

**Commerce 4SG3
Corporations and Society
Winter 2016 Course Outline**

**Information, Marketing, Operations Area
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University**

COURSE OBJECTIVE

The goal of this course is to familiarize students with a variety of concepts related to the role of corporations in society. Using cases, simulations, guest speakers, a group project and reflections, students will sharpen their ability to critically analyze and debate complex and systemic issues from an informed position. Students will also learn tools to help management address many of the challenging issues facing our society. Students will emerge from this course understanding both the business challenges and opportunities inherent in sustainability.

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Brent McKnight

Instructor

bmcknight@mcmaster.ca

Office: DSB #210

Office Hours: after class

Tel: (905) 525-9140 x24704

TA's name: Marla Campbell

TA's email: campbme@mcmaster.ca

Course Website: Avenue

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value:	3	Leadership:	Yes	IT skills:	No	Global view:	Yes
Avenue:	Yes	Ethics:	Yes	Numeracy:	No	Written skills:	Yes
Participation:	Yes	Innovation:	Yes	Group work:	Yes	Oral skills:	Yes
Evidence-based:	Yes	Experiential:	Yes	Final Exam:	No	Guest speaker(s):	Yes

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The role of corporations and society has been evolving over the past couple of decades from a fringe business issue, to one of central concern to managers. A recent survey conducted by McKinsey found that for 49% of CEOs, sustainability was a top three priority item. Sustainability has become an increasingly important concern in today's business world. At the core of this course are the relationships that firms build and maintain with society (a so called license to operate) and ecological systems (which provide invaluable inputs and essential services). The importance of these relationships cannot be understated as they significantly impact the long term viability of the firm. This course focuses on those relationships. In the past, environmental and social issues were seen as constraints on business; unwelcome interruptions on the path towards increased profitability. They were peripheral. But no longer. Today firms of all stripes, from mining and forestry, to food and beverage, and even banking are adopting strategies and practices that take into account a broader set of stakeholders including their environment, society, governments and non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). It was inevitable that firms would adopt these strategies and practices. To quote Ray Anderson, CEO of Interface Carpets and a highly regarded environmentalist in his own right:

"the only institution on earth that is large enough, powerful enough, wealthy enough, pervasive enough, and influential to lead humankind out of the mess it's making for itself is the same institution that is doing the most damage -- the institution of business and industry, my institution." - Ray Anderson, CEO Interface Carpets

The issues we raise and discuss in class are among the most critical and exciting challenges confronting business today. Sustainability is the quintessential international problem. In our time together we will explore innovative business models used across the globe in developed and developing countries. In this class, our joint task is to learn how we can think globally and act strategically in ways that also add the most value to the societies within which we operate as business leaders

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course you will:

- Gain a familiarity with a variety of concepts related to corporations and society including triple bottom line, resilience, stakeholder engagement, the tragedy of the commons, sustainability and technology, sustainability reporting, and sustainable business models;
- Understand the application of tools and solutions to key challenges facing organizations resulting from environmental and social issues;
- Sharpen critical analysis and communication abilities, especially in the context of complex and systemic issues;
- Understand both the challenges and opportunities inherent in social and environmental issues;
- Be challenged to clarify your own values and opinions on issues related to corporations and society.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Avenue registration for course content, readings and case materials • http://avenue.mcmaster.ca	\$ FREE
Custom Courseware: Commerce 4SG3 Corporations and Society •purchase at the bookstore	\$ ~75
	prices subject to change

EVALUATION

- **Participation:** 25%
- **Reflections:** 40%
- **Group Project – Written Report:** 20%
- **Group Project – Classroom Component:** 15%

Participation

The daily classroom discussion represents a unique opportunity for you to develop and enhance your confidence and skill in articulating a personal position, reacting to new ideas, and receiving and providing critical feedback from a group of assertive and demanding colleagues. Much of your learning will come from these classroom experiences.

You are expected to come to each class, having read cases and assigned readings but more importantly with a readiness and willingness to contribute to the class discussion. Your contribution to the learning of others, through the experience and insights you share is a key part of this learning process. Contribution will be graded based on quality, quantity and consistency. Some of the things that will determine a contribution include:

- ◆ Are you listening, not just for a few minutes, but the duration of the class?
- ◆ Are your contributions relevant to the discussion? Do your comments relate to the comments of others and to the themes that the class is exploring together? Do you build on the class discussion?
- ◆ Do your comments add to our understanding of the situation? Are you incisive? Do you cut to the core of the problem?
- ◆ Are you willing to challenge the ideas that are being expressed in the classroom?
- ◆ Are you willing to test new ideas or are all comments “safe”?
- ◆ Do you bring in your own experience, personal or professional, in order to add value to the class discussion

Participation will be graded using a peer grading system that each student will participate in at least once throughout the course.

