

**Commerce 4SG3
Corporations and Society
Winter 2018 Course Outline**

**Strategic Management 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 gain 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 the interface between corporations and environmental and social issues.

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Brent McKnight

Instructor
bmcknight@mcmaster.ca
Office: DSB #210

Office Hours: before/after class/appointment
Tel: (905) 525-9140 x24704

TA's name: Rahul Bansal

TA's email: bansar3@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 the late 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, social finance, 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 the challenges and opportunities inherent in social and environmental issues;
- Solve sustainability-related business challenges with a real company;
- 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:** 20%
- **Reflections:** 40%
- **Group Project – Written Report:** 25%
- **Group Project – Presentation:** 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 student will participate in at most once throughout the course.

REFLECTIONS

A key aim of this course is to provide the opportunity for students to think critically about issues pertaining to sustainability and the role of business. Thus, following each class students are encouraged to actively reflect on what they have learned. These reflections are not a repetition of what happened in class, instead they are meant to be a *continuation of thinking beyond the classroom*.

For *three* of the classes, students must submit their reflections for grading. *Each reflection will constitute 13.3% 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 to engage the executive. 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://www.webguru.neu.edu/communicating-science/communicating/business-memos>

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>

Personal reflection: A third form of reflection is that of a personal reflection. In this reflection 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; due January 29th at midnight
- 1 reflection for classes 4 through 6; due Feb 26th at midnight
- 1 reflection for classes 7 through 9; due March 19th at midnight

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. Reflections should be submitted in pdf format.** Late submissions will be penalized at 10% a day. A rubric is viewable in Avenue.

Please acknowledge intellectual debts and facts and figures in your reflection using a superscript number and endnotes to 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.

GROUP PROJECT – ENGAGING PRACTICE TO MAKE IMPACT

In groups of 5 or 6, students will work on a real life problem facing a specific organization. This will provide students with an exciting opportunity to engage with practice using learning from this course.

We are using the Riipen platform to match students with companies. Instructions for signing up and connecting with the course can be found on Avenue in a folder called Riipen materials.

Key deadlines and deliverables

1. Form group and select company through Riipen between **midnight Thursday January 25th**. Contact company to introduce the team.
2. Submit a 1 page Scope Statement submitted through Riipen by **midnight Tuesday February 6th**

A scope statement is a high level overview of what the student groups are developing and delivering on over the semester. It should explicitly identify and elaborate on the deliverables associated with the project including documents, research, models, and reports. A scope statement helps to ensure that the student group and the company partner are aligned.

Expect that you will receive feedback from both the company and the professor to ensure the scope statement is feasible, valuable to your company, and is suitable to the course objectives.

3. Complete a 30 minute professor “check-in” during the **week of February 26th** including written answers and discussions regarding the following 5 questions:
 1. Describe the progress you have made to date.
 2. Describe the activity that you are planning on taking.
 3. What is going as planned with the project?
 4. Where are the challenges with the project?
 5. What other issues would you like to discuss?

Students will respond to a doodle poll in order to schedule a professor meeting.

An interim peer evaluation report will be submitted on Avenue (see final page of the syllabus)

4. Deliverable: Group project – Final Paper and/or other deliverables due by **midnight Monday April 2nd on both Riipen and Avenue**

Produce a report providing analysis and detailing recommendations addressing the scope of work agreed upon with the industry partner. Because scope of work for each project differs, each report will be unique. A rubric on Avenue details how this will be graded; but as with all experiential learning, the true “grade” associated with this project will be how well it serves the needs of the client.

The report will be at least 10 pages single spaced. Sections of the report should include but are not limited to: Executive Summary, Scope, Background and Context, Research and Analysis, Options Considered, Recommendation, and an Implementation Plan.

A final peer evaluation report will be submitted on Avenue (see final page of the syllabus). If % of work allocated is uneven, these differences will be reflected in individual grades proportionally.

5. Deliverable: Final group presentations on **Wednesday April 4th**

Your group will make a 15 minute presentation to the class. In most cases, representatives from your industry partner will be in attendance. The report should follow, in general, the same content as the report.

