

Purdue University  
SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

COURSE SYLLABUS – WMBA-FALL 2013

RAWLS 2082 Oct 12, 19, 26; Nov 9, 16, 23; and Dec 7. All classes 0900-1230

Dr. Henry R. Feeser (Hank)

e-mail: [hank@feeser.net](mailto:hank@feeser.net)

Class Web Site: <http://wmba13.wix.com/home>

Office hours: Oct 12 before/after class, thereafter by appointment remotely

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

**Introduction:**

The modern day concept of sustainability dates back to Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring* which touched off an environmental awareness that grows stronger every day. While "sustainability" dates back to the late sixties in the US<sup>1</sup>, the most cited and used definition has its roots in the 1987<sup>2</sup> Bruntland Commission report. The commission was created to address growing concerns "about the accelerating deterioration of the [human environment](#) and [natural resources](#) and the consequences of that deterioration for [economic](#) and [social development](#)." The report deals with [sustainable development](#) and the change of politics needed for achieving that. The definition of this term in the report is quite well known and often cited as follows:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

From a business perspective, the concept of sustainability has been operationalized by focusing on the "triple bottom line"<sup>3</sup>, or the need to balance the three E's in the global economy; that is:

1. Economic prosperity
2. Environmental quality
3. Social equity
4. Geopolitical (4<sup>th</sup> "P") is becoming more and more a factor in sustainability and we will include this aspect in our studies also.

We will use **Profit, Planet, People and Politics** as surrogates for these constructs; a congruent model Social, Ecology (Environment), Economics expanded to include (Geo)Politics (SEEP) will also be introduced. In all studies and discussion of sustainability, a [Global viewpoint](#) will be taken.

Accenture (consulting company) for instance, currently defines "sustainability as the way a company or organization creates value for its shareholders and society by maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative effects on social, environmental and economic issues and stakeholders." By comparison, Shell<sup>5</sup> states "Shell is a global group of energy and petrochemical companies. Our aim is to meet the energy needs of society, in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally viable, now and in the future." And lastly, "Sun Chemical's sustainability policy<sup>6</sup> is based on the concept of eco-efficiency as defined by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Eco-efficiency is achieved by the delivery of economically competitive goods and services that satisfy our customers' needs and brings quality of life, while progressively reducing ecological impact and resource intensity throughout the life-cycle."

But in actually moving beyond the rhetoric about sustainability, companies have found that in fact actionable sustainability strategies have somewhat surprisingly resulted in [improved financial results](#) and [competitive advantage across industry spectrums](#). This course is about **gaining competitive advantage from sustainability strategies**. **The course views the world from the C-Level of a corporation from the perspective therein. As such, it is uniquely the only such course currently known to introduce such a broad strategic perspective at the graduate level.**

## Course Overview & Objectives:

The course will provide students with access and in-depth exposure to firms that are actively grappling with sustainability-related issues through cases, readings and open class discussion.

The course seeks to address these questions by providing students with:

1. In-depth knowledge of the various sustainability issues faced today (and tomorrow!);
2. A set of analytical tools and frameworks that will help you understand/analyze as well as impact these issues; and
3. Experience analyzing firms and/or organizations currently developing new business models (or reforming existing ones) in line with sustainable development.

The concept of Sustainability is evolving, adjusting, and morphing in front of our eyes. New corporate structures to cope with increasing social (think Occupy Wall Street) and environmental pressures (think an increasingly proactive EPA) are coming to the forefront. Understanding this new world is what this course is all about; having fun while doing so is also a central tenant of the course.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Grading: (1)** Starting week two, submit via Katalyst the assigned case question by start of class for that week. There are six such assignments, each weighted ten points each for a total of 60 points

(2) Final Exam weighted 30 points. See <http://wmba13.wix.com/home> for details concerning the final exam.

(3) Class Participation weighted 10 points. Since we meet for seven sessions, it is extremely important that you "are there" for every class, on time, ready to go with all assignments completed. This includes being logged in to Adobe Connect for remote classes on/ahead of time with all systems go.

Final grades will be assigned in accordance with Krannert's WMBA Guidelines. Total points: 100.

**Conduct of the course:** For the first session we will meet on Saturday in Rawls 2082 as scheduled. The remaining six sessions we will meet in an online video conferencing format. To support these six sessions, you will need access to a computer, a fairly robust internet connection, and a webcam/mic. It is suggested that you use a separate mic/headphone to cut down on extraneous noise; I will do so. Most out-of-the-box Macs support such a setup. Should circumstances preclude your video participation, you will be able to access the "classroom" via phone connection, or in the assigned classroom also. Purdue's Adobe Connect will be used for online course support the last six sessions. You will be able to either engage in the online sessions from Rawls 2082, at your home, or wherever you chose that has a fairly robust internet connection. On my end, I will be on Time Warner Cable at 30 megs down and 5 up which has worked well in the past. There will be a TA in all classes to further enhance your learning environment for this course.

**Class Web Site:** All assignments, readings, and video links will be maintained on the course web site, <http://www.wmba13.wix.com/home>. **This site will be kept current and used for all class assignments.** Should conflicts arise between this syllabus and the web site, the web site takes precedence and is to be followed. The site is programmed in HTML5 and should be rendered correctly on all Smartphones, tablets, and PCs, regardless of their brand and/or operating system(s). Keep in mind that some of the landing links are NOT HTML5 so less than optimal viewing may result for portable device users; all sites and links should display correctly on PCs. Also note that a minimal number of videos use flash codecs and WILL NOT display correctly on Apple devices which DO NOT support Adobe's Flash. [And yes, there are work-arounds, may Steve RIP.]

For those of you who own smartphones and/or tablets, a "Pack" of all written course material has been programmed on [www.skyepack.com](http://www.skyepack.com) under the name "Sustainability." Go to the App-store for your device, download/install Skyepack, open the App on your device, then install the Pack "Sustainability." iPads work very well for this purpose. We will discuss this further in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE is provided in detail via the course web site.

**Regarding Academic Integrity: see**

<http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academicintegritybrochure.php>

**ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR -> SEE [WWW.FEESER.NET](http://WWW.FEESER.NET) OR [WWW.FEESER.NET/MOBILE](http://WWW.FEESER.NET/MOBILE)**

**FOOTNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> The word 'sustainability' was originally used in forestry where Saxony's economic backbone, silver mining, was endangered due to an acute scarcity of wood which had been devoured for ore mining and production of charcoal.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.worldinbalance.net/intagreements/1987-brundtland.php> accessed 12/5/09

<sup>3</sup> <http://getsustainable.net/triple-bottom-line.html> accessed 12/5/09

<sup>4</sup> [https://microsite.accenture.com/sustainability/Pages/landing\\_corporate.aspx?c=ad\\_gp09usconpsgs\\_1208&n=g\\_Sustainability-Green/a\\_0\\_k/green\\_supply\\_chain&s\\_kwid=TC|7232|green%20supply%20chain||S|b|4078675363](https://microsite.accenture.com/sustainability/Pages/landing_corporate.aspx?c=ad_gp09usconpsgs_1208&n=g_Sustainability-Green/a_0_k/green_supply_chain&s_kwid=TC|7232|green%20supply%20chain||S|b|4078675363) accessed 12/5/09

<sup>5</sup> <http://sustainabilityreport.shell.com/2008/servicepages/welcome.html> accessed 12/7/09

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sunchemical.com/company/sustainability> accessed 12/10/09