Reflection

A key aim of this course is to provide the opportunity for students to think critically about issues pertaining to sustainability. Thus, following each class students are encouraged to actively reflect on what they have learned. For **four** of the classes, students must submit their reflections for grading. **Each reflection will constitute 10% of your final grade.**

These reflections will take three different forms.

Executive Memo: The first form is an executive brief targeted at either a specific executive or a class of executives (ie Sustainability Director or CEO). It is meant to inform these executives about a particular issue or class of issues and offer concise, relevant and actionable advice. Your memo should first briefly present the issue of interest and engage the reader. Then, in 2-3 paragraphs the memo should describe 2-3 critical action items. A brief summary and call to action would follow. Further guidance and examples can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/1/> and <http://nku.edu/~fordmw/memo.htm>. You may also benefit from reading the following article about executive communication: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/career-advice/recruiters-put-premium-on-communication-skills/article20206416/>

Editorial: Alternatively it can take the form of an editorial. Hard hitting and possibly controversial, it drives at making a point to a broader audience. For example, <http://webuser.bus.umich.edu/ajhoff/editorials/2008%20CRO.pdf>

Diary: A third form of reflection is that of a diary. In this diary you are expected to get personal and reflect on what a particular class meant to you. How did it alter your way of thinking or assumptions about particular issues? This is an ideal form when you are experiencing confusion over gray issues (no clear right or wrong). Explain how you would approach the situation or how you would manage any trade-offs that exist. Be specific. **You may only choose to do the diary format for one reflection.**

Students must submit a reflection according to the following schedule.

- 1 reflection for classes 1 through 3;
- 1 reflection for classes 4 through 6;
- 1 reflection for classes 7 through 9;
- 1 reflection for classes 10 through 11;

Reflections are due by **noon** on the **Friday following the class** being reflected upon. Submissions will only be accepted through Avenue. Reflections must be **no more than 2 pages, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1.5 line spacing, 1 inch margins, and clearly state the form of reflection being attempted.** Late submissions will be penalized at 25% a day.

What you write in your reflections can be confidential however at the beginning of the next class students may be encouraged to share their reflections with the class.

Group Project

Understanding social and environmental issues are important for effective decision making in today's world. The wide relevance of these issues provides an opportunity for you to contribute to your learning, your classmates', and to the wider community. It is this philosophy that has guided our development of this project.

Working in groups of **4 to 6** you must identify an environmental or social issue and describe innovative business approaches to addressing the issue. The project must comprise two major parts.

1. **Issue definition.** Define and describe the issue, including its scope and negative impacts on either society or on the planet.
2. **Innovative practices taken by business to address the issue.** You can focus on just one case study, or list a number of approaches that firms take or could take.

In selecting a topic, you could either first identify an issue that you find most troubling and want to see what businesses are doing, or find a company that you find innovative and then work backwards to define a social or environmental issue that the firm is addressing.

By **Week 4**, you will be required to submit the names of the people in your group, and a description of the issue or company that you will be researching (no more than 1 page double-spaced). I will provide feedback by **Week 5**.

Written Report – Due Week 12

The written report should be between 3000 and 4000 words, excluding references, title page, and appendices. It will be graded on both substance and style. In terms of substance, the paper should be researched well, and yet focus only on the most salient facts. The message should be credible and accurate with supporting facts and evidence. In terms of style, the paper should be easy to read and free of errors. It should be impactful and engaging.

Important Considerations:

- Better projects focus on a narrowly well-defined issue with a foreseeable impact on business. If you can't define the issue easily and well, the audience will never really understand what it is that you are talking about.
- Better projects also tend to avoid well-worn issues (such as deforestation, climate change), and focus on issues that are relatively new to your audience or take a new angle on well-known issues (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions associated with air travel).
- A good report is not an information dump, but a careful culling of the material, providing only the best, most credible and reliable data and images. There are significant space and time restrictions, so be selective in the information you choose.
- Your report should include a description of the problem, key stakeholders, how this problem affects which stakeholders, an analysis of the environment, and then a solution targeted at the intended audience of the report. Be sure to include an executive summary.

Referencing and citations:

For your final report, please use a superscript number and endnotes to acknowledge intellectual debts and facts and figures in your reports. Draw on the library citation guide

(<https://library.mcmaster.ca/sites/default/files/businesscitation.pdf>) paying particular attention to page 6 and page 15 for endnote and citation support.

Classroom Case – Due Week 11

To share your work you will prepare a **2-3 page** (single-spaced including figures) case for classroom discussion that outlines the issue at the centre of your project. In this case you will lay out the issue of concern in your project and create a protagonist – a central figure and organization that is tasked with resolving in some way your central issue.

