Managing for Sustainability in the Global Economy: The Role of Human Resource Professionals in Organizations Aiming for Sustainability

HRIR 5000 Section 001 Fall 2013 - Term A

Course Meeting Dates, Time, and Place

Dates: Wednesdays, September 4 through October 16, 2013
Time: 5:45 p.m. – 9:05 p.m.
Place: Carlson School of Management, Room L-118

Instructor Contact Information and Office Hours

Instructor: David Wanberg, Adjunct Professor
dwanberg@umn.edu
Cell Phone: 612-384-1686 (8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. or anytime if it is an emergency)
Office Hours: The best way to contact the instructor is through email. Please put “HRIR 5000” in the subject line. The instructor will gladly meet with students before or after class to address any questions or discuss the course material in more detail. If students need to meet at another time, please let the instructor know and we will work out a meeting place and time. The instructor is also available to meet via Skype or other means if helpful.

Course Overview

Course Description

This course explores human resource management as it relates to the environmental, social, and economic issues of the 21st century. In short, this course is about the role of human resource professionals in helping organizations move toward sustainability.

In the first half of the course, students will consider how global environmental, social, and economic issues are affecting organizations and the planet as a whole. Students will also learn basic principles of sustainability and how organizations around the world are striving to become sustainable.

In the second half of the course, students will learn about specific actions that human resource professionals can take to help organizations move toward sustainability. Working in teams, students will develop a succinct set of recommendations that are intended to help human resource professionals in a Minnesota-based company move their company closer to sustainability.

At the completion of the course, students will have a good understanding of sustainability and why an increasing number of organizations are making the shift toward sustainability. Ultimately, students will have a solid understanding of how human resource professionals can help organizations facilitate their shift toward sustainability. The instructor hopes students leave this course inspired to learn more about the topic and apply what they learn in this class in their existing and future work settings.
Course Goals and Learning Objectives
At the completion of this course, students will have a good understanding of the following:

1. Key global environmental, social, and economic trends, challenges, and opportunities affecting organizations;
2. The importance of systems thinking and how it applies to human resource professionals helping organizations move toward sustainability;
3. Key sustainability frameworks, principles, and tools used by organizations;
4. How to critically analyze the actions of organizations as they move from or toward sustainability and what that movement means to the future of those organizations, their employees, and stakeholders, as well as the future of society and the environment;
5. How human resource professionals can help organizations move toward sustainability;
6. Where to access additional information, resources, and opportunities that can take you beyond the material covered in this course;
7. How to effectively present and implement human resource recommendations to an organization and its stakeholders.

Course Moodle Site
Throughout the semester, the instructor will put presentations, assignments, readings, and other resources on the course Moodle site. Students will be asked to upload information and assignments to the Moodle site as well. You can access the site by going to www.myU.umn.edu and follow the link for my courses. If you have not used Moodle in the past, you may have to first log in at www.moodle.umn.edu. Please check the Moodle site frequently.

Books, Readings, and Resources
There is no assigned textbook for this class. However, the instructor will place a variety of readings and resources on the course Moodle site for student use.

General Expectations of the Students and Instructor

What Students Can Expect from the Instructor
The instructor will strive to ensure that students leave this course with a strong understanding of the role HR professionals can play in helping organizations move toward sustainability. The instructor also hopes to inspire students to learn more about sustainability and to actively apply the principles discussed in class to their own unique experiences. More specifically, the instructor will....

1. Plan and communicate the framework of the course, but throughout the semester, the instructor may alter the specifics of the course as needed to best meet the learning objectives of the course and student interests.
2. Bring his background and experiences into the classroom, but the instructor will also invite guest speakers and students to share their background and experiences on course related topics. The instructor welcomes a discussion of a variety of beliefs and attitudes related to course topics.
3. Be available to discuss the course material with you via email, the telephone, or in person. The instructor is committed to helping students learn the course material.

4. Treat students with respect.

5. Evaluate student work in a fair manner consistent with University grading policies.

What the Instructor Expects from the Students

The instructor expects all students will....

1. Actively participate in the class, which means attending every class, listening, and participating in class discussions and activities (see “Attendance Policy” for additional information).

2. Take this class seriously and put good effort into learning the course materials. The instructor expects high quality work from all students.

3. Let the instructor know about any difficulties or concerns you are having with the course. Likewise, let the instructor know of any suggestions you have for improving the course.

