



BUS/SUST/ENV 340 Global Sustainable Business

Course Syllabus

Spring Semester 2025

Instructor: Francesca Hansstein

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: None

Class Meeting Days & Time: Mond–Wed, 9:00-10:30 pm

Office Hours: Monday after class by appointment (FSE Office, First Floor)

Course Type: Course with a Service Learning component

Course Fee: \$50.00

Course Description

The role of sustainability in business has evolved over the past few decades from a fringe issue to one of central concern. This course has two objectives: first, to delve into the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that sustainability presents in business, and second, to equip students with the practical skills to apply their knowledge to real-world business scenarios. The course has a global dimension as students examine complex environmental, social, and economic factors that affect sustainability in business, also reflecting on the profound differences that exist between different social and economic contexts. Students will also explore the role of consumer behavior and its determinants to promote more sustainable practices. Through case studies and analysis of sustainability strategies, students will acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to assist companies in adopting more eco-friendly practices. In addition to researching business management tools and best practices, students will also learn to apply evaluation tools for assessing a company's sustainability performance and identifying areas for improvement.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods for assessing students' achievement for each learning outcome.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- *Explain* how the business focus on sustainability has evolved and describe current challenges and opportunities faced by businesses committed to supporting sustainability efforts both locally and globally;
- *Articulate* the principles and values that support global sustainable business;
- *Describe* specific strategies and practices that businesses can employ to promote sustainability;
- *Examine* the advantages of utilizing specific sustainable KPIs and certification programs for assessing environmental performance in businesses, considering both local and global contexts;
- *Formulate* an action plan to improve the sustainability standards for an active business, aligning the goals with its location, sector, and market potential;
- *Compare* the efficacy and reliability of the different marketing strategies that businesses use to communicate with their stakeholders.

Course Materials

Readings (mandatory)

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

Note: The textbook *Sustainable Business Key Issues* by Helen Kopnina, Rory Padfield, and Josephine Mylan, edited by Routledge (2023, third edition) (not mandatory for this course) is available for consultation in the Umbra library for those who wish to explore additional resources.

Assessment

Attendance	10%
Weekly Moodle Quizzes	20%
Course Journal	20%
Field assignment	15%
Service-Learning Project	28%
End of Semester CE Presentation	5%
Office hours	2%

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional Excellent
A-	90% - 92%	
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences per course without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Weekly Moodle Quizzes (20%)

Students will be assigned a quiz every week, which will be due before class time and will not be reopened. The quiz will be on Moodle and it is not timed. Students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the highest grade they receive. There will be a combination of technical, methodological, and content questions. The content questions will help students zoom in on the most important ideas of the readings. The technical questions will help students learn the class' policies and administrative procedures. The

methodological questions will test on skills that will pop up every week, like finding an author's argument and assessing sources.

Course Journal (20%)

Students will be provided with a notebook at the start of the semester, which they will use as a personal space through which to reflect on course material and ideas. In-class assignments (e.g. summaries of assigned readings, analyses of primary sources, mental maps, reflections, predictive exercises) will be regularly scheduled and graded twice throughout the semester, i.e. before the mid-semester break (in Week 6) and at the end of the course (Week 12). Each of these checks is worth 10% of your grade, for a total of 20%. See the full prompt on Moodle for more information.

Field assignment (15%)

Students will submit a one-page document evaluating the sustainability of a product they recently purchased at a local supermarket, preferably from an Italian brand. They can select from various categories such as food, FMCGs, or clothing. The student's task is to identify indicators of its environmental friendliness through cues on packaging, labels, and other readily identifiable information. A prompt for this assignment will be made accessible on Moodle. The field paper assignment is due by the end of Week 5.

Service-Learning Project (28%)

For the final projects, under the instructor's supervision and guidance, students will conduct a SWOT analysis of a local business to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in terms of sustainability. Based on the SWOT analysis, students will write a report describing the results and suggesting strategies to improve the current practices. The report will follow the GRI standards' framework. Students will present their work in class. A prompt for this assignment will be accessible on Moodle. The overall assessment grade is made of two components: class presentation 5%; and project report 23%.

Office Hours (2%)

Getting to know your professor makes you more comfortable with that person and therefore more likely to ask for help. It also might help you to ask questions about the various assignments or discuss a paper idea. In this course, you get 2% of your grade for coming one time before Week 9 to office hours.

