

**PREREQUISITES**

There are no formal prerequisites for this course.

**COURSE MECHANICS**

**Website:** This is an online class presented using the Canvas platform. You can login at: <https://ucdenver.instructure.com/login>

There are no required Zoom meetings but I will have an optional weekly Zoom discussion. You can complete the course being completely asynchronous – having no defined login times if that works best for you. The Zoom discussion could include responses to questions about assignments. If so, I’ll try to make notes available for anyone who missed the meeting.

**Readings:** There is no textbook for this class. I post relevant articles in each weekly module. I’ll designate several as required, then have some optional ones that you can read if the topic is of interest. My goal is to not over-burden you with reading. Instead, I hope you will find some of the topics particularly interesting or relevant to your situation and explore them further.

**Virtual office hours**

I check e-mail and the class website often, i.e., daily. During the week (Monday-Friday) I will try to respond to e-mails within 24 hours. Weekends the response can be slower.

**Important e-mail and contact information**

When you send me an e-mail be sure to **put your name in the note** and have **MGMT 6826** in the subject line. I am teaching three classes this semester and this will help me better understand and respond to your question. My e-mail address is: john.byrd@ucdenver.edu In case you need it, my home phone is 970-247-9182. We turn in early, please limit calls to the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 9:30 p.m.

**Grades of "Incomplete":** Incomplete grades are given when unexpected emergencies prevent a student from completing a significant assignment at the end of the class. Students have up to one year (three semesters) to complete course requirements or the “I” turns into an “F.”.

**Academic Honesty:** Student Code of Conduct: Students are expected to know, understand, and comply with the ethical standards of the university, including rules against plagiarism, cheating, fabrication and falsification, multiple submissions, misuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic dishonesty. In this class a lot of assignments are unique (e.g., postings) and for others I will encourage sharing, but I’ll provide some guidelines about how much ‘sharing’ to do.

University on-line policy: When you login to your courses using your CU Denver login credentials you are certifying that the person logging in is you. As such, providing your login credentials to any other individual and allowing them to login to a course on your behalf is considered academic dishonesty.”

**Important University Dates**

* Last day to drop without $100 course penalty – August 24.
* Last day to drop with tuition adjustment – September 2.
* Last day to drop without special petition and Dean’s signature – October 26.

**GRADING**

There are a mix of assignments in this class. It can be a little confusing so please read the next sections carefully. More detail is provided on pages 4 through 6.

This field is so large and changes so quickly that I cannot keep up. So, I am asking you to help by finding new. Clever things to report on. There are 12 posting opportunities, and I’d like you to participate in at least 8 of them, you choice of topics. You set a set number of points for completing 8 or more postings. There isn’t extra credit for doing more, but you’re welcome to.

There are three 25-point assignments. You need to do two of them, your choice.

There are four medium-sized assignments, one of which is the final exam. These are all required and I anticipate they will take several hours (maybe 3 to 6) to complete. One, the carbon footprint, is quantitative. Two are more reading, thinking and writing an essay assignments. The exam will probably be a mix of quantitative and essays.

The two larger assignments which are bunched up at the end of the class. One is a presentation you will share with the class on a topic of your choice (with my approval). The other assignment is a case that asks you to develop a sustainability plan for a small company using the tools from the class.

Letter grades are assigned roughly with 93% of total points = A, 90% = A-, 87% a B+, etc. The Business School recommends class GPA of 3.1 to 3.6. I tend to the high end of that range.

**Postings:**

Complete at least 8 of 12 possible **60**

**25-point Assignments (Compete 2 of 3) 50**

Life Cycle Assessment

Climate Justice

Recycling Analysis

**60-point required (complete all 4) 240**

Carbon footprint exercise

CSR report critique

Fast Fashion/Tourism Essay

Final exam

**Major Assignments**

Final project (due December 8th) **100**

Sustainability Plan (case to be sent out) **100**

**Total 550**

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Postings**

Postings are a way to share things with classmates. We will use the Discussion areas in the class website to do this. You can post images, text, video, etc., and you can easily return and edit your posting and respond to comments and questions. The postings should be brief, so we will limit them to a maximum of about 500 words and 3 or 5 images. I plan to give full credit for these.

