esade

Business in Society

Required and recommended readings and materials

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Below you find descriptions of the class topics as well as readings and other media materials. Please note that the materials may be complemented or replaced since I intend to add latest news and other up-to-date issues. Please check the class website before we start a new topic for the latest material.

REQ readings/material are required and students are expected to comment on them during classtime. To accommodate different learning types, I have aimed to add as much multi-media material such as podcasts, videos, and websites. In many instances you will be able to choose between options; please choose at least 1.

I provided a Spotify playlist for the podcasts on this list, and a Youtube playlist for the videos that are available on Youtube.

PART 1: WHY SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

Unit 1: Introduction to the course

In our first session, we will present the course by explaining its main objectives, methodology, evaluation, etc. We will leave ample room for questions and concerns to ensure everybody is on the same page.

Required reading (REQ) for first class:

The course syllabus (especially #3 Course format and #5 Assessment)

Unit 2: Global sustainability challenges: The state of the planet and society

The challenge of sustainability comes into focus as we approach or cross environmental planetary boundaries while social foundations remain precarious. In the face-to-face sessions, we will get to know each other, and the thorny issue of sustainability, via playing The Fish Game - Will you manage to sustain your resource base so that your company can thrive? In the virtual session, we look at the systemic drivers of unsustainability. What does the state of the planet mean for us personally? What are possible pathways for business and society toward sustainability? We will also watch a film that provides a critical perspective on businesses' role in society.

A. How can we manage common pool resources?

REQ 1: The Fish Game handout

REQ 2: Jacobs, Andrew. 2017. "China's Appetite Pushes Fisheries to the Brink". New York Times, 30.04.2017.

B. What are planetary boundaries? Are we overshooting them?

REQ 1: Foley, Jonathan. 2010. "Boundaries for a Healthy Planet." *Scientific American 302*(4):54–57.

REQ 2: One out of these two options:

Option 1: ▶ Breaking Boundaries (Netflix, 74 min)

Option 2: 🎙 Kate Raworth argues that rethinking economics can save our planet (The TED Interview, 54 min)

C. How has business – and corporations in particular – affected society?

REQ 1: ▶ The New Corporation. The Unfortunately Necessary Sequel (Youtube, 1:46 h)

D. Reasons for hope - how can businesses contribute to the doughnut economy?

REQ 1: ▶ Meet the Economy. Doughnut Economics Action Lab (Youtube, 6 min)

REQ 2: ▶ Raworth, K. 2020. Business meets the doughnut (Youtube, 17 min)

REQ 3: Bradley, K. and Pargman, D., 2017. The sharing economy as the commons of the 21st century. Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 10(2), pp.231-247.

Recommended resources for unit 2

Dietz, T., Ostrom, E. and Stern, P. 2003. "The Struggle to Govern the Commons." Science 302(5652):1907–12.

Nijhuis, M. 2021. "The miracle of the commons". Aeon, 04.05.2021

Raworth, K. 2017. Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21-Century Economist. (and 2018 book by the same name)

Stanley Robinson, K. 2020. The Ministry for the Future. A Novel. Orbit.

Stopper, M., Kossik, A., & Gastermann, B. (2016). „Development of a sustainability model for manufacturing SMEs based on the innovative doughnut economics framework." In Proceedings of the International MultiConference of Engineers and Computer Scientists (Vol. 2, pp. 16-18).

🌐 Doughnut Economics Action Lab: Putting Doughnut Economics into practice.

▶ Winnie Byanyima on Women's Unpaid Care Work (Youtube, 7 min)

PART 2: DEFINING BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITY

Unit 3: Theories of evil: Is Don't Be Evil a good enough strategy?

Why do human beings do evil? Is it in our nature? Is it part of our instinct? Is it a miscalculation? Is it a result of ignorance or a clear byproduct of our consciousness? In this session we will focus on the systemic nature of evil, and how the environment can condition our behavior for better or for worse. Exploring real historic examples as well as several psychological experiences, we will aim at learning lessons that can helps us as managers or entrepreneurs, and critically probe whether a strategy such as "Don't Be Evil" (famously the former unofficial Google motto) is enough to assure business responsibility.

