



# Strategies for Sustainability Management (E-105)

Harvard Extension School  
Spring Semester 2015

## Strategies for Sustainability Management ENVR E-105 (#21808)

### SYLLABUS

#### Overview of the Course

Many sustainability courses are focused on global issues (e.g., climate change) or presented as corporate social responsibility (CSR). This course focuses instead on a wide range of local organizations that are seeking to become sustainable and contribute to the sustainability of the community and perhaps their “parent” organizations. Think globally – act locally! Maybe the corporate sustainability program should be built from the bottom-up as the sum of the “local” parts. Organizations need to understand their internal and external context. They need to be engaged with their key stakeholders in the neighborhood and community. We need to move beyond green initiatives (“random acts of sustainability”) by integrating sustainability and risk management into what every employee or organization member does every day. You will be actively engaged in a perspective of sustainability in organizations that you can experience in your own life through weekly cohort discussions. This is the way to learn how sustainability works and how it transforms the way these organizations operate and thrive over the long term. Sustainability is defined as “the capability of an organization to transparently manage its responsibilities for environmental stewardship, social well-being, and economic prosperity over the long term while being held accountable to its stakeholders.” Jargon, euphemisms and colors (e.g. green) will not be used. This course has been taught at Harvard University for the past twelve years. This 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the course has been updated to represent the latest research and practice in sustainability and risk management at the organizational level. The content is supported by a peer reviewed body of knowledge on this topic.

#### Action Learning

Learning through action is a process of experience and reflection that happens with the support of a cohort group working with each other with the intention of developing the skills to use the knowledge presented on the website and in your reading. You will visit an organization at the beginning of the course and use the tools that are arranged in a practical step-by-step format. By working with your assigned cohort members during the week to hone your skills, you will heighten your learning experience by actually seeking how your organization can operate in a sustainable fashion in the community. This interaction will take place with the use of an online discussion board. A *distance-learning option* enables people from more than 30 countries around the world to participate in this open-enrollment course. This thinking through or reflection is considered to be a necessary precursor to effective action. Learning from the cohort experience can be enhanced through your active participation.



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Weekly discussions of the cohort learning are held in a live setting using direct streaming and a chat room to involve a large number of the class members. This year we plan to hold a section for class members that are in Europe and the Middle East since the traditional live section is in the evening in Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA). The evening session is preserved on streaming video for those that cannot participate directly. We will seek to find a way to preserve the separate “section” discussion. The class website is used to provide and store all of the learning and reflection provided in this course. Most of the material is viewable only to the students enrolled in the course.

The entire teaching staff is dedicated to the topic each week and to serving you in this action learning experience. Please read the information provided on the class website to get more information on how this course is presented.

## Learning Outcomes

This action learning course is designed to produce the following outcomes:

- ✓ Define sustainability from the perspective of organizations operating at the community level
- ✓ Demonstrate relationships between risk management and sustainability
- ✓ Help you develop the skill to research and understand what makes organizations sustainable
- ✓ Looking beyond initiatives to integrate sustainability within any organization
- ✓ Create a focus on obtaining the organization’s objectives to drive long term sustainability
- ✓ Understand how risk management supports sustainability in different contexts
- ✓ Learn how to engage employees and stakeholders in the organization’s sustainability efforts
- ✓ Examine how an organization is involved in value chains
- ✓ Learn the importance of communicating an organization’s sustainability maturity level
- ✓ Develop your own body of knowledge to improve your sustainability competency
- ✓ Understand how to reflect on the future of sustainable organizations in sustainable communities
- ✓ Use action learning to support your continuing professional development

## Class Schedule

(Class discussion dates are underlined)

### **Dec 1 – Jan 25 Understanding Sustainability (Posted on Website)**

- Introduction to the Content Presented in this Course
- Introduction to creating the local Cases
- Information to Help You Navigate Through the Course
- Foundation information on risk management and sustainability
- Guide to Taking this Course

### **Jan 26, 2014 Review of the Foundation Information (Open Discussion)**

- Understanding the perspective of a local organization
- Understanding risk management, decision-making, and management of systems
- How do these topics help integrate sustainability into local organizations?



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- Jan 27-Feb 2 Local Organizations and Context (Week 1)**
- Definition and typology of organizations – Community level
  - Individuals participating in multiple organizations
  - Hierarchies of organizations from bottom-up
  - Determine the internal and external context
  - Vision/Mission/Core Values and setting the organization’s objectives
  - **CASE:** Using SWOT, PESTLE and other similar tools
- Feb 3 - 9 Stakeholders, Customers and License to Operate (Week 2)**
- Understanding the active role of stakeholders in sustainability
  - Identifying stakeholders through the external context
  - Concept of true engagement to understand stakeholder ‘interests’
  - Practical side of achieving a “Social License to Operate”
  - **CASE:** Using the ‘Voice of the Customer’ and other similar tools
- Feb 10 - 16 *HOLIDAY – No Live Class – Organizational Governance & Leadership (Week 3)***
- Governance in a local organization and their ‘parent’ organization
  - Decision-making, knowledge, and sense making in an organization
  - Mandate and commitment for risk management and sustainability
  - Ethics, principles and codes of conduct
  - **CASE:** Decision and sense making tools – knowledge management
- Feb 17- 23 Risk Management (Week 4)**
- Understanding the international definition of risk
  - Working with ‘uncertainty’ and its effects on the organization’s objectives
  - Working with the organization’s opportunities and threats
  - Risk management’s – Principles, Framework and Method
  - **CASE:** Use of risk assessment tools
- Feb 24–Mar 2 Managing in an Organization (Week 5)**
- Systems of management basics (Plan-Do-Check-Act)
  - Creating a system of management framework
  - Integrating with the risk management framework and process
  - **CASE:** Creating a universal organizational system of management platform
- Mar 3 - 9 Understanding Organizational Sustainability (Week 6)**
- Defining sustainability from the perspective of an organization
  - Operational and supporting processes
  - Value chain within the organization
  - **CASE:** Porter’s value chain and process mapping
- Mar 5 *Mid-Term Exercise Posted on Class Website (DUE March 15)***



