

International Business and the Sustainable Development Goals

Course Outline

6314M0320Y

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Meetings 13.00 – 16.00 Wednesday April 4, 11, 18, 25, & May 2, 16
Room E0.09 ([E-building](#))
Roetersstraat 11
1018 WB Amsterdam

Objectives

Upon completion of this course students are able to:

- Contextualize, explain and debate the challenges and opportunities for multinational enterprises posed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Relate the SDGs to concepts, theories and frameworks from international business, strategic management, and organization theory;
- Creatively and empirically analyze the relevant threats and opportunities for management practice;
- Cooperate in international teams to convert analyses into specific solutions, innovations and concrete advice for organizations during case presentations.

Contents

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has specifically called upon the business community to mobilize in order to realize the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs set out an ambitious agenda to transition the world to a more sustainable, inclusive economy by 2030. The success of these goals will depend on the ability to establish different institutional and governance mechanisms including new forms of partnership, co-investment, and collaboration by a diverse range of actors. The global goals campaign represents a significant new opportunity for companies that view emerging and frontier markets as their source of long-term growth, as achieving the goals will reduce obstacles that hold back potential emerging countries from growing into vibrant markets. At the same time, the campaign's call for new, more inclusive business models and smaller environmental footprints may pose a threat for entrenched companies in the form of disruption of operations, supplies, or reputational damage. Achieving the SDGs will require innovation in global value chains and in the nature of partnerships with government and civil society organizations, as well as coordination and the sharing of knowledge to solve these complex problems. It will also require business to reconcile short-term pressures with longer-term strategies to deal with the challenges and opportunities in an integrated manner.

This course will prompt students to think critically about how organizational theories and international business strategies and frameworks relate to and are impacted by the pursuit of the SDGs. Students will consider the impact of specific goals at the industry level, as well as actively engage in case studies of actual firms as they adapt to the challenges posed by the SDGs.

Format

The course will be structured as one three-hour session per week for six weeks. Attendance at all sessions is mandatory.

Study materials

Study materials are available via [Blackboard](#). In order to download some of the articles in this course, you need to be connected to the UvA Network. If you want to access these articles from somewhere else (such as your home), you will need to set up a VPN connection. Please click the following link to learn how to do so:

<https://student.uva.nl/en/content/az/uvavpn/download/download-uvavpn-software.html>

Assessment

The final grade consists of:

- Individual written papers consisting of:
 - Weekly Thought Papers (20%)
 - Final Exam Paper (40%)
- Teamwork assignment (40%): case discussion paper and presentation.

Conditions to pass the course:

- The score for each of the components of the grade must be 5.5 or higher;
- Mandatory attendance: students who miss more than one mandatory session are required to do an extra assignment and, in extreme cases, will not be allowed to write the final paper of the course.

Resit:

In the case of a failing grade only the individual final exam paper can be retaken within the time frame offered by the lecturer; results obtained for weekly papers and group assignments will remain valid.

Overview of Course Content and Assignments

| Date | April 4 | April 11 | April 18 | April 25 | May 2 | May 9 | May 16 | June 1 |
|-------------|---|---|--|---|--|---------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| SDGs | Intro to course SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities | SDG 3: Good Health & Well-Being SDG 12: Responsible Consumption & Production | SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth SDG 13: Climate Action | SDG 2: End Hunger, achieve food security, promote sustainable agriculture SDG 5: Gender Equality | SDG 6: Sustainable mgmt of water and sanitation SDG 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions | No Class: Team Project Meetings | Final Team projects: FMO Development Financing | Final Exam Paper Due |
| Assignments | Readings | Readings & Weekly Thought Paper | Readings & Weekly Thought Paper | Readings & Weekly Thought Paper | Readings & Weekly Thought Paper | | Team Presentation & Case Discussion Paper (48 hrs) | |

Course Content and Assignment Details

Class 1: April 4, 2018

13.00 – 16.00 REC E0.09

Introduction to course

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities

Guest Speakers: Rosemarijn van der Meij, Fund Manager, FMO (Netherlands Development Bank); Richard de Oude, SDG Tracker (Co-developer with CSR Netherlands)