A: What is evil? Where does it come from? Are corporations evil?

REQ 1: Excerpt from: Calder, T., "The Concept of Evil", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), [Parts 2.1, 2.3, and 3.5 – see Moodle upload]

REQ 2: ▶ The Psychopathic Corporation -- A Clinical Diagnosis (PCLR), by Dr. Robert Hare, PhD (from The Corporation, Youtube, 10 min)

REQ 3: One out of these two options:

Option 1: ▶ The Stanford Prison Experiment (Youtube, 34 min)

Option 2: 🎤 Rutger Bregman is hopeful for humankind (Eat Sleep Work Repeat Podcast, 59 min)

B: Are fossil fuel companies evil? What should be our response?

REQ 1: Davis, J. 2021. Are some business models plain evil? IMD

REQ 2: Doyle, C. 2016. Is fossil fuel a moral evil? A Penn professor and a Holocaust survivor weigh in. The DP.com

REQ 3: Klein, E. 2021. It seems odd that we would just let the world burn. NY Times

REQ 4: One out of these two options:

Option 1: ▶ Revealed: ExxonMobil's lobbying war on climate change legislation (Youtube, 9 min)

Option 2: 🎤 The Turn (S1E2, Drilled podcast, 19 min)

Recommended resources for unit 3

Arendt, H. 1963. [Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil](#).
Penguin Books.

Foroohar, R. [Don't Be Evil. How Big Tech betrayed its founding principles – and all of us](#). Allan Lane.

▶️ [What is 'The Banality of Evil'?](#) The Polymath's Paradise (Youtube)

🎙️ The Real Question Podcast. [Evil: Part 1](#) and [Evil: Part 2](#)

LaJeunesse, R. 2020. [I Was Google's Head of International Relations. Here's Why I Left](#). Medium.

🎙️ [Fighting back against big tech, with Rana Foroohar and Ros Urwin](#)
(Intelligence Squared podcast)

Submit Project Deliverable 1: Selection of sustainability challenge

Unit 4: From Corporate Social Responsibility to Creating Shared Value

In this unit we survey the main theories that have linked business activities with their societal impact, and associated responsibility. Starting with the Triple Bottom Line, we also review the concepts of stakeholder management and corporate social responsibility. We place a special emphasis on the idea of Creating Shared Value and its promise to connect the dots between the ethical challenges, our sustainability vision and social innovation to generate value for the company and for society.

A. Who are businesses accountable to? Shareholders or stakeholders?

REQ 1: Friedman, M. (2007). The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. In Corporate Ethics and Corporate Governance (pp. 173-178). Springer: Berlin.

REQ 2: Freeman., R.E. 2007. Managing for Stakeholders. The Darden School, University of Virginia

B. Can we create value for both business and society?

REQ 1: Kramer, M. R., & Porter, M. 2011. Creating shared value. Harvard Business Review, 89(1/2), 62-77.

REQ 2: Crane, A., Palazzo, G., Spence, L. J., & Matten, D. 2014. Contesting the value of "creating shared value". California Management Review, 56(2), 130-153.

Recommended resources for unit 4

Taylor, 2021. So Many Stakeholders. How Do Companies Choose Who to Satisfy? Wall Street Journal

ReGenerate Trust, 2020. What is a purpose-driven business?

PART 3: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

Unit 5: Social entrepreneurship and its paradoxes

Social entrepreneurs develop, fund and implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues. While many social enterprises function as non-profit organizations, others blend for-profit goals with generating a positive "return to society". Through the case study of Thrive Farmers, a B Corp-certified company with the mission to help coffee farmers access the international market at beneficial conditions and improve their livelihoods, we look at the possibilities and challenges of social entrepreneurship. The virtual session will host Ken Lander, one of Thrive Farmers' founders, for a retrospective on the company's development and Q&A session.

