SUMA K4700

ETHICS AND VALUES FOR SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT

Course Overview

Today we find many new ethics asserted by individuals, including practitioners and scholars, and by governmental organizations such as the UN, EU, and OECD, besides innumerable NGOs and corporations. These ethics, together with the values they imply, are variously associated with sustainability. What are the ethics, and how can they be pursued by governmental, non-profit and business organizations, with the aim of benefitting stakeholders and coincidentally combating corruption? In this course, we will examine the new ethics and discover how they can be implemented as ethics initiatives by sustainability managers.

The course is organized into six main parts, corresponding to six major dimensions of sustainability management: global, eco-systemic, regional, organizational, workplace and personal dimensions. In each part, two new ethics are introduced and discussed: in the first, earth justice and environmental justice; in the second, ecological integrity and the land ethic; the third, regional equity and sectoral social justice (e.g. energy, resource, water and climate justice); the fourth, social responsibility and responsible leadership; the fifth, transparency and inclusivity; and the sixth, care and resilience. Cases are examined in which outcomes are shaped by ethical or unethical considerations; and a range of ethical performance criteria are discussed. The course also addresses what has become a growing movement towards the global standardization of sustainability ethics, including the development of metrics serving as indicators of attentiveness to ethics.

While sustainability management requires the understanding and application of complex environmental science, the efficacy of this in yielding human and environmental benefit depends upon ethical evaluations of need, use and harm, and upon concomitant ethical practice within all dimensions of management. Close familiarity with relevant ethical, as distinct from economic or technical expectations, problems, and possibilities will enable and advance the efforts of sustainability managers to achieve beneficial human and environmental outcomes. This is particularly critical today, when ethical demands are adamantly framed and voiced, and ethical monitoring mechanisms are analytically developed and applied in response to the imperative of sustainability.
Course Objectives

Students are expected to learn how to frame, apply and assess ethics initiatives, with the aim of promoting and ensuring ethics in the practice of sustainability management. On completing the course, students should be able to:

1. identify the specific stakeholders in sustainability decision making and evaluate their ethical claims;
2. utilize major sources of current ethics initiatives, such as those of the UN, EU and OECD, in identifying stakeholders’ claims;
3. develop proposals for ethics initiatives within non-profit, governmental and business organizations;
4. implement corruption assessment tools such as those offered by Transparency International;
5. communicate, defend or advocate policies and actions in terms of eco-justice and environmental justice;
6. design fair incentives and disincentives for the remediation of problematic use of natural resources;
7. evaluate the effects of human flight and blight patterns upon human communities;
8. develop proposals for social responsibility in organizations and their leaders;
9. negotiate workplace-related conflict and promote inclusivity within organizations;
10. integrate considerations of integrity into recruitment and promotion procedures.

Course Content

Important Notice: There is flexibility in the assigned readings. From among the five listed for each class session, you should select and complete three each week, although you may certainly choose to complete them all. Depending upon your selections, you will have approximately 45 to 55 pages of reading each week. Readings selected should be completed prior to each class session. In the Library Reserves section of our Courseworks webpage, an article from a book may appear under the name of the author of the article or, alternatively, under the name of the editor of the book.

Class 1: Introduction – The Place of Ethics in Sustainability Management

Common ground in discussing ethics: the centrality of rationality and sensitivity.

Section I: Global Ethics

Class 2: Earth Justice
Prioritization in complex situations: people or planet or profit?

Readings (select 3):


**Class 3: Environmental Justice**

Remediation of injustices: blame and compensation for unfair costs.

Readings (select 3):


Section II: Ecosystem Ethics

Class 4: Ecological Integrity

Preferred ecological conditions: baselines, icons, invasives and settlers.

Readings (select 3):


Class 5: The Land Ethic

Freshwater terrestrial ecosystems: the middle-range status of humans.

Readings (select 3):


**Section III: Regional Ethics**

**Class 6: Regional Equity**

Human migratory patterns: the daily commute, home equity and “sweat” equity.

Readings (select 3):


Pastor Jr., Manuel, Chris Benner and Martha Matsuoka. 2009. Unpacking Regional Equity. Ch. 2 in *This Could Be the Start of Something Big: How Social Movements for*
Class 7: Sectoral Social Justice

Energy, resource, climate and water regimes: private, public or common goods?

Readings (select 3):


Levant, Ezra. 2010. Say One Thing, Do Another: Ethical Funds and the Oil Sands. Ch. 6 in *Ethical Oil: The Case for Canada’s Oil Sands*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., pp. 80-106.