Readings:

Websites:

1. SDG Website on goal 7: facts & figures, targets, & links.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/energy/>

2. SDG Website on goal 10: facts & figures, targets, & links.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/>

3. <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/blog/systems-thinking-unlocking-sustainable-development-goals>

Articles:

4. Schramade, W. (2017). Investing in the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Opportunities for Companies and Investors. *Journal of Applied Corporate Finance*, 29(2), 87-99.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jacf.12236>

5. Suddaby, R., Bruton, G. D., & Walsh, J. P. (2018). What We Talk About When We Talk About Inequality: An introduction to the Journal of Management Studies Special Issue. *Journal of Management Studies*. Forthcoming.

http://scholar.google.nl/scholar_url?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.researchgate.net%2Fprofile%2FRoy_Suddaby%2Fpublication%2F322448334%2FWhat-we-Talk-About-when-we-Talk-About-Inequality%2Flinks%2F5a6caae30f7e9bd4ca6bfed1%2FWhat-we-Talk-About-when-we-Talk-About-Inequality&hl=en&sa=T&oi=gga&ct=gga&cd=0&ei=j4yyWuvmMI2pmAHz562QCw&scsig=AAGBfm0ekNWPYekjP7rcnoyba8end3P34g&noss=1&ws=1181x511

Class 2: April 11, 2018

13.00 – 16.00 REC E0.09

SDG 3: Good Health & Well-Being

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption & Production

Guest Speakers: Simon Braaksma, Senior Director, Corporate Sustainability Office, Philips; Anniek Mauser, Sustainability Director, Unilever;

Readings:

Websites:

1. SDG Website on goal 3: facts & figures, targets, & links.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>

2. SDG Website on goal 12: facts & figures, targets, & links.
<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/>

Articles:

3. Mirvis, P., & Googins, B. (2006). Stages of corporate citizenship. *California Management Review*, 48(2), 104-126. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=31279e1b-0178-40e1-8345-854dc28926b8%40sessionmgr4007>

4. Agarwal, N., Gneiting, U., Mhlanga, R. 2017. Raising the bar: Rethinking the role of business in the Sustainable Development Goals. *Oxfam Discussion Papers*.
https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/dp-raising-the-bar-business-sdgs-130217-en_0.pdf

Class 3: April 18, 2018

13.00 – 16.00 REC E0.09

SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth

SDG 13: Climate Action

Guest Speakers: Geanne van Arkel, Sustainable Development, Interface;

Liesbeth Unger, HumanRights@Work;

Charlotte Portier, Senior Coordinator of sustainable development and the SDGs, GRI

Readings:

Websites:

1. SDG Website on goal 8 facts & figures, targets, & links.
<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/>

2. SDG Website on goal 13: facts & figures, targets, & links.
<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change-2/>

Articles:

3. Kim, D. H. (1999). *Introduction to systems thinking* (Vol. 16). Waltham, MA: Pegasus Communications. <https://thesystemsthinker.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Introduction-to-Systems-Thinking-IMS013Epk.pdf>

4. Le Blanc, D. 2015. Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets. DESA Working Paper No. 141 ST/ESA/2015/DWP/141.
http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2015/wp141_2015.pdf

5. Hahn, J. Pinske, L. Preuss, F. Figge. 2015. Tensions in corporate sustainability: towards an integrative framework. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 127(2): 297-316.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-014-2047-5>

Optional Reading: Williams, A., Kennedy, S., Philipp, F., & Whiteman, G. (2017). Systems thinking: A review of sustainability management research. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 148, 866-881.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652617302068>

Class 4: April 25, 2018

13.00 – 16.00 REC E0.09

SDG 2: End Hunger, achieve food security, promote sustainable agriculture

SDG 5: Gender Equality

Guest Speakers: Els Boerhof, Partner, Goodwell Investments;

Readings:

Websites:

1. SDG Website on goal 2: facts & figures, targets, & links.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>

2. SDG Website on goal 5 facts & figures, targets, & links.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

3. Read one of the research papers at the Equileap website:

<http://equileap.org/research-papers/>

Articles:

4. Omidyar, P. 2011. EBay's Founder on Innovating the Business Model of Social Change.

Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2011/09/ebays-founder-on-innovating-the-business-model-of-social-change>

5. Brown, T., & Wyatt, J. (2010). Design thinking for social innovation. *Development Outreach*, 12(1), 29-43.

<https://ojs.unbc.ca/index.php/design/article/viewFile/1272/1089>

Class 5 May 2, 2018

13.00 – 16.00 REC E0.09

SDG 6: Sustainable management of water and sanitation

SDG 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions

Guest Speakers: Michel Scholte, Director, TruePrice;

Rutger Goethart, Manager, International Labour Relations, Heineken

Readings:

Websites:

1. SDG Website on goal 6 facts & figures, targets, & links.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/>

2. SDG Website on goal 16: facts & figures, targets, & links.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>

3. Website Our World in Data <https://ourworldindata.org/a-history-of-global-living-conditions-in-5-charts?lsrc=f17a3282-b0ae-4197-978f-9076ef3a1135>

Articles:

4. Oetzel, J., Westermann-Behaylo, M., Koerber, C., Fort, T. L., & Rivera, J. (2009). Business and peace: Sketching the terrain. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 89, 351-373.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/40605375?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

5. Kolk, A., & Lenfant, F. (2016). Hybrid business models for peace and reconciliation. *Business Horizons*, 59(5), 503-524. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0007681316300155>

Class 6: May 16, 2018

13.00 – 16.00 REC E0.09

Final student group projects: Team Presentations

Judges Panel: Rosemarijn van der Meij, Fund Manager, FMO (and colleagues)

ASSIGNMENTS

Instructions: Weekly Thought Papers

In classes 2 – 5, each student is required to submit a thought paper reflecting on the content for that week, with four sections (2 pages, 11 point font, single spaced, around 1000 words).

Section 1: Write a paragraph synthesizing the articles assigned that week, reflecting on the main points of the articles and how they relate to the SDGs. Provide appropriate citations.

Section 2: In one paragraph for each SDG discussed that week, find one example of a firm that is or could be threatened or challenged by the pursuit of that goal, and one example of a firm (preferably in another industry) that will (or could) find opportunity in the pursuit of that goal—the more specific your description of the firm policy or practice connected to opportunity, the better. Four firms in total should be described in this section, and in the one paragraph per SDG you should explain your reasoning for suggesting the threat/opportunity for each of the two firms.

Section 3: For each SDG, identify and describe in a couple sentences a recent innovation (ITC or other technology, multi-stakeholder initiative, measurement system, etc.) that aims to further progress toward one or more target(s) under the SDG. Provide a link if there is a relevant website.

Section 4: Develop two discussion questions for the lecture on the readings, and four questions (divided between the speakers) for members of the guest speaker panel. With regard to the speakers, 'Why', 'Whether' and 'How' questions asking for explanation are often more interesting in this context than 'What', 'When' or 'Where' questions asking for facts. Consulting the website of the speakers' organizations will help in developing relevant, interesting and important questions.

Assessment, Weekly Thought Papers

| Element | 0 points | 1 point | 2 points | 3 points | 4 points |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
| Depth | No proof that student read anything. Largely "making stuff up." | No depth. Only passages lifted from websites/readings, no elaboration. | Mostly direct quotes and paraphrasing with little elaboration and detail. | Some detail and elaboration, demonstrates good understanding of topic. | Great use of detail and elaboration, evident that student comprehended information and gained knowledge. |
| Analysis, Examples & Questions | Failed to analyze readings, find examples, or develop questions in any meaningful way. | Missed significant part/s of readings; Missing examples; Developed questions but missed issues or unclear/confusing/misleading on major part. | Addressed but did not fully analyze readings; Obvious examples; Questions simplistic or off base. | Directly addressed readings correctly overall; Good examples; Developed clear, relevant questions. | Fully and correctly synthesized all readings; Interesting & innovative examples; Developed important and interesting questions. |
| Mechanics | No cites, failure to use quotes for quoted material; paper marred by spelling and grammar mistakes. | Some minor mistakes (or omissions) in citation, a few grammar or spelling errors, style problems (no paragraphs, informal language). | Free or almost free of grammar errors, citation is correct and used properly. Good writing style. | | |