Posting #12 is required, but you may choose the other 7. This should help provide a bit of flexibility to the class workload.

**Important:** To insert images into you have to upload them to your File area in Canvas. Once the images are there you can easily add them to your Discussion posting using the image icon (little mountains and sun). The Canvas help manuals explain how to do this.

Videos are problematic. Some students have tried to post just a title and a video as their entire posting. This will not earn a passing score. If a video is the best way to demonstrate your point, and it may be, use a very short video (1-3 minutes) then discuss the topic, explain how the video relates to it (reiterate the key points) and enrich or critique the video. The easiest way to add a video to your posting is to use something from YouTube. There is a YouTube icon that produces a search window. Entering the exact title of the video you want will usually produce your video. I have had good luck finding the videos I want, but some never appear and I have to choose a different video to get the HTML code, then copy the URL from the video I want, go into the HTML editor and replace the wrong URL with the right one. It is a bother.

**ASIDE**: You may expand on a posting for your final project.

**Specific Posting Assignments (complete 8 of 12, I want everyone to do #12)**

*1. State of the World:* There is a written lecture and a short video about population, food and water. There are lots of other topics that need to be introduced. These include literacy and education of girls, soil loss, coral reef bleaching, deforestation, maternal mortality, the cause of much infant or child mortality, child labor, the location of strategic minerals, health of ocean fisheries or many other important aspects of our world today. I will have a place where you can sign up so we don’t get duplication. Due: August 24

*2. Market Failures:* The problems that sustainable business efforts address arise in large part from *market failures.* Markets are quite amazing but have weaknesses, limitations and blind-spots. Recognizing the market failure(s) that causes a problem can help identify possible solutions. The most common market failure by far are externalities, such as pollution. Other failures, and these are not mutually exclusive, are the over-use of common access resources (Tragedy of the commons), and incomplete information. Finding market failures in everyday life is pretty easy. Due: August 31

*3.* Regenerative business models; *Inequality as a sustainability issue* or *Brands Taking Stands:*  Extend our discussion of inequality as a market failure. Find other examples of Brands Taking Stands beyond those I highlighted. Due: September 15

*4.A. Climate Change Mitigation:* Mitigation refers to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Try to find examples that are not already well-known. I think everyone knows about shifting to renewable energy or using electric vehicles, so don’t use these topics. Instead, look for something new and clever.

*4.B. Climate Change Adaptation:* Adaptation refers to ways that we can learn to live with and survive climate change. Building a seawall, engineering crops to withstand drought and finding ways to conserve water would be adaptation examples.

**You can one or the other, Mitigation or Adaptation, but not both. Due: September 22**

*5. Food:* This could be a course in itself, and probably is some places. Important questions include can we feed 9 billion people? Does local food matter? What are the impacts of plant-based meat substitutes? Due: October 12

*6. Water:* Some big topics are how companies are reducing their water use, e.g. see Coca-Cola’s Replenish program, and should water be privatized or turned into an investable asset? Due: October 19

*7. Green Design:* This is fun because it is so wide open. Any product with green attributes will work. You should examine whether the product really is green, and maybe comment on how the design might be changed to reduce its impact. Images are required to show the product. Counter examples are also fun to show. Some products are so poorly designed you have to wonder who thought of them. Due: October 26

*8. Green Ad or Greenwashing:* There are some really clever ads that have a strong sustainability message. There are also efforts to appear green without making any substantial changes. Images are crucial to show these examples. Be sure to comment on the idea or concept being supported or the false message that is trying to be conveyed. Due: October 26

*9. Supply Chain Impact*: For many companies the greatest impact of their activities is through the supply chain rather than directly within the company boundaries. Also, some of the most egregious impacts – terrible violations for people’s health, safety and human rights – occur hidden deep within supply chains. Companies are taking increased responsibility for their supply chains. Examples can be upstream or downstream. Examples of how companies are improving their supply chains would be great. Due: November 2

*10. Employee-related Sustainability Issues/Policies:* Beyond direct health and safety concerns there are a range of more subtle or nuanced issues that companies are starting to address such as work-life balance, helping employees grow and prosper, adapting job requirements to changing family demands, and so on. Examples of these types of programs and policies would be a great way to help us see some of the options available for improving everyone’s work experience. Due: November 16

