

PROJ_MGT 443 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES IN ORGANIZATIONS

Instructor: Mike Stopka, AIA, LEED BD+C, Principal, MIST Environment

Course Objective

Organizations of all types are facing new expectations and opportunities related to environmental and social impact around the world. Whether core to their mission or emerging through internal and external pressure, wide ranging topics from energy to waste to global agreements, such as Paris climate talks, are increasingly part of organizational strategy and innovative leadership. Understanding sustainability in an evolving landscape of stakeholder expectations, complex regulations, and emerging technologies is challenging. Finding an effective place to position yourself to effect the change you seek is equally critical.

This course will examine how organizations across a variety of sectors have approached sustainability. We will examine how sustainability affects almost every organization throughout its operations and learn how to apply an "enterprise-wide" approach when developing a sustainability strategy which maximizes environmental and economic benefits.

In addition, this course sets the stage for future classes in sustainability and touches on metrics, economics, policy and systems thinking. In the process this course aims to provide students with:

- A bridge between sustainability in science and theory and applications in organizational strategy
- A forum for moderated discussions about critical global themes and events shaping the space
- An opportunity to interact with sustainability leaders, consultants and professionals from local nonprofit, government and private sector organizations
- Tools to be more self-aware of their leadership abilities and how to leverage to drive change

The course is presented in the following sequence:

Part I: Sustainability and Organizations (Weeks 1-4) The course begins with an introduction to the overall idea of sustainability. It then moves into the more significant global themes, such as climate change, water, and energy, that organizations of all types (for profit, non-profit and government) must work to address.

Part II: Your Leadership (Weeks 5-7) The middle of the course shifts the focus to the individual and why being self-aware of your approach, particular skillset, and leadership style are critical to success, regardless of the context of your work. We will explore the role of cooperative approaches and key intra-personal skills, such as facilitation, advocacy, servant leadership, change management, and human-centered design, on enhancing success.

Part III: Strategic Approach to Sustainability (Weeks 8-10) The course concludes by exploring why we must have a deep understanding of an organization and ourselves to influence change. We will examine types of partnerships and tools that organizations use to address complex, multifaceted sustainability challenges and opportunities (for example, cross-sector partnerships, external rating systems, or tools to identify and quantify impact).

Week 1: Themes and Drivers of Sustainability

Introduction to the course and an overview of sustainability themes

Week 2: Sustainability in the Public / Government Sector

Key sustainability viewpoints, challenges and topics from the government / public agency perspective.

Possible organizations explored: CMAP, City of Chicago, MPC, IL EPA

Guest Speaker: Amy Jewel, Senior Advisor, City Energy Project – City of Chicago

Week 3: Sustainability in the Private Sector

Key sustainability viewpoints, challenges and topics from the private business perspective. Possible organizations explored: West Monroe Partners, SOM, Sterling Bay Companies

Guest Speaker: Chris Dillion, President, Campbell Coyle Real Estate

Week 4: Sustainability in the Non-Profit Sector

Key sustainability viewpoints, challenges and topics from the non-profit and NGO perspective. Possible organizations explored: Delta Institute, Illinois Green Alliance, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

Guest speaker: Kim Wasserman-Nieto, Executive Director, LVEJO

Week 5: Midterm-Presentations / Self-Awareness and Your Personal Brand

The first half consists of student midterm presentations. The second half focuses on understanding your leadership characteristics, being okay with everything not being okay, T-shaped people, and communication style. We will review leaders and companies that exhibit different kinds of successful sustainability leadership and brand identity.

Guest Speaker: Kat Benitez, Director, Office of Sustainability, Northwestern University

Week 6: Facilitation, Stakeholder Engagement and Servant Leadership

In this class we'll review approaches, outlooks, and tools to engage, such as understanding decision-makers and c-suite leaders, the role of the internal champion, seeing through the eyes of those you seek to convince, facilitation and engagement techniques, and subtle vs assertive advocacy.

Guest Speaker: Megan Bhatia

Week 7: Human Centered Design

Tutorial on the process of Human Centered Design (HCD), how to facilitate it, and examples of successful applications. Included will be an in-depth case study of Lumin, an energy efficiency service developed using HCD.

Guest Speaker: David Schonthal, Kellogg School of Management / IDEO
Kevin Dick, Director, Delta Institute

Week 8: Frames for Strategic Sustainability Planning

Review Sustainable Development Goals, 7S, and more. Each frame is appropriate for different situations and the ability to assess which are right for a given context is crucial to success. How to develop a sustainable action plan. Case studies: University of Chicago and United Airlines.

Guest Speaker: Angela Foster Rice, Managing Director, Environmental Affairs, United Airlines

Week 9: Sustainable Company Development

Examples of intentionally investing in and developing sustainable brands and companies from the venture capital stage to market success. How early stage companies balance sustainability with economic realities.

Guest Speaker: Mark Thomann, Managing Director, Spiral Sun Ventures

Week 10: Assessing How You Can Drive Change

- Revisit the themes, overall drivers, and techniques to position yourself to effectively drive change across the sectors explored.
- Guest Speaker: Joyce Coffee, President, Climate Resilience Consulting

Week 11: Student Presentations

Time: Weekly 3-hour evening classes consisting of lectures, case discussions, and guest speakers.

Text: There is no textbook for this course. Reading assignments will include timely articles/publications in the field of study and publications provided by the speakers.

Speakers: Guest speakers will join for parts of many classes and will come from for profit, non-profit and government sectors.

Grade Determination:

- Class Participation and attendance (30%) – Active engagement in class and guest lecture discussions
- Homework assignments (30%) –Preparing short assignments and presenting conclusions in class
- Group Project (40%) – In-class presentation and written materials that deliver a comprehensive analysis and proposal for an organization or sector