Examples of protagonists are readily found in most cases under discussion throughout the course. For example, suppose your group project pertained to the issue of shark fin soup and the practice of shark finning. You may choose a number of protagonists including the manager of a Chinese banquet centre that caters to Chinese weddings and is placed in a difficult decision as to how to satisfy customers while addressing this harmful practice. Or you could be a manager of a food processing plant who is presented with an opportunity to incorporate new synthetic shark fin soup technologies. The choice of protagonist should be one that helps you explore the key findings of your report. While the case should be largely fact based, you can make up fictional individuals or companies if they advance your learning objectives.

In your classroom component, you will facilitate a discussion among fellow students regarding this case focusing on resolving the case. Your aim is to use the case to teach your fellow students something you learned through the course of your group project. Be purposeful about your teaching objectives. One of the most challenging parts of teaching cases is asking the right questions to get students to work through a case. Thus each group should come prepared to stimulate and advance classroom discussion drawing, if you wish, on some of the techniques I use throughout the course.

The cases are **due on Avenue by midnight on the day of class in Week 11**. I will then post these cases on Avenue to allow your fellow students time to read each case. Each group will be allocated approximately **20 minutes** for the case discussion. There will be a 25% penalty for students who are not present for final presentations.

Grade Conversion

At the end of the course your overall percentage grade will be converted to your letter grade in accordance with the following conversion scheme.

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	LETTER GRADE	PERCENT
A+	90 - 100	C+	67 - 69
A	85 - 89	C	63 - 66
A-	80 - 84	C-	60 - 62
B+	77 - 79	D+	57 - 59
B	73 - 76	D	53 - 56
B-	70 - 72	D-	50 - 52
		F	00 - 49

Communication and Feedback

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student. Emails regarding course issues should NOT be sent to the Area Administrative Assistants.

Instructors are required to provide evaluation feedback for at least 10% of the final grade to students prior to Week #8 in the term.

Instructors may conduct an informal course review with students by Week #4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery.

Students who wish to have a course component re-evaluated must complete the following form:

http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/Form_A.pdf

In order for the component to be re-read:

- the component must be worth 10% or more of the final grade in the course
- students pay a fee of \$50 in Gilmour Hall #209 and the receipt is then brought to Student Experience - Academic Office (formerly the APO) in DSB 104
- the Area Chair will seek out an independent adjudicator to re-grade the component
- an adjustment to the grade for the component will be made if a grade change of three points or greater on the 12 point scale (equivalent to 10 marks out of 100) has been suggested by the adjudicator as assigned by the Area Chair
- if a grade change is made, the student fee will be refunded

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at;

www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to;

www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

REQUESTING RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

1. Students may request relief from a regularly scheduled midterm, test, assignment or other course component in the following ways:
 - a) **for absences from classes lasting up to three (3) days; or**
 - b) **for absences from classes lasting more than three (3) days.**
 - c) **for conflicts arising from Student Experience - Academic Office approved events**

a) For absences from classes lasting up to three (3) days

Students must use the MSAF (McMaster Student Absence Form). This is an on-line, self-reporting tool, for which submission of medical or other types of supporting documentation is normally not required. Students may use this tool to submit a maximum of one (1) request for relief of missed academic work per term as long as the weighting of the component is worth less than **25%** of the course weight. Students must follow up with their course instructors regarding the nature of the relief within two days of submitting the form. Failure to do so may negate the opportunity for relief. It is the prerogative of the instructor of the course to determine the appropriate relief for missed term work in his/her course. Details are described below.

If the value of the component is worth **25%** or more, students must report to their Faculty Office (the Student Experience – Academic Office for Commerce students) to discuss their situation and will be required to provide appropriate supporting documentation.

Please visit the following page for more information about MSAF:

http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=13&navoid=2208#Requests_for_Relief_for_Missed_Academic_Term_Work

b) For absences from classes lasting more than three (3) days

Students cannot use the MSAF. They **MUST** report to their Faculty Office (the Student Experience – Academic Office for Commerce students) to discuss their situation and will be required to provide appropriate supporting documentation.

Students who wish to submit more than one request for relief of missed academic work per term cannot use the MSAF. They must report to the Student Experience – Academic Office and discuss their situation with an academic advisor. They will be required to provide supporting documentation and possibly meet with the Manager.

c) For conflicts arising from Faculty Office approved events

Students unable to write a mid-term at the posted exam time due to the following reasons: religious; work-related (for part-time students only); representing university at an academic or varsity athletic event; conflicts between two overlapping scheduled mid-term exams; or other extenuating circumstances, have the option of applying for special exam arrangements. Please see the DeGroot Missed Course Work Policy for a list of conflicts that qualify for academic accommodation

<http://ug.degroote.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-resources/missed-course-work-policy/>

Such requests must be made to the Student Experience – Academic Office at least ten (10) working days before the scheduled exam along with acceptable documentation.