A. How can business disrupt global supply chains?

REQ 1: LaPorte, N. 2013. Coffee's Economics, Rewritten by Farmers. NY Times

REQ 2: Wilson, N. et al. 2013. Helping Consumers "Know Who Grows" Their Coffee: The Case of THRIVE Farmers' Coffee. IFAMA Case Study.

B. How does THRIVE Farmers balance its social and business missions? Guest speaker: Founder and Chief Sustainability Officer Ken Lander

REQ 1: Berglund, K. & Schwartz, B. 2013. Holding on to the Anomaly of Social Entrepreneurship Dilemmas in Starting up and Running a Fair-Trade Enterprise, Journal of Social Entrepreneurship, 4:3, 237-255

Plus check out the Thrive Farmers website and please prepare 1-2 questions each for Ken!

Recommended resources for unit 5

Bennett & Grabs, 2021. Rethinking the "necessary" trade-offs of distributing value to suppliers. An analysis of the profit-sharing model. Carr Center. Discussion Paper

🎙 Tom Matthesen and David Paparelli with Thrive Farmers International (CEO Exclusive podcast)

🎙 The Solutions Whisperer (People Fixing the World podcast)

Norwich University. How Social Entrepreneurs Make a Social Impact and a Profit

Submit Project Deliverable 2: Business responsibility for challenge

Unit 6: Entrepreneurship to serve the Bottom of the Pyramid

According to the Creating Shared Value theory, one major area where firms can create both business and societal value is by meeting the needs of underprivileged populations in developing and emerging markets. This unit will review examples of such business models and critically ask questions such as: who is in the 'bottom of the pyramid' and how can we know what they want? How can we ensure that our activities do not cause unintended consequences for such vulnerable populations? And to what extent can or should companies take on 'development' missions?

A. How could business help alleviate poverty through BoP?

REQ: Prahalad, C.K. 2004. The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid, ch. 1

B. Are Bottom of the Pyramid strategies ethical?

REQ: Karnani, A. 2005. Romanticizing the Poor. SSIR.

Recommended resources for unit 6

▶ The Race to the bottom of the Pyramid (Youtube, 25 min)

Reficco, E., & Gutiérrez, R. 2016. Organizational ambidexterity and the elusive quest for successful implementation of BoP ventures. Organization & Environment, 29(4), 461-485.

Simanis, 2012. Reality Check at the Bottom of the Pyramid. Harvard Business Review.

PART 4: INNOVATION AND SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

Unit 7: Can new technology tackle wicked problems?

We are in an age with increasingly sophisticated methods to generate and use large quantities of data. This unit asks: How can technological advances – e.g. in satellite surveillance, machine learning or big data analytics – help address some of the most intractable problems of our day? We use the example of

commodity-driven deforestation to explore how innovative tech-based approaches have allowed start-ups to support societal problem-solving while experiencing strong business growth, and explore the limits of technology-driven innovation in solving complex problems.

Our guest speaker will share the experience of Satelligence, a leading satellite-powered geodata analytics company providing daily insights into the global performance of agricultural production and supply chain risks such as deforestation, forest fires, and flooding.

A. How does Satelligence harness technology for problem solving? Guest speaker: Nanne Tolsma, Head of Client Relations

REQ 1: ▶ Commodity supply chain deforestation monitoring (Youtube, 15 min)

REQ 2: Why Technology Alone Won't Transform the Fight for Sustainability. Food Logistics

Please also prepare questions for our guest speaker, Nanne Tolsma!

B. What are wicked problems? Can technology help?

REQ 1: Waddock, S. 2013. The wicked problems of global sustainability need wicked (good) leaders and wicked (good) collaborative solutions. Journal of Management for Global Sustainability, 1(1), 1-1.

REQ 2: One out of these two options:

Option 1: Yong, E. 2017. Artificial Intelligence: The Park Rangers of the Anthropocene. The Atlantic.

