Master of Science in Sustainability Management

Innovative Sustainability Leadership
Thursday, 4:15 – 6:00
3 credits
Elective

Instructor:	Sara Goddard. Email: swg2123@columbia.edu
Office Hours:	by appointment
Response Policy:	I generally respond within 24 hours, but on the weekend or when traveling, I may not be able to respond within that time frame. Please plan ahead when making requests.

Facilitator/Teaching Assistant: To be determined
Office Hours:
Response Policy:

Course Overview

"Innovation is the key to addressing the climate crisis" declares Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. The task of unleashing innovative solutions within the high-risk environment of a rapidly warming planet is left to courageous and creative sustainability leaders – individuals working across all sectors who are prepared to forge bold and novel pathways for their organizations and for society at large. Who are these individuals and what attributes distinguish them as change agents? Can these qualities be learned and serve as a blueprint for others to adopt?

This course will prepare students to be leaders in developing innovative sustainable frameworks and solutions. We will analyze the characteristics of innovative sustainability leaders, including common themes (if any), how they have grappled with success and failure, and how these individuals become effective leaders who inspire their teams and organizations to act as catalysts for change. Through guest speakers, in-depth discussion, and by using a variety of examples and case studies from the non-profit, profit, and public sectors, we will examine the impacts that innovative sustainability leaders have on organizational success and failure.

Against the backdrop of a world transformed by climate change, we will then expand our view to assess the significance of collaboration both within and beyond the conceptual boundaries of organizations, considering the pivotal roles that diverse stakeholders play in driving advancements in sustainable innovations. Ultimately, we will evaluate the role and responsibility of innovative sustainability leaders to effect transformational change on a societal level. By the end of the course, students will have developed actionable tools, strategies, and critical thinking skills for leading transformational change in their organizations and beyond.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:
   L1. Demonstrate the importance of sustainability in organizational strategy and the potential benefits and challenges of adopting innovative sustainability practices.
   L2. Apply innovative sustainability leadership strategies to real-world scenarios to analyze and address sustainability-related challenges and opportunities.
   L3. Analyze and evaluate the impact of sustainability on organizational performance and develop strategies for effectively communicating the benefits of sustainability to stakeholders.

L4. Evaluate the effectiveness of current sustainability practices and leadership strategies in terms of sustainability performance and competitive advantage and propose improvements or modifications where necessary.

L5. Develop a comprehensive sustainability leadership plan that incorporates innovative practices and strategies to drive long-term sustainability and success within and external to an organization.

Readings

Weekly readings may be adjusted based on in-class discussions and/or guest speakers.

Relevant material for guest speakers and profiles of innovative sustainability leaders will be provided and/or assigned as background preparation for in-class discussion.

Books (Selected Chapters Noted in Course Calendar)

Chouinard, Y. (2016). *Let my people go surfing: The Education of a Reluctant Businessman--Including 10 More Years of Business Unusual*. Penguin.

Nidumolu, R. (2013). *Two birds in a tree: Timeless Indian Wisdom for Business Leaders*. National Geographic Books.

Lenox, M., & Chatterji, A. (2018). *Can business save the earth?: Innovating Our Way to Sustainability*. Stanford Business Books.

Malhotra, N. (2022). *Frontiers in social innovation: The Essential Handbook for Creating, Deploying, and Sustaining Creative Solutions to Systemic Problems*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Weekly Readings

Week 2

Nidumolu, R., Prahalad, C. K., & Rangaswami, M. R. (2009). Why sustainability is now the key driver of innovation. *Harvard Business Review*.

Deloitte. (2013). Sustainability Driven Innovation: Harnessing sustainability's ability to spark innovation.

Makower, J. (2013). How sustainability leadership drives innovation | Greenbiz. *GreenBiz*.

Krishnan, H. A. (2021). Mindfulness as a strategy for sustainable competitive advantage. *Business Horizons*, *64*(5), 697-709.

Week 3

Tideman, S. G., Arts, M. C., & Zandee, D. P. (2013). Sustainable Leadership: towards a workable definition. *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, *2013*(49), 17–33.

Week 4

Gloor, J. L., Mestre, E. B., Post, C., & Ruigrok, W. (2022). We Can't Fight Climate Change Without Fighting for Gender Equity. *Harvard Business Review Digital Copy*.

De Trenqualye, M. (2023, March 16). 'It's inequality that kills': Naomi Klein on the future of climate justice. *The Guardian*.