End of Semester Community Engagement Presentations (5%)

During Special Academic Events Week, on **Thursday, April 24**, the class will present a 15-minute summary of the project experience to the Umbra community. Students will receive the guidelines and presentation order after the mid-semester break. Participation in this event is MANDATORY and an integral part of the community engagement grade.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero.

As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused "sick days" and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student's academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student's final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students' grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided. Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during an exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person, or an AI generator, for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Laptop & Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be set to silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices (for example, ear buds) cannot be used during class lectures and discussions unless there has been a specific academic accommodation.

As an instructor and as a person, I am dependent on both my computer and my telephone. That said: An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result, you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, I have a physical notebook policy: I ask you to leave your computers in your bags and phones in your pockets and use a regular notebook. There are four exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation; 2) if you're using a tablet to take notes, 3) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer; or 4) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools.

U.N. Sustainable Development Goals

This course contributes to the achievement of one or more goals of U. N. Agenda for Sustainable Development:



Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Introduction to global sustainable business

Meeting 1 *In the first class, the instructor will explain the structure of the course and introduce the topic of Global Sustainable Business presenting the definition(s), the evolution of the concept, and current main applications, with a special focus on the Italian market. Introduction of the community engagement project partner by Umbra staff.*

Meeting 2 *The Patagonia Case Study.*

Readings for the week:

- Section I, Chapter 1st, Introduction – key concepts in sustainability issues. Helen Kopnina, Rory Padfield, and Josephine Mylan. *Sustainable Business: Key Issues*. 3rd ed. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2023, 3-23.
- Schaltegger, S., & Burritt, R. (2018). Business cases and corporate engagement with sustainability: Differentiating ethical motivations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 147, 241-259.
- Neren Uri (2012). Patagonia's Provocative Black Friday Campaign. *Harvard Business Review*, 1-5.

WEEK 2

Business ethics

Meeting 1 *The concept of business ethics: from production to consumption.*

Service Learning Project: In-class presentation of the project and partner by Umbra staff.

Meeting 2 *Discussion of the Volkswagen case study.*

Readings for the week:

- Szabo, S., & Webster, J. (2021). Perceived greenwashing: the effects of green marketing on environmental and product perceptions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 171, 719-739.
- What is greenwashing? BBC News (*video*) is available at [this link](#).
- Kopnina et al., *Sustainable Business, Business Ethics*, pages 28-51.

WEEK 3

Actions, policies, and programs in Italy and Europe

Meeting 1 *The EU Green Deal and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive.*

Meeting 2 *The effect of the new legislation on greenwashing and consumer behavior: Italian case studies and best practices.*

Service Learning Project: *In-class presentation with the community partner Francesco Micillo, from Vettore 2476 fashion brand start-up.*

Readings for the week:

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- Hereu-Morales, J., Segarra, A., & Valderrama, C. (2024). The European (Green?) Deal: a systematic environmental sustainability analysis. *Sustainable Development*, 32(1), 647-661.
- Martini, M., Fedi, A., Murphy, B., Dean, M., & Loera, B. (2024). More Than Organic: Consumer Expectations of Sustainability and Quality. Evidences from a Qualitative Study in Italy. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, 30(1), 1-15.
- Kopnina et al., Sustainable Business, "Environmental Challenges" pages 55-79. *(optional)*

WEEK 4

Globalization and business: sustainable behaviors in the food industry

Meeting 1 *An introduction to sustainability in the food industry*

Meeting 2: *Factors affecting consumer purchasing behavior of sustainable food.*

Readings for the week:

- Baldassarre, F. F., Santovito, S., Campo, R., & Dilozenzo, G. (2024). Sustainable and healthy purchasing behaviors towards palm oil-based food in Italy. *British Food Journal*, 126(1), 156-172.
- A Biotech Solution to Palm Oil Deforestation, Climate Rising., Harvard Business School Podcast (2024), [available here](#).
- Kopnina et al., Sustainable Business, "Social and Economic Challenges" pages 80-102. *(optional)*

WEEK 5

Globalization and business: the fashion industry

Meeting 1 *Sustainability and Fashion.*

Meeting 2: *Guest Lecture: TBC*

Readings for the week:

- Niinimäki, K., Peters, G., Dahlbo, H., Perry, P., Rissanen, T., & Gwilt, A. (2020). The environmental price of fast fashion. *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment*, 1(4), 189-200.
- Tebaldi, L., Brun, A., & Bottani, E. (2022). Evidences on sustainability issues in the Fashion Supply Chain: An empirical study in Italy. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 33, 651-663.
- Kopnina et al., Sustainable Business, "Globalization and Business" pages 125-147. *(optional)*

Assignments:

Field assignment. Upload your paperwork on Moodle.