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 result, 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:

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 – accessed through Avenue to Learn) to reveal plagiarism. 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 DeGroote 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 2018 Course Schedule**

	Topic	Details
Week 1 Jan 8 th	The Tragedy of the Common	Introduction to the course <i>Simulation: Fishbanks</i> <u>Group Project: Onboarding call with Riipen</u>
Week 2 Jan 15 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 - Courseware</i> <i>Readings: Creating shared value by Porter and Kramer - Courseware</i>
Week 3 Jan 22 nd	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: Resilience by Zolli - Courseware</i> <i>Guest Speaker: Bryan Gilvesy, YU Ranch</i> <u>Group Project: Select Company through Riipen by January 25th midnight</u>
Week 4 Jan 29 th	Certification Systems and Sustainability Reporting	<i>Lecture: Certifications, greenwashing,</i> <i>Case: SC Johnson and the Greenlist Backlash</i> <i>In Class Exercise: Sustainability Reporting</i> <i>Readings: Sustainability Reporting to Improve Organizational Performance - link in Avenue</i> First reflection due, January 29th at midnight on Avenue
Week 5 Feb 5 th	Stakeholder Engagement and Social License to Operate	<i>Case: IKEA's Global Sourcing Challenge: Indian Rugs and Child Labor)</i> <i>Lecture: Stakeholder Theory and Social license to Operate</i> <i>Readings: Managing Sustainable Global Supply Chains: Framework and Best Practices - link in Avenue</i> <i>Guest Speaker: Gordon Pitts, writer in residence, on writing reflections</i> <u>Group Project: Scope Statement submitted on Riipen Tuesday February 6th by midnight</u>
Week 6 Feb 12 th	Sustainable Business Models	<i>Lecture: Sustainable Business Models</i> <i>Case: Honey Care Africa: A Tripartite Model for Sustainable Beekeeping</i> <i>Reading: "Driving Social Change: Best Practices for Business Leaders and Social Entrepreneurs" – link in Avenue</i>

		<i>Guest Panel: Local Social Entrepreneurs</i>
Feb 19 th		<i>Reading Week</i>
Week 7 Feb 26 th	Innovation and the Base of the Pyramid	<p><i>Lecture: Base of Pyramid</i> <i>Case: <u>Grameen Intel Social Business: Technology Solutions at the Base of the Pyramid</u></i></p> <p><i>Debate: Be it resolved that technology will solve our environmental and social problems.</i></p> <p><u>Group Project: Meeting with Professor and answering 5 questions</u> sign up on doodle poll; <u>complete interim peer evaluation</u></p> <p>Second reflection due, February 26th at midnight on Avenue</p>
Week 8 Mar 5 th	Business Strategies for Climate Change	<p><i>Lecture: Climate Change Strategies and Carbon Markets</i> <i>Case: Travelers Insurance</i> <i>Reading: Business Adaptation to Climate Change: A Systematic Review of the Literature - <u>link in Avenue</u></i></p> <p><i>Guest: Shawn Gagne, Founder and President of Urban Offsets (Skype)</i></p>
Week 9 Mar 12 th	Social Finance and Impact	<p><i>Lecture: Social Finance</i> <i>Case: Acumen Fund: How to make the greatest impact</i></p> <p><i>Guest: Mark Porter, Rocky Mountain Institute (Skype)</i></p>
Week 10 Mar 19 th	Building the Business Case	<p><i>Lecture: Building the Business Case</i> <i>Group Project: Class time for Group Projects ; <u>Professor in Residence</u></i></p> <p>Third reflection due, March 29th at midnight on Avenue</p>
Week 11 Mar 26 th	Giving Voice to Your Values	<p><i>Case: Giving Voice to Values - Distributed in class</i></p>
Week 12 Apr 2 nd	Project Presentations	<p><i>Deliverable: Group project – Final Paper due Monday April 2nd</i> <i>Deliverable: Final group presentations on Wednesday April 4th</i></p>

Peer Evaluation

Company Name: _____

Group Member	% of work done	Signature
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

You will complete this peer evaluation both in the interim during the 30 minute professor meeting during the week of February 26th and as a separate file in the final report submission to Avenue.