Roth, S. (2023). He ran the NAACP. Now he's leading the Sierra Club's fight - Los Angeles Times. *Los Angeles Times*.

Week 5

Fronzetti Colladon, A., Toschi, L., Ughetto, E., & Greco, F. (2023). The language and social behavior of innovators. *Journal of Business Research*, *154*, 113317.

SWACO's Kyle O' Keefe stresses the importance of collaboration for waste reduction. (2021, July 22). Waste360.

Week 6

Shi, D. (2023). In times of uncertainty, our most creative thoughts can happen through play. *Fast Company*.

Week 8

Tello, S. F., & Yoon, E. (2008). Examining drivers of sustainable innovation. *ResearchGate*.

Week 9

Bobrow, E. (2023, February 3). Ryan Gellert wants Patagonia to be part of the environmental solution. *WSJ*.

O'Leary, M., & Valdmanis, W. (2021). An ESG Reckoning Is Coming. *Harvard Business Review*.

Winston, A. (2023, April 05). Why Business Leaders Must Resist the Anti-ESG Movement. *Harvard Business Review Digital Copy*.

Week 10

Friedman, V. (2021, December 13). Do you know where your sweater came from? *The New York Times*.

Week 11

Google's huge solar buys help fund efficiency fixes for low-income homes. (2023, March 8). *Canary Media*.

Swartz, J, (2010). How I Did It: Timberland's CEO on Standing up to 65,000 Angry Activists. *Harvard Business Review*.

Week 13

Joly, H. H. (2021). How to Lead in the Stakeholder Era. *Harvard Business Review*.

Multimedia (Relevant weeks noted in course calendar)

TED. (2022, June 20). *How great leaders innovate responsibly | Ken Chenault | TED* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_rsxmtfKr0

INSEAD. (2009, June 29). *Collaborating for results* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNr3ektRMkI

GreenBiz. (2020, May 19). *In conversation: John Elkington - May 14, 2020* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK6MyEoBMb8

Assignments and Assessments

Class Participation – 35% (Individual Grade)

This course places significant emphasis on engaged and substantive student participation. Participation consists of the following:

- **Attendance.** Students are expected to arrive on time and stay for the full duration of the class. If a student cannot attend or must leave early, they must notify the instructor at least one day before class. More than three unexcused absences will result in a zero for attendance.
- **Class discussion.** Students are expected to contribute meaningfully to every class discussion using course content and relevant material.
- **In-class activities.** Each class will feature an in-class activity and/or guest speaker. Students are expected to actively participate in all activities and engage with speakers and fellow students.

Students will be evaluated based on the level of their engagement, course comprehension, and capacity to add substantive value to class discussions and activities using insightful analysis and relevant examples.

Group Project – 40% (Individual Grade and Group Grade, as noted)

In this group project, each group will examine the innovative sustainability leadership successes and failures of a particular company or organization. The goal of the assignment is to provide an opportunity for students to apply the concepts and frameworks covered in this course to a real-world example of innovative sustainability leadership.

Over the course of 14 weeks, you will work in groups of 3-4 people to research, analyze, and evaluate the successes and failures of the organization's leadership to innovate and execute sustainability initiatives. Ideally, your team will engage with and interview employees within your chosen organization to gain real-time understanding of the leadership dynamics within the organization.

This multi-part assignment concludes in Week 14 with group presentations. Your group will also be responsible for submitting three memos of 1-2 pages that demonstrate the group's comprehension of the company's innovative sustainability leadership strategies, whether implemented successfully or not.

The multi-part assignment consists of the following elements:

- **Memos – 25% (Group – L1, L3, L4).** Three memos of 1-2 pages that demonstrate the group's comprehension of the company's innovative sustainability leadership strategies, whether implemented successfully or not.
- **Online Discussion Forum – 5% (Individual – L3, L4).** Upon completion of each memo assignment, 1-2 teams will post their memos to a discussion forum for individual review, commentary, and comparison by classmates.
- **Final Group Presentation – 10% (Group – L1, L2, L3, L4, L5)** in Week 14.

Students will be evaluated and graded 1) as a group for the depth of analysis and research on memos and presentation, and 2) on an individual basis for the substantive quality of commentary entries in the discussion forum.