WEEK 6

Globalization and business: the steel industry

Meeting 1 *Learning through history: the environmental crime case study of ILVA.*

Meeting 2: *Visit the Fair Trade Shop Monimbò TBC.*

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Readings for the week:

- Lucifora, A., Bianco F., and Viagliasindi, MG (2015). Environmental crime and corporate miscompliance: case study on the ILVA steel plant in Italy. *Efface – European Action to Fight Environmental Crime*, Case Study, 1-27.
- Kopnina et al., Sustainable Business, "New Strategic Thinking" pages 209-229. (optional)

Assignments:

Upload course journal activities up to W6 (included). Choose the format you prefer: ppt, word, or PDF.

Semester Break

WEEK 7

New strategic thinking: the sharing economy

Meeting 1 Recap. *The sharing economy: from production to consumption.*

Meeting 2: *Information about the final project, collaborative consumption.*

Readings for the week:

- Forno, F., & Garibaldi, R. (2015). Sharing economy in travel and tourism: The case of home-swapping in Italy. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 16(2), 202-220.
- Gazzola, P., Vătămanescu, E. M., Andrei, A. G., & Marrapodi, C. (2019). Users' motivations to participate in the sharing economy: Moving from profits toward sustainable development. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 26(4), 741-751.
- Benzaghta, M. A., Elwalda, A., Mousa, M. M., Erkan, I., & Rahman, M. (2021). SWOT analysis applications: An integrative literature review. *Journal of Global Business Insights*, 6(1), 55-73.

WEEK 8

New strategic thinking: the B-Corp Movement; GRI reporting standards

Meeting 1: *The B-Corp Movement and Certification The GRI reporting standards*

Meeting 2: *Meeting with partner (TBC)*

Readings for the week:

- Diez-Busto, E., Sanchez-Ruiz, L., & Fernandez-Laviada, A. (2021). The B Corp movement: A systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 13(5), 2508, pages 1-17.
- B Lab Europe, Alpro: Promoting healthier eating and sustainable living, [available here](#).

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- How GRI is addressing the challenges of global reporting, PxW US, podcast, [available here](#)
- Kopnina et al., Sustainable Business, "Cradle-to-cradle" pages 230-241. *(optional)*

WEEK 9

New Strategic thinking: the Cradle to Cradle and Circular Economy

Meeting 1: *The opportunities of the cradle-to-cradle business strategy: certification and upcycling*

Meeting 2: *Circular economy and electronic waste*

Readings for the week:

- Testa, S., Troise, C., Cincotti, S., & Camilleri, M. A. (2024). The role of electronic waste management solutions and message framing in influencing consumer behaviors: Exploring the crowdfunding context. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 33(2), 917-929.
- 4th Report on Circular Economy in Italy (2022), Circular Economy Network, pages 1-10.
- Circular economy country profile – Italy (2022), European Topic Centre on Circular economy and resource use, Report, 1-21.
- 100 Italian Circular Economy Stories (2022), European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, 1-220 *(optional)*.

WEEK 10

Reflection on the role of consumers

Meeting 1: *Effective strategies to nudge consumers toward sustainable behaviors.*

Meeting 2: *Sustainability or scam? Understanding greenwashing tactics*

Readings for the week:

- Mintel (2024), Global Consumer Trends 2024, Report, 1-31.
- Hardisty, and Rishad Habib (2019), the Elusive Green Consumer, *Harvard Business Review*, pages 1-11.
- How to Spot Greenwashing: When Companies Aren't as Green as They Claim (2023), Wakk Street Journal, [video](#).

WEEK 11

Sustainable reporting: best practices and tips

Meeting 1: *Reporting in sustainability: best practices and review of the main reporting standards*

Meeting 2: *Final Review*

Readings for the week:

- Barilla (2023). The Joy of Food a Better Life. Sustainability Report 2022, Report, 1-151 (selected parts).
- Ferrari (2023). Sustainability Report 1-180 (selected parts).