Option 2: 🎙 1 podcast of your choice from the Data for Future podcast

Recommended resources for unit 7

▶ Supply Chain Tech Demo: Sourcemap + Satelligence (Youtube, 3 min)

From millions of satellite images to deforestation alert. GeoAwesomeness

🎙 Oceans back from the brink - May 2070. Radical Ocean Futures

McGrath, M. 2021. Climate change: Technology boosts efforts to curb tree loss in Amazon. BBC News.

Submit Project Deliverable 3: Social enterprise pitch

Unit 8: Examining the dark side of Big Data, AI, and their ethical implications

Information technologies have become part of our everyday lives and are increasingly acting as intermediaries in our workplaces and personal relationships or even substituting them. Much of technological innovation and big data advances similarly rely on the ever-more granular collection and exploitation of personal data, while AI methods may perpetuate biases present in their training data. This unit examines the ethical dilemmas surrounding big data, AI, and algorithms, but also highlights the opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship in providing consumers with more ethical and secure alternatives.

A. What are the ethical problems with Big Data?

REQ 1: O'Neil, C. 2016. Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data increases inequality and threatens democracy. Penguin Random House. Introduction and Chapter 1: What is a model?

REQ 2: McGrory, K. 2021. Pasco Sheriff's Office letter targets residents for 'increased accountability'. Tampa Bay Times.

B. Should we be worried about privacy in a digital age? How can innovation provide solutions?

REQ 1: Amnesty International 2019. Surveillance giants: How the business model of Google and Facebook threatens human rights. Executive summary and chapter 1: The business of surveillance.

REQ 2: Curran, D. 2018. Are you ready? Here is all the data Facebook and Google have on you. The Guardian.

REQ 3: Aten, J. 2021. How Signal Became the Most Popular App in the World Overnight, and Why It Matters. Inc.Com.

Recommended resources for unit 8

O'Neil, C. 2016. Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data increases inequality and threatens democracy. Penguin Random House. (full book)

🎙 Ethical AI. (Data for Future podcast)

▶ The Guardian. The Power of Privacy (Youtube, 29 min)

▶ Glenn Greenwald: Why Privacy Matters. TED (Youtube, 15 min)

Schiffer, Z. (2019). Facebook and Google surveillance is an 'assault on privacy,' says Amnesty International. The Verge.

Unit 9: Innovating how society and the global economy works: From bullshit jobs to business in the doughnut economy

In this session, we zoom out and focus on innovations of business models and the economy more widely. We start with the concept of 'bullshit jobs' (Graeber, D.) to critically assess whether all jobs hold societal value. We then discuss ideas such as the Universal Basic Income, doughnut economics, and post-growth economics, and identify how innovative entrepreneurs can contribute to societal transformation.

A. What are bullshit jobs, and should we continue creating them?

REQ 1: Graeber, D. 2013. [On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant](). Strike! Magazine.

REQ 2: Klein, E. 2021. [What the rich don't want to admit about the poor](). New York Times.

B. How can new entrepreneurship and business models contribute to post-growth doughnut economies?

REQ 1: ▶ Rieback, M. 2019. [Post-growth entrepreneurship]() (TedxBerlin, 19 min)

REQ 2: Schulz-Hofen, J. 2020. When is growth not the best choice? Why we chose to build Planio as a sustainable business instead of drowning in VC dollars

REQ 3: Zebras Unite 2017. [Zebras fix what unicorns break]().

Recommended resources for unit 9

Mayers, K., Davis, T., and Van Wassenhove, L. 2021. [The Limits of the 'Sustainable Economy'](). Harvard Business Review.

Sunstein, C.R., 2014. [Nudging: A Very Short Guide](), 37 J. Consumer Pol'y 583.

PART 5: SUMMARY

Unit 10: Reflection and presentation of final projects

In the virtual session, we will look backward at what we learned over the course of the semester, and discuss how each of us aims to deal with all the topics we have touched along the course. Finally, the face-to-face sessions will give us the opportunity to present in groups the final projects the students have worked on over the course of the semester.

There are no additional readings or media assigned for this unit.