Non-Commerce students must submit their documentation to their own Faculty Office and then alert the Student Experience – Academic Office of their interest in an alternate sitting of the midterm.

Adjudication of all requests must be handled by the Student Experience – Academic Office. Instructors cannot allow students to unofficially write make-up exams/tests.

The MSAF cannot be used during any final examination period.

If a mid-term exam is missed without a valid reason, students will receive a grade of zero (0) for that component.

POLICY FOR APPROVED MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

Students who cannot write a test, and have advanced knowledge and permission as described above, will be given the opportunity to write an alternate version of the test and an alternate time.

Students who did not write a test, and subsequently provide an MSAF submission, or documentation for which they have been approved by the Student Experience – Academic Office, will have the weight of the missed work reallocated across other course components. The student must follow up with the instructor to understand this process and decision.

Students who submit an MSAF, or have been approved by the Student Experience – Academic Office, for an assignment deadline, will be given an extension of 3 days for the assignment. Please note, the student will ultimately be required to submit the assignment.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) offers various support services for students with disabilities. Students are required to inform SAS of accommodation needs for course work at the outset of term. Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca

For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities;

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE COURSE

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Commerce 4SG3
Corporations and Society
Winter 2016 Course Schedule**

	Topic	Details
Week 1 Jan 11 th	The Tragedy of the Common	Introduction to the course <i>Simulation: Fishbanks</i>
Week 2 Jan 18 th	Confronting the Social Responsibility of the Firm	<i>Lecture: The Triple Bottom Line</i> <i>Case: PepsiCo's Turning Point: Establishing a role in a sustainable society</i> <i>Readings: The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits, by Friedman (1970)</i> <i>Guest Speaker: Gordon Pitts, writer in residence, on writing reflections</i>
Week 3 Jan 25 th	Resilient Organizations and Resilient Societies	<i>Lecture: Resilient Organizations and Societies</i> <i>Case: YU Ranch: Strategy and Sustainability in Cattle Ranching (A)</i> <i>Readings: Chapter 1, Resilience by Zolli</i>
Week 4 Feb 1 st	Clean technology	<i>Lecture: Clean Technologies</i> <i>Case: Hydro: From Utsira to Future Energy Solutions</i> <i>Guest Speaker: Mark Porter from Ernst & Young</i> <i>Due In Class: Group names and 1 page topic write up</i>
Week 5 Feb 8 th	Certifications	<i>Lecture: Certifications</i> <i>Case: SC Johnson and the Greenlist Backlash</i> <i>Exercise: Sustainability Reporting</i>
Feb 15 th		<i>No Class – Reading Week</i>
Week 6 Feb 22 nd	Climate Change: Business Strategies for Carbon Management	<i>Lecture: Climate Change Strategies and Carbon Markets</i> <i>Case: Travelers Insurance</i> <i>Reading: http://nbs.net/wp-content/uploads/Adaptation-to-Climate-Change-Primer.pdf</i> <i>Guest: Shawn Gagne, Founder and President of Urban Offsets</i> <i>Deliverable: Please complete a personal carbon footprint calculator and bring it to class (ie http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculator/s/ - requires flash)</i>
Week 7 Feb 29 th	Stakeholder Engagement	<i>Case: Royal Dutch/Shell in Nigeria (A)</i> <i>Lecture: Stakeholder Theories</i> <i>Lecture: Introduction to Social Movements</i>
Week 8 March 7 th	The Role of Technology and Innovation in sustainability	<i>Lecture: Technology and Sustainability</i> <i>Case: Blueprint for Ford's Future: From Personal Automobiles to Mobility</i> <i>Debate: Be it resolved that technology will resolve our environmental and social problems.</i>

Week 9 March 14 th	Sustainable Business Models	<i>Lecture: Sustainable Business Models</i> <i>Case: Honey Care Africa: A Tripartite Model for Sustainable Beekeeping</i>
Week 10 March 21 st	Building the Business Case	<i>Lecture: Building the Business Case</i> <i>Case: Putting a Suit on a Tree Hugger: Sustainability at The International Centre</i> <i>Reading: Introduction to Bob Willard's <u>The New Sustainability Advantage</u></i> <i>Guest speaker: Trevor Lui, Director of Operations & Sustainability</i>
Week 11 March 28 th	Giving Voice to Your Values	<i>Case: Distributed in class – Giving Voice to Values</i> <i>Reading: Introduction to Giving Voice to Values</i> <i>Deliverable: Group project – Classroom case due on Avenue by midnight</i>
Week 12 April 4 th	Project Presentations	<i>Deliverable: Final group projects due on Avenue by midnight</i>