11. *SRI (Socially Responsible or ESG) Investing:*  Maybe profile an unusual ESG mutual fund or ETF. Consider low-carbon or fossil-free funds. Research a topic using data from one of As You Sow’s Invest Your Values online screening tools. Due: December 7

12. **REQUIRED**  *How does sustainable business need to change to be a force for good?:*  Find examples of companies that seem to moving to a doing good or post your thinking about how business can shift from doing less bad to doing good. Due: December 8

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**25-point Assignments**

**Life-Cycle Assessment (due September 12)**

**Climate Justice (due September 29)**

**Recycling Analysis (due October 25)**

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**60-point assignments: all are required**

**Carbon Footprint (due October 4)**

**Critique a Corporate Sustainability Report (due November 24- flexible)**

Everyone will find a corporate sustainability report then comment on its strengths and weaknesses. You should post images from the report to support your discussion.

**Can Fast Fashion or Tourism be sustainable? (due December 1)**

I would like you to explore the sustainability potential of one of these industries. They both have serious sustainability challenges. The essay should first describe these challenges, then offer ideas for addressing the challenges based on which to me are inherently unsustainable.

**Final exam (due December 15)**

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**100-point assignments**

**Final Project Presentation (100 points) Topic due November 15th, project due December 8**

Choose a topic and create a posting to share with the class. Rough guidelines about length are 1,500 words and 4 to 8 images. I’ll post more information as the semester progresses.

**Developing a Sustainability Plan** **(100 Points) due December 13**

You will develop a sustainability plan for a small (hypothetical) company. Case to be distributed about December 5.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

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| Week | Date | Topic | Assignment | Due Date |
| 1 | 17-Aug | Introductions: What is sustainability: Business Case for Sustainability; State of the World | Posting #1 - State of the World | 24-Aug |
| 2 | 24-Aug | Economics of sustainability: Market Failures: | Posting#2 - Market Failure | 31-Aug |
| 3 | 31-Aug | Sustainability Thinking | **LCA exercise (25 point)** | 12-Sep |
| 4 | 7-Sep | Business for a better world: Regenerative business models; Inequality as a sustainability issue, and Brands Taking Stands | Posting #3 - Inequality as a sustainability issue or Brands Taking Stands | 15-Sep |
| 5 | 14-Sep | Climate Change | **Climate Justice essay (25 point)** | 29-Sep |
| 6 | 21-Sep | Climate Change | **Carbon Footprint (60 point due 4-Oct)**  Posting #4 - Climate Mitigation or Adaptation | 22-Sep |
| 7 | 28-Sep | Food SDGs | Posting #5 - Food | 5-Oct |
| 8 | 5-Oct | Water | Posting #6 - Water | 12-Oct |
| 9 | 12-Oct | Circular economy; Recycling | **Recycling Analysis (25 point)** | 25-Oct |
| 10 | 19-Oct | Green Design; Green Advertising | Posting #7- Green Design  Posting #8- Green Ad or Greenwashing | 26-Oct |
| 11 | 26-Oct | Supply Chain | Posting #9- Supply Chain Impacts | 2-Nov |
| 12 | 2-Nov | Sustainability Reporting | **Critique report (60 point)** | 24-Nov |
| 13 | 9-Nov | Work/Life balance; employee wellness; happiness, Liveable wage | Posting #10- Employee-related topic | 16-Nov |
| 14 | 16-Nov | Fast Fashion and Tourism: Can they be sustainable? | **Essay (60 point)** | 1-Dec |
| 15 | 23-Nov | Thanksgiving Holiday |  | 5-Dec |
| 16 | 30-Nov | SRI and individual actions | Posting #11 Socially Responsible Investing | 7-Dec |
| 17 | 7-Dec | How does sustainable business need to change? | Posting #12 – Ideas for moving business to do more good. **Required posting**  Sustainability Plan(due 12/13)  **Exam (due 12/15) (60 point)** | Posting due 8-Dec |

**Postings**: Do any 8 of the 12 posting opportunities (#12 is required)

**25-point Assignments:** Do 2 of the 3 listed

**60-point Assignments:** Do all four.