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WEEK 12

Final Exam

Meeting 1: *Group Work*

Meeting 2: *Group presentations in class with the partner; discussion and feedback.*

Assignments:

- Upload the course journal activities from W6 to W12. Choose the format you prefer: ppt, word, or PDF.
- Upload the final presentation (PPT or similar) and the final project (Word or similar) on Moodle.

WEEK 13

Final Classes, Final Exams, & Special Academic Events Week

Meeting 1 (Wednesday, April 23): *Getting ready for the Semester Community Engagement Presentation and course wrap-up*

Thursday, April 24: Community Engagement Presentation

Assignment

- Submission of the Final Presentation on Moodle.
- Upload course journal activities from W7 to W12 (included). Choose the format you prefer: ppt, word, or PDF.



BUS/SUST/ENV 340: Global Sustainable Business

Service Learning Project

Syllabus Appendix

Spring 2024

What is service learning?

Service learning is an important type of experiential education integrated into a course in which:

- Students engage in an organized activity or project aimed to address a community need that is identified in collaboration with the community partner;
- Students critically reflect on the link between the experience in the community, course content, and the learning goals; and
- There is reciprocal learning both by the students and by the community partners.

Students will need a certain degree of flexibility, creativity, and self-initiative to realize a service learning project. Organization and open communication in-class with the instructor and team members will be key to student success.

Service Learning Project Overview

Community Partner

Vettore 2476 is a sustainable fashion startup founded by Francesco Micillo. Having gained a deep understanding of sustainable business practices from his corporate finance thesis developed in collaboration with ENEL, a leading Italian energy company, Francesco was inspired by Patagonia and his past experiences in the fashion industry to launch his own brand. Rooted in his hometown of Norcia, a picturesque medieval town nestled in the heart of the Umbrian Apennines, and named after the region's highest peak, Mount Vettore, the brand is committed to producing high-quality, sustainable apparel.

While Vettore 2476 is currently in its startup phase, Francesco continues to work as a consultant in Milan to gain further experience and attract investment. The brand's focus is on producing and selling clothing, with a future vision of specializing in technical mountain wear. Alongside its fashion endeavors, Vettore 2476 is deeply committed to environmental stewardship. Francesco organizes annual community clean-up events, utilizing data analytics to identify and address specific environmental challenges. For example, by analyzing the types of waste collected, the community can implement targeted solutions, such as installing additional ashtrays to reduce cigarette litter.

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Website: <https://vettore2476.org/index.php/shop/>

Project Description and Goals

By conducting thorough research on Vettore 2476, including interviews with the founder and an analysis of company materials, students will gain a deep understanding of the startup's unique challenges and opportunities. Building on this knowledge, students will select and execute one of the following projects: a comprehensive sustainability assessment, a B Corp certification strategy, a market research and branding initiative, or a sustainability-driven business plan.

Organization, Expectations, and Roles

Student teams will be chosen by the instructor. Teams will be responsible for deciding how to divide the various tasks to ensure members contribute equally throughout the course of the project. An important amount of time will be dedicated to the service learning project's progress in class. If necessary, teams will also be required to meet outside of class each week for approximately 1-2 hours.

In-Class Presentation for Community Partner

Each team will create and present a final detailed presentation based on its findings and recommendations to a company's representative, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. Audience members will be expected to ask questions to the other teams presenting to promote a community of learning and support.

Guidelines:

- PowerPoint or Google Slides (spell-check).
- 10-15 minutes.
- Each team member contributes to the preparation and delivery of the presentation.
- Rehearse presentation as a group for content, length, and transitions.

Final Report

Students are to assume the role of a sustainability manager/consultant to “Giuditta Brozzeti” Museum-Atelier. Students have been asked by the management to complete a sustainability report and to prepare a strategy to become more sustainable in the future. Students will apply analytical methods and concepts developed in class to provide an original report and set of recommendations.

Community Engagement Final Presentation

During Special Academic Events Week, the class will present a 15-minute summary of the project experience to the Umbra community during the Community Engagement Presentations on **Thursday, April 24**. Students will receive the guidelines and presentation order after the mid-semester break. Participation in this event is **MANDATORY** and an integral part of the community engagement grade.

Grading Rubric

The service learning project is worth a total of 33% of the final course grade, which will be divided into three categories:

1. Sustainability report (23% of the final course grade)
2. In-class presentation for partner (5% of the final course grade)
3. End of Semester Community Engagement Presentations (5% of the final course grade)

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