Section IV: Organizational Ethics

Class 8: Social Responsibility


Readings (select 3):


**Class 9: Responsible Leadership**

Accumulation of moral capital: exceptional and exception-making leaders.

*Readings (select 3):*


Section V: Workplace Ethics

Class 10: Transparency

Administrative opaqueness: blocking accountability for dirty deals.

Readings (select 3):


Class 11: Inclusivity

Personhood and human rights: accommodating cultural diversity.

Readings (select 3):


**Section VI: Personal Ethics**

**Class 12: Care**

Empathy and altruism: overcoming distance, difference, non-reciprocity and competition.

*Readings (select 3):*


Class 13: Resilience

The Golden Ratio: appropriate proportionalities and equations.

Readings (select 3):


Final Exam Period: Student Presentations

Method of Instruction and Evaluation

Each class session will include lecture material and open discussion. Students are welcome to raise questions and offer comments throughout.

Grades will be determined, based upon the following factors:
1. **Attendance and participation** will be given a weight of 20%.

Class participation can take the following forms:

   a. Express views and raise questions in class.

   b. Explain your discussion entries in class.

   c. Elaborate upon class comments by way of e-mail to the instructor.

   d. Express relevant views to the instructor during office hours.

Attendance and participation will be graded on a letter grade scale ranging from A+ to Fail.

2. **Discussion Entries** posted on our Courseworks website will be given a weight of 25%.

Each week several prompts connecting the readings for that week will be posted. Students should then offer a response either (a) to the prompts; or (b) to a response (or more than one response) already offered by another student (or other students). The entry should be creative, analytical or both, and should reflect knowledge of the readings for that week. All entries should be posted weekly by *Monday noon*. Each student should maintain a document file containing all his or her discussion entries, dated as entered. Entries must be posted for a minimum of ten weeks of class. The file is to be submitted in paper copy at the end of the semester and will be graded on a letter grade scale from A+ to Fail.

3. A **first assignment** will be given a weight of 25%.

This assignment, primarily reflective, consists of an assessment of some dimension of sustainability ethics to which you yourself are particularly committed. In your own view, what aspect of human action is particularly in need of a sustainable ethics “make-over”? Why is it particularly compelling, and how could it be remedied? Actual cases can be used to illustrate your points and substantiate your argument. This assignment will be due in paper copy and electronic copy at the end of the seventh week of class.

4. A **second assignment** will be given a weight of 30%.

This assignment, primarily (although hypothetically) consultative, consists of a proposed sustainability ethics initiative for an organization (for-profit, nonprofit or governmental) or some component or division of it, and should draw on websites or documents of relevant organizations. How should the organization alter its mission, vision, structure, culture, or other features to meet what you see to be the requirements of sustainability
ethics? The assignment will be due in paper copy and electronic copy at the end of the fourteenth week of class.

For both assignments, you may decide whether you would like to proceed primarily by way of charts, graphs or models, including scorecards, or primarily by way of textual material. Both assignments will be evaluated for (1) coherence and insight of the assessment or proposal; (2) clarity and structure of the project as whole; (3) appropriateness of research; and (4) presentation of findings to the class. More detailed instructions will be provided in the Assignments section of our Courseworks website. The two assignments will be graded on a letter grade scale from A+ to Fail.

Course Resources

Required readings, listed on Courseworks in the Syllabus section under each class session, are selected from a broad range of relevant literature, which takes the place of a textbook. Prior to the start of the semester, required readings will be made available in two ways: (1) as e-reserves on our Courseworks website; and (2) as desk reserves in Lehman Library (IAB).

Supplemental course materials, such as charts or figures, will be posted periodically on our Courseworks website in the Files and Resources section, as will links to suggested online readings or videos. As needed, detailed instructions will be posted on our Courseworks website under Assignments.

Statements of University Policy

Academic Integrity Statement

The School of Continuing Education does not tolerate cheating and/or plagiarism in any form. Those students who violate the Code of Academic and Professional Conduct will be subject to the Dean’s Disciplinary Procedures. The Code of Academic and Professional Conduct can be viewed online at:

http://ce.columbia.edu/node/217

Please familiarize yourself with the proper methods of citation and attribution. The School provides some useful resources online; we strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with these various styles before conducting your research.

Violations of the Code of Academic and Professional Conduct will be reported to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
Facilities Accessibility Statement

Columbia is committed to providing equal access to qualified students with documented disabilities. A student’s disability status and reasonable accommodations are individually determined based upon disability documentation and related information gathered through the intake process. For more information regarding this service, please visit the University’s Health Services website at:

http://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/support