*Note: A more detailed description of this project, along with expectations for memos, discussion forum, and final presentation is outlined in the **Assignment Details** section below and will also be available on the course site.*

Responses to Weekly Discussion Questions on Courseworks – 5% (Individual Grade – L2, L3, L4)

Students are required to respond to all weekly discussion questions posted on Courseworks. These responses, which will serve as the basis for in-class discussion, should be around 150 words in length and demonstrate comprehension of the course material and readings. Each entry will be evaluated on an A+ to F letter grade scale. Discussion questions will be posted on Tuesday and should be submitted via Courseworks no later than 11:00 am prior to each class session. No late submissions will be accepted unless an extension is granted by the instructor.

Leadership Role-Playing Exercise – 20% (Individual Grade – L2, L3, L4, L5)

The final assignment is designed to provide students with the opportunity to synthesize the key points and concepts learned during the semester into a cohesive 2-3 page paper. Students will role-play as the leader of a real-world organization to identify issues and challenges within the organization and apply course concepts in providing scenarios in which to address to issue.

*Note: A more detailed description of this assignment is outlined in the **Assignment Details** section below and will also be available on the Courseworks course site, including formatting and citation requirements.*

Grading

The final grade will be calculated as described below:

FINAL GRADING SCALE

Grade	Percentage
A+	98–100 %
A	93–97.9 %
A-	90–92.9 %
B+	87–89.9 %
B	83–86.9 %
B-	80–82.9 %
C+	77–79.9 %
C	73–76.9 %
C-	70–72.9 %
D	60–69.9 %
F	59.9% and below

Assignment/Assessment	% Weight	Individual or Group/Team Grade
Class Participation: attendance, and participation in class discussion and activities (average of all three)	35%	Individual
Group Project Memos (average of all three memos)	25%	Group
Group Project Presentation	10%	Group
Group Project Online Discussion Forum	5%	Individual
Weekly Discussion Questions on Courseworks	5%	Individual
Leadership Role-Play Exercise	20%	Individual

Course Schedule/Course Calendar

Date	Topics and Activities	Readings (due on this day)	Assignments (due on this date)
Week 1	Introduction to Innovative Sustainability Leadership	None	None
First Area of Focus: The Leader			
Week 2	Leadership Styles: Self Awareness	- Chouinard chp: Intro/History - Chatterji Chp 2 - Why sustainability is now the key driver of innovation. - Sustainability Driven Innovation: Harnessing sustainability's ability to spark innovation. - How sustainability leadership drives innovation. - Mindfulness as a strategy for sustainable competitive advantage	Weekly discussion questions
Week 3	Leadership Styles: From Me to We	- Chouinard chp: Management Philosophy - Nidumolu chp 10 - Sustainable Leadership: Towards a Workable Definition	• Weekly discussion questions • Group Project: Submission of organization name and group names
Week 4	Expanding the Tent: Inclusive Leadership	***Readings*** - We Can't Fight Climate Change Without Fighting for Gender Equity. - It's inequality that kills: Naomi Klein on the future of climate justice - He ran the NAACP. Now he's leading the Sierra Club's fight against climate change. ***Video*** How Great Leaders Innovate Responsibly	• Weekly discussion questions • Leadership Role-Play Exercise: Submission of organization name

Week 5	Communication, Collaboration and Influence	***Readings*** - The language and social behavior of innovators. - "SWACO's Kyle O' Keefe Stresses the Importance of Collaboration for Waste Reduction." ***Video*** Collaborating for Results	Weekly discussion questions
Second Area of Focus: Leading a Team			
Week 6	Innovation Cultures	- Seth Goldman material - Chouniard Chp: HR Philosophy - In times of uncertainty, our most creative thoughts can happen through play	***Speaker:*** Seth Goldman, Honest Tea • Group Memo 1 • Discussion Forum open (on-going)
Week 7	Evaluating and Measuring Success	Malhotra, Chps 4 and 15	Weekly discussion questions
Week 8	Organizational Social Responsibility and Sustainability	***Readings*** - Chatterji Chp 3 - Examining drivers of sustainable innovation. ***Video*** In Conversation: John Elkington	• Weekly discussion questions • Group Project outline
Third Area of Focus: Leading a Movement			
Week 9	Driving Societal Change Through Innovative Sustainability Leadership	- Chouinard Chps: Environmental Philosophy; Turn Around - Bobrow, E. (2023). Ryan Gellert Wants Patagonia to Be Part of the Environmental Solution. - Additional Patagonia reading material re the company's political/social positions - An ESG Reckoning Is Coming. - Why Business Leaders Must Resist the Anti-ESG Movement	• Weekly discussion questions • Leadership Role-Play Exercise outline
Week 10	Market Transformation and Systems Change	- Nidumolu Chp 8 - Chatterji Chp 8 - Do You Know Where Your Sweater Came From?	Group Memo 2
Week 11	Sustainability and Community Development	- Bramson/New Ro sustainability material	***Speaker:*** New Rochelle Mayor, Noam Bramson • Weekly discussion questions
Week 12	**NO CLASS**		
Week 13	Building a Movement: Stakeholder Collaboration and Partnerships	- Sustainable Westchester material	***Speaker:*** Jim Kuster, Co-Chair, Interim Exec Director, Sustainable Westchester