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- Mar 11 – 15** **No Class – Improving Sustainability in Operational Processes (Week 7)**
- Performance frameworks and applicability to sustainability
  - Understanding leading and lag performance indicators
  - Enhancing the execution of sustainability in an organization
  - Scoring Sustainability Performance and Results
  - Navigating the hierarchies of parent organizations – “bottom-up” management
  - **No Case This Week**
- March 15** **Mid-Term Exercise Due at Midnight (US Eastern Time)**
- Mar 15 – 22** **Spring Break – No Class – No Cohort Discussions**
- Mar 23** **Introduction to the Measurement of an Organization’s Accountability (Discussion)**
- How to measure anything – even “intangibles”
  - Life cycle of a metric
  - Importance of transparency in organizational sustainability
- Mar 24 - 30** **Developing Sustainability in a Value Chain (Week 8)**
- Interface between system of management, risk and performance
  - Sustainability in an organization’s supply chain
  - Participating in the customer(s) supply chain
  - Competitive advantage and shared value
  - **CASE:** Creating “Risk-Based Thinking” in the organization
- Mar 31–Apr 6** **Monitoring and Measuring Sustainability (Week 9)**
- Creating a process for monitoring and measurement
  - Improving performance (lead) to get better results (lag)
  - Overlap between risk, decision-making, and sustainability
  - Keeping information up-to-date – Management of Change
  - Maintaining a “*Forward Looking*” perspective
  - **CASE:** Creating a process focus in the organization
- Apr 7 – 13** **Transparency and Accountability in an Organization (Week 10)**
- Concepts of transparency and accountability
  - Questionnaires and scorecards – internal and external sources
  - Contributing to a ‘parent organization’s’ sustainability report
  - Internal auditing and external assurance
  - **CASE:** Ways to let others know about the organization’s sustainability efforts
- Apr 14 - 20** **Maturity of a Sustainability Program (Week 11)**
- Using sustainability maturity matrices
  - Creating and using a maturity grid
  - Difference between reporting and program maturity



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- **CASE:** Creating maturity grids and spider plots

### **Apr 21 – 27** Open Discussion (Week 12)

- Use of the monitoring and measurement in a sustainability program
- Continual improvement and innovation
- Planning for organization continuity after a risk 'event' - resilience
- Planning for management of the organization's assets
- **No Case This Week**

**April 29** *Semester Report Due (Graduate Students Only)* Note the Wednesday date!

### **Apr 28-May 4** Continual Improvement and Innovation (Week 13)

- Management System and Risk Driving Continual Improvement
- Performance Driving Results
- Innovation Driving Performance
- **No Case** – Discuss Scenarios for Cambridge and its Organizations

**April 30** *Final Exercise Posted, Due on May 10*

**May 10** *Final Exercise Due at Midnight (US Eastern Time)*

## Registration Information

You can register for this course on the Harvard Extension School website:

<http://www.extension.harvard.edu/registration> Additional information on what you need to know to register properly can be found on the class website (provided below).

The enrollment period commences on November 17, 2014. Registration closes on January 25, 2015. The first class is on Monday, January 26, 2015. Please do not wait until last minute to register.

The tuition and registration fee for noncredit and undergraduate credit is \$US 1,250. Tuition and registration fee for graduate credit is \$US 2,200. If you wish to apply for the masters' degree in Sustainability Management in the future, you must take the course at the *graduate level*. The primary difference between the graduate and undergraduate levels is the requirement of a semester project for graduate level participants. If you *audit* the course (noncredit status), you will have complete access to the information presented in the course. However, you will receive no feedback from the teaching staff on your work. Most students participate in the course at the graduate level to help develop the skills to work in the sustainability discipline. Additional information posted with this syllabus on the class website. Please consult with the Instructor should you have any questions.



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### Information on the Course

Each week during the semester, there will be a live discussion on Monday evenings from 7:40 pm (19:40) to 9:40 pm (21:40) US Eastern Time from **Byerly Hall 013** on the Harvard University campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. All classes are available for live viewing (see the information on the class website) with an active chat room. All live discussions are videotaped, converted to streaming video, and posted on the class website within 24 hours. All the course information is posted on the class website: <http://isites.harvard.edu/k107383>

The class website has information on how to participate in the discussion. It is VERY IMPORTANT that you will read and understand this information prior to the first class. Please consult with the Instructor or a member of the teaching staff should you have any questions or need further clarification on any of the points covered in this important document.

Reading materials on each topic will be posted on the class website. No other reading materials are required. Students will be expected to research each topic to better understand the application of the information presented to the case of their choosing. Any references consulted must be cited in the discussion threads. Students will have access to these references to supplement the information presented.

### Instructor and Teaching Staff

Dr. Robert B. Pojasek is the Instructor for this course. Information on Professor Pojasek along with information on the members of the teaching staff can be found on the class website. If you have any questions about the course, please contact Professor Pojasek via email: [rpojasek@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:rpojasek@fas.harvard.edu)