Instructions: Team Project FMO Investment Opportunities

Each team will analyze and present findings regarding one actual development investment opportunity undertaken or currently under consideration by FMO. The questions to be analyzed are as follows:

1. Identify all the SDGs impacted by the investment. Explore in detail how the investment will contribute to specific SDG targets, providing evidence from websites, reports, statements and press releases;
 2. Taking a systemic thinking approach, consider tensions or synergies between the achievement of multiple SDG targets, including any feedback loops, reinforcing and balancing processes, gaps and/or delays.
 3. Recommendations: a) Recommend a plan for how FMO could measure all the positive impacts of the investment on the SDGs, suggesting specific indicators for measuring those improvements.
b) Recommend a plan for how the investment could mitigate any potential negative impacts on SDGs.
- Each team will give a 20 minute powerpoint presentation explaining their answers to these questions in class on May 16.

On May 18, each team will submit a paper explaining their answers in more detail, incorporating any feedback from the question and answer segment of their presentation.

Assessment, Team Project (Presentation and Paper)

| Element | 0 points | 1 point | 2 points | 3 points | 4 points |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| Depth of analysis | No evidence that team researched websites or FMO materials, nor incorporated any course readings or discussion in the analysis. | Team missed or mis-stated significant issues regarding investment or FMO materials. Simplistic approach to course readings and discussions without elaboration. | Team addressed but did not completely analyze investment and FMO materials with few/minor mistakes. Little elaboration and detail in approaching course readings or discussions. | Team completely analyzed investment and FMO materials. Some detail & elaboration, demonstrates good understanding of course readings and discussions. | Great use of detail and elaboration in applying investment, FMO and course materials. Demonstrates outstanding understanding of course readings and discussions. |
| Logic and Thoughtfulness of suggestions and recommendations | Team failed to make any suggestions or recommendations | Team makes only illogical, unrealistic suggestions and recommendations. | Team suggestions and recommendations are logical and realistic, but with little elaboration. | Team suggestions and recommendations are logical and realistic, and demonstrate thought and reflection. | Team suggestions and recommendations are both fully logical/realistic and demonstrate very innovative and creative thinking. |
| Mechanics | Presentation unprofessional, unclear and illogical structure. Paper poorly written and marred by spelling and grammar mistakes. | Reasonably professional presentation, clear logical structure. Paper adequately written, some minor mistakes in grammar or spelling errors. | Highly professional and engaging presentation. Paper complete and with good writing style, free of grammar or spelling errors. | | |

Final Exam Paper: 7 pages, single spaced, 11 point font, about 4000 words, excluding references. Due June 2 at 16.00 via Blackboard. Choose one of the following topics:

1. Synthesizing all of the team cases, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in how well FMO is contributing to the SDGs. Taking a design thinking approach, explain how FMO could re-organize its fund criteria, investment selection, monitoring processes, etc., to make a more significant contribution. Provide specific examples from the cases, from FMO materials, and refer to specific SDG targets to make your explanation concrete. Refer to readings from the course, using appropriate citations. You may refer to other relevant academic literature, though this is not intended to be an academic research paper. Provide a list of references at the end of your paper.

2. Choose one of the remaining SDGs not addressed during the course and explore the challenges and opportunities that meeting this goal poses to business. First explain the general issues raised by this goal. Then narrow in on a particular firm, relying on information that is publicly available about that firm (websites, financial statements, analyst reports) and provide a detailed analysis of the particular challenges and opportunities that the selected firm faces in relation to this SDG. Taking a design thinking approach, discuss any changes that firm would have to make to its stage of corporate citizenship, business model, programs, partnerships, policies and/or strategy, to contribute fully to meeting this goal. Refer to readings from the course, using appropriate citations. You may refer to other relevant academic literature, though this is not intended to be an academic research paper. Provide a list of references at the end of your paper.