		- How to Lead in the Stakeholder Era.	• Group Memo 3
Week 14	Presentations		• Group Presentations • Leadership Role-Play Exercise final draft (*due 2 days after class*)

Assignment Details

Group Project

Group Process and Selection of Organization

- Groups of 3-4 members will be assigned randomly after the first class, and one person will be assigned the role of group manager. Students that add the course late will be added to an existing group.
- Group members are responsible for setting meetings and identifying roles and responsibilities.
- Each group will select a company or organization either from a list of organizations provided or one of their choosing that has been pre-approved by the instructor.
- For groups electing to choose their own organization, the entity should be 1) currently in operation, and 2) engaged in primary activities of their industry — not primarily a service or consulting company.
- The number of groups will depend on the final class size.

Online Discussion Forum

Upon completion of each memo assignment, 1-2 team(s) will post their memo(s) to an online discussion forum for individual review, commentary, and comparison by classmates.

Guidelines for Online Discussion Forum:

- Provide substantive, individual comments, including suggestions, incorporation of course material, comparisons with other memos, responses to other posts.
- Post at least 10 individual comments over the course of the semester.
- Team members of posted material are encouraged to respond and engage in discussion/debate.

Group Presentation

Groups will prepare a final presentation representing a culmination (rather than repetition) of their semester's work and present their analysis and recommendations.

Guidelines for Presentation:

- Group Manager will email the presentation slides to Courseworks by 3:00 pm one day prior to the date of the presentation.
- One group member will be responsible for a presentation of approximately 10 minutes, followed by 10 minute Q&A.
- Topics covered should include (but not limited to) the team's 1) assessment of innovative sustainability leadership's ability to achieve organizational goals, 2) analysis and evaluation of any challenges and obstacles faced by leadership to implement their goals, and 3) recommendation of potential solutions to current and future challenges.

<u>Group Memos</u>

Groups will be responsible for submitting three memos on the following themes and topics.

Guidelines for Memos

- 1-2 pages, one-inch margins, double-spaced in 12 pt. font, with additional pages for any references and citations.
- Group manager will upload the memo to Courseworks by 3:00 pm on the appropriate due date.
- Memos will be assessed based on depth of analysis and research; clarity and coherence; and demonstration of an understanding of the course concepts and frameworks.

Memo 1: Examining Individual Leadership Styles

Groups will research and, using material learned thus far, analyze the individual leadership styles of key individuals within the chosen company or organization.

This memo should include the following:

- Overview of the company or organization, size, location, its history, mission, approach to sustainability, including outline—if any--of sustainability goals, mission, and/or sustainable practices.
- Overview of organizational and leadership structure, with identification of key leaders, including those who may not be in senior positions but possess influence.
- Assessment, based on direct communication and/or research, of key individuals, including specific examples of initiatives, strategies, and leadership personality styles that conform with course content.
- Assessment of the effectiveness of the leadership styles in inspiring innovative sustainability ideas and initiatives and identification of any limitations or challenges that may be present.

Memo 2: Leading a Team and Evaluating Success

Groups will identify and evaluate leadership's approach to innovation, creative problem solving, and sustainability, as well as their ability to inspire, influence and direct employees and teams to achieve organizational goals and how the organization measures success.

This memo should include the following:

- Analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of the leadership styles in creating an organizational culture of innovative sustainability.
- Examination of the organization's approach to innovation, creative problem solving, and sustainability, as well as how they evaluate and measure sustainability successes.
- Assessment of any limitations or challenges that may be present.

Memo 3: Leading a Movement and Community Development

Groups will examine the ability of leadership to drive industry and societal changes and consider the extent to which the organization collaborates with stakeholders, partners, and consumers to achieve these goals.