4. Take personal responsibility for making this course a meaningful and rewarding experience.

5. Check the course Moodle site and your official University email account often for class updates.

In short, the students and instructor are in this course together. We all need to work together to maximize what we will gain from this course.

Conduct, Attendance, Late Policy, and Scholastic Dishonesty

The University of Minnesota Board of Regents Student Conduct Code applies to all students at the University. You can view a copy to the code at the following website: www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.html. If you have any questions about the Student Conduct Code, please contact the instructor.

Conduct in the Classroom

The students in this course represent a range of experiences and values. This diversity provides richness to the class that will benefit the class if we all actively contribute and work to ensure that all are full classroom participants. Treat each other with respect. And, as appropriate, share your skills and experiences with others as we all try to strengthen our understanding of the course material.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes. The instructor will have an attendance sheet at every class. Students must sign the attendance sheet to receive credit for attending the class. The instructor will record attendance on the course Moodle site. Students are responsible for checking the Moodle site to ensure the accuracy of their attendance record. Students must notify the instructor of any discrepancy in their record within one week of the attendance posting in question.

While the instructor expects students to attend every class, the instructor recognizes that students may be absent from class for a variety of excused and unexcused reasons. Student absences will be handled as follows.

Excused Absences. As per University policy, students will not be penalized for absence during the semester due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. Such circumstances include documented illness of the student or
his or her dependent, participation in intercollegiate athletic events, subpoeas, jury duty, military service, bereavement, and religious observances. Such circumstances also include activities sponsored by the University if identified by the senior academic officer for the campus or his or her designee as the basis for excused absences. Students are responsible for documenting the legitimacy of any absences. Students are also responsible for making up all work missed due to the excused absence.

**Unexcused Absences.** The instructor recognizes that a student may miss class for a variety of reasons not officially recognized by the University as an excused absence. Such absences may include unavoidable work conflicts, transportation problems, sickness that does not require a visit to a doctor’s office, etc. Depending on the circumstances, the instructor may waive a penalty for unexcused absences provided that the student completes all work missed in class and that the student completes an instructor approved make-up assignment within one week of the missed class or prior to a revised deadline approved by the course instructor. A make-up assignment may involve one of the following:

1. Watch an instructor approved Frontiers in the Environment lecture (in person or online at: [environment.umn.edu/news_events/events/frontiers.html](environment.umn.edu/news_events/events/frontiers.html)) and write a two-page summary of the lecture or present a PowerPoint summary of the lecture to the class.
2. Read an instructor approved course related journal article and write a two-page summary of the article or present a PowerPoint summary of the article to the class.
3. Prepare a student-initiated make-up assignment to be approved in advance by the instructor.

If a student misses class for an unexcused reason and therefore misses an in-class assignment or quiz, that student will not be able to make-up the missed assignment or quiz.

If a student does not complete the class work and make-up assignment from an unexcused absence within the assigned deadline (and as approved by the instructor), that student's final course grade will be lowered as follows:

1. **One unexcused absence:** the instructor may waive a penalty (depending on the circumstances and the class missed);
2. **Two unexcused absences:** the instructor may lower the student's final course grade by one full letter grade (for example, an "A" may be reduced to an "B"); or
3. **Three or more unexcused absences:** the student will not receive a passing grade.

**Policy for Arriving Late to Class or Having to Leave Class Early**

The instructor realizes that some students may have unavoidable conflicts that could result in them arriving to class late or that could result in them having to leave class early. For example, students may experience a transportation problem that causes them to be late to class. To the extent possible, students must coordinate these issues with the instructor ahead of time. Students will be responsible for all material covered during their absence.

**Late Assignment Policy**

To submit a late assignment without penalty, the student must provide documentation related to an excused absence. Otherwise late assignments will be subject up to a 10% penalty provided they are submitted within one week of the assignment due date or prior to a revised deadline approved by the course instructors. If a student knows they are going to miss class when an assignment is due, they must submit the assignment before the class meets in order to avoid a late penalty.
**Scholastic Dishonesty**

Scholastic dishonesty is any act by a student that misrepresents the student's own academic work or that compromises the academic work of another. Examples include plagiarizing, cheating on assignments or examinations, and engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work. Students engaging in scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the entire course. Please contact the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity ([www.oscai.umn.edu/integrity/faculty/index.html](http://www.oscai.umn.edu/integrity/faculty/index.html)) if you are uncertain about whether a specific action constitutes scholastic dishonesty.