This memo should include the following:

- Identification of leadership's ability to effect market transformation, systems change, and community development initiatives and assessment of successes and failures.
- Identification and analysis of key organizational and community-wide stakeholders and partners impacted by leadership strategies, and evaluation of the extent of their collaboration, engagement, and influence.

Leadership Role-Play Exercise

<u>Overview</u>

This individual, written assignment is designed to allow students to synthesize key points and concepts they have learned over the semester into a cohesive paper. Students will assume the role of a leader in a real-world organization, identifying issues and challenges within the organization and utilizing course concepts to provide solutions to these issues. By doing so, students will have the opportunity to apply their learning in a practical and realistic setting.

Guidelines for Individual Assignment:

- Choose one of the organizations from the list provided by the instructor or submit your own proposal for approval. Imagine you have been appointed as the new leader of this organization.
- Include a brief overview of the organization: sector, history, location, size, mission and vision, sustainability goals and practices.
- Identify an existing issue or challenge or one that is a potential credible threat within the organization.
- Using the concepts learned over the course of the semester, propose at least two scenarios for addressing the issue or challenge. Your proposals should demonstrate your understanding of course concepts and the organization's ability to apply them to a real-world situation.
- The final paper should be 2-3 pages, one-inch margins, double-spaced in 12 pt. font, with additional pages for references and citations.
- Submit outline with headings by Week 9.
- Submit the final draft *two days after the last class*.

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance
I expect you to come to class on time and thoroughly prepared. I will keep track of attendance and look forward to an interesting, informed and lively discussion. If you miss an experience in class, you miss an important learning moment and the class misses your contribution. More than one absence will affect your grade.

Late work
Work that is not submitted on the due date noted in the course syllabus without advance notice and permission from the instructor will be graded down 1/3 of a grade for every day it is late (e.g., from a B+ to a B).

Citation & Submission
All written assignments must use standard citation format (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago), cite sources, and be submitted to the course website (not via email).

School and University Policies and Resources

Copyright Policy

Please note—Due to copyright restrictions, online access to this material is limited to instructors and students currently registered for this course. Please be advised that by clicking the link to the electronic materials in this course, you have read and accept the following:

> The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

Academic Integrity

Columbia University expects its students to act with honesty and propriety at all times and to respect the rights of others. It is fundamental University policy that academic dishonesty in any guise or personal conduct of any sort that disrupts the life of the University or denigrates or endangers members of the University community is unacceptable and will be dealt with severely. It is essential to the academic integrity and vitality of this community that individuals do their own work and properly acknowledge the circumstances, ideas, sources, and assistance upon which that work is based. Academic honesty in class assignments and exams is expected of all students at all times.

SPS holds each member of its community responsible for understanding and abiding by the SPS Academic Integrity and Community Standards posted at https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/academic-integrity-community-standards. You are required to read these standards within the first few days of class. Ignorance of the School's policy concerning academic dishonesty shall not be a defense in any disciplinary proceedings.

Diversity Statement

It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is our intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture.

Accessibility

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: https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services.

Class Recordings

All or portions of the class may be recorded at the discretion of the Instructor to support your learning. At any point, the Instructor has the right to discontinue the recording if it is deemed to be obstructive to the learning process.

If the recording is posted, it is confidential and it is prohibited to share the recording outside of the class.

SPS Academic Resources

The Division of Student Affairs provides students with academic counseling and support services such as online tutoring and career coaching: https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/student-support-resources.

Columbia University Information Technology

Columbia University Information Technology (CUIT) provides Columbia University students, faculty and staff with central computing and communications services. Students, faculty and staff may access University-provided and discounted software downloads.

Columbia University Library
Columbia's extensive library system ranks in the top five academic libraries in the nation, with many of its services and resources available online.

The Writing Center
The Writing Center provides writing support to undergraduate and graduate students through one-on-one consultations and workshops. They provide support at every stage of your writing, from brainstorming to final drafts. If you would like writing support, please visit the following site to learn about services offered and steps for scheduling an appointment. This resource is open to Columbia graduate students at no additional charge. Visit http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center.

Career Design Lab
The Career Design Lab supports current students and alumni with individualized career coaching including career assessment, resume & cover letter writing, agile internship job search strategy, personal branding, interview skills, career transitions, salary negotiations, and much more. Wherever you are in your career journey, the Career Design Lab team is here to support you. Link to https://careerdesignlab.sps.columbia.edu/