**Student Rights, Accommodations, and Resources**

**Equity and Diversity**

The University will provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: [www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.html](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.html)

**Sexual Harassment**

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting, your internship setting, or any setting. For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: [www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.html](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.html)

**Disability Accommodations**

The University is committed to providing quality education to all students regardless of ability. Determining appropriate disability accommodations is a collaborative process. You as a student must register with Disability Services and provide documentation of your disability. The course instructor must provide information regarding a course's content, methods, and essential components. The combination of this information will be used by Disability Services to determine appropriate accommodations for a particular student in a particular course. For more information, please reference Disability Services: [ds.umn.edu/](http://ds.umn.edu/) Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange special accommodations should contact the instructor and the Office of Disability Services (160 McNamara Alumni Center, 612-626-1333 TTY) as soon as possible.

**Mental Health Services**

Students may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance abuse, depression, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with these and other issues. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health website: [www.mentalhealth.umn.edu](http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu).
Student Time Commitment

In accordance with University policy, students are expected to spend an average of three hours per week on this course per credit received. Given that this is a two-credit course, the instructor expects you to spend at least three hours a week in class and three hours a week outside of class in learning the course material. Depending on your experience, work style, and interests, you may need to spend more time per credit than that of a typical student.

Student Evaluation

The instructor will evaluate student work in accordance with the University of Minnesota’s Uniform Grading Policy and on a percentage basis as follows:

A: Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements (93 - 100%)
A-: (90-92%)

B+: (87-89%)
B: Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements (83-86%)
B-: (80-82%)

C+: (77-79%)
C: Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect (73-76%)
C-: (70 -72%)

D+: (67-69%)
D: Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements (63-66%)
D-: (60-62%)

F: Failed to meet the minimum requirements of the course.

Incompletes will only be assigned in the case of extraordinary circumstances arising late in the semester that prevent normal completion of course requirements.

The following provides a tentative breakdown of how the instructor will determine your final grade in this course. Please note that the instructor may revise the grading components and weighting of the components at any time and will communicate those changes with students.

- Individual Assignment: Initial Reflection Paper ................................................................. 5%
- Individual Assignment: Analysis of a Corporate Sustainability Report ......................... 25%
- Quiz 1: Understanding Principles of Sustainability .......................................................... 10%
- Team Assignment: HR Recommendations for General Mills ....................................... 40%
- Quiz 2: Understanding HR’s Role in Advancing Sustainability ....................................... 15%
- Final Reflection Paper ...................................................................................................... 5%

An unexcused absence will lower your final course grade as per the Attendance Policy described in this syllabus. Active participation in the class may improve your final course grade.
Course Schedule and Topics

The following describes the tentative course schedule, general topics, and assignments. The instructor may adjust the schedule and topics throughout the semester to best address the needs of the class. Please frequently refer to the course Moodle site for additional details and updates (including readings).

Part One: Laying the Foundation - Understanding Sustainability and Its Connection to Human Resource Management

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Sept. 4</td>
<td>Building the Case for Sustainability as a Strategic Issue for Organizations</td>
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<td>An Introduction to the Role of HR Professionals in Helping Organizations Move Toward Sustainability</td>
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<td>- Assign Initial Reflection Paper (Due September 11)</td>
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<td>- Assign Analysis of Corporate Sustainability Report (Due Sept. 18)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>Case Studies of Organizations and Their Journey Toward Sustainability</td>
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<td>- Guest Speaker: Ellen Silva, Applied Sustainability Senior Manager, General Mills</td>
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<td>- Assign HR Recommendations for General Mills (due Tuesday, Oct. 15)</td>
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<td>- Initial Reflection Paper Due</td>
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<td>Developing a Deeper Understanding of Sustainability, Sustainability Frameworks, and Sustainability Tools used by Organizations</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sept. 18</td>
<td>HR's Role in Organizing for Sustainability</td>
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<td>- Analysis of a Corporate Sustainability Report Due</td>
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<td>- Quiz 1</td>
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Part Two: Building on the Foundation - Applying Human Resource Management Techniques to Advance Sustainability

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sept. 25</td>
<td>Digging Deeper into HR’s Role in Organizing for Sustainability</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Oct. 2</td>
<td>HR’s Role in Implementing Sustainability Actions in Organization</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>HR’s Role in Monitoring and Measuring an Organization’s Progress in Moving Toward Sustainability</td>
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<td>- Assign Final Reflection Paper</td>
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<td>- Quiz 2</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>Presentation of Team Projects and Course Reflection</td>
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<td>- HR Recommendations for General Mills Due</td>
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