

Syllabus for MSMGT 770 Leading Sustainable Organizations

Course Description

This course adopts a macro-level perspective on leading sustainable organizations. Topics addressed include: organizational change and transformation processes, strategic and creative thinking, organizational structures and their impacts, conflict management and negotiation, stakeholder management and situational leadership styles and behaviors. The course focuses on how organizational leaders develop and enable sustainable organizations, especially in times of environmental change.

Fundamentally, we're talking about making decisions that balance the triple bottom line (People, Planet, and Prosperity). Sustainability focuses on respect for people and other living things, and the ethical use and management of economic and environmental resources such that both current and future generations are able to meet their needs. Sustainable organizations understand, value, and develop their people. Sustainable organizations understand and make energy, product, and process decisions that value the planet and its resources. Sustainable organizations understand and manage their stakeholders to ensure sufficient profits. Without profits, organizations cannot avoid entropy. In this class, we'll focus on what leaders (like you) can and must do to balance the three Ps and lead sustainable organizations.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Recall and understand the fundamental philosophies, theories, concepts, techniques, and terminology associated with leading sustainable organizations.
- Communicate sustainability concepts effectively.
- Apply what you have learned about leading sustainable organizations to novel and concrete situations, as appropriate.
- Synthesize your observations with relevant prior and personal knowledge, and with knowledge from other, appropriate sources.
- Evaluate consequences and implications of proposed solutions.

Course Materials

Information on course materials can be found in the [textbook section](#) of the SMGT website.

In addition to the reading associated with our main text, the course includes a number of optional research articles to explore select course topics.

Course Requirements

Since this is a graduate class, you will bear significant responsibility for the teaching and learning that occurs. The primary means of learning in this class, in addition to your reading of the text and completion of the written exam and assignments, will be class discussions.

The readings will serve as resource materials to enhance our discussions and class activities. However, I will not "lecture from" any of the readings. I will ask you to take the role of providing personal and organizational examples that illustrate the text's concepts, question the text's concepts, extend the text's concepts, consider the limits of the text's concepts, and think about how you might apply the text's concepts in organizations, and so on. I will not be the advocate for the text's concepts, but will work to make sure that they are understood correctly.

1. **I expect you to be prepared.** Please do all of the required reading, on time. **By "on time" I mean no later than Monday evening of each week.** Otherwise, you will not be prepared to discuss the week's reading when you need to do so. Think carefully about your reading. Take notes on your reading.
2. **Review the presentations.** They include the publisher's summary of each chapter. These are **not** narrated by the instructor. They serve as a way for you to frame and organize the chapter material. I never lecture in graduate-level classes, and narrating a presentation is inconsistent with my graduate-level teaching philosophy, which is predicated on the belief that you learn best at the graduate-level when **you** and **your classmates** are the main teachers. Peer-teaching is crucial in graduate classes and an important means to share and acquire knowledge. You must **discover** the value and meaning of the information yourselves to be able to effectively put it into practice. This requires your reflection and dialogue with classmates. My task as the instructor is to be a "guide on the side," not a "sage on the stage." While you may occasionally wish for a narrated presentations in this class, my experience teaching this material and similar material at the graduate-level is that you will learn it better if I don't lecture as I do at the undergraduate level.
3. **Watch the "Points to Ponder" video(s)** associated with each text chapter. In each I will identify critical topics and questions for each chapter.
4. I recognize that each of us has a life outside this class, complete with responsibilities and demands. That being said, you have **chosen** to take this class. If you are unable to complete any of the class requirements, you must accept the associated consequences. Do not try to avoid these consequences, or negotiate reduced or different consequences. All decisions yield consequences that should be borne by the decision maker. Please consider whether you can fit this class into the rest of your busy life. It's my experience that graduate students who are also working struggle to succeed when they take more than two classes in a semester. For some people, even one class stretches their limits. My advice:

- Know your limits. While you may be that unusual person who can juggle full-time employment with multiple graduate classes and a personal life, odds are that you aren't that person. (I know that I couldn't do all of that well!) Why make yourself miserable? Better to take fewer classes at one time and do well than to take too many classes and do poorly (and be stressed out).
5. If this were a face-to-face class, we would spend about 2½ hours each week in class discussion. You would then spend additional time reading, preparing your assignments, and writing your examinations. As this is a graduate-level class, it is reasonable to assume that you will allocate **no less than two hours per week to online discussion**, plus the rest of the time you'll need to read, prep assignments, and take the midterm exam. This demands that you develop thoughtful responses to others' posts. It also requires that you avoid thinking in terms of "what's the minimum number of posts required?" Treat the discussion forums as you would a face-to-face discussion – be prepared to ask purposeful and creative questions, to provide thoughtful and evidence-based answers, to augment your responses as requested by your student colleagues, to share your personal and organizational experiences, etc. That said, your responses shouldn't read like essays complete with loads of References. Instead, they should read like careful responses you'd give in a face-to-face class, with perhaps occasional References, links to relevant URLs, attached articles, etc.
 6. Relative to our discussions, you are required to post a thoughtful response to each of the week's original posts (1-2 questions per chapter). In addition to these initial responses, I expect you to post several thoughtful responses to your colleagues' comments. **On average, you should comment about 4-6 times per week, in total.** Quantity as well as quality will be considered when grading your discussion participation. The individuals leading each week's discussion (i.e., you and your fellow students, each of whom will be assigned a week's discussion to lead or co-lead) will evaluate their classmates' participation. The aggregation of these evaluations will constitute your Discussion Participation grade. "Thoughtful responses" are more than a simple sentence; they are typically several sentences. They build upon what the original writer has said, and they add substance to the ongoing dialogue. They reference the text and additional readings. They draw upon your personal experiences. All discussions will **conclude by 11 p.m. each Friday**, leaving Saturday and Sunday for reading of the text, preparation of written assignments and exams, relaxing, spending time with family and friends, etc.
 7. Similarly, you are required to **read all of the posts every week**, just as you would listen to the entire discussion in a face-to-face class. This is common courtesy. It will also help to ensure that you don't needlessly repeat what others have already said, and it will help to ensure that you have read everything written by me. My comments will often reference important material outside the text and assigned articles. Please note: **I expect you to read everything I write.** It will be obvious to me (and your classmates) if you do not.

8. In general, **I will not chime in much** to your discussions. While I will be involved, your discussions are directed at and with your fellow students. Therefore, posing queries to me, mid-discussion is not a desirable direction. As would be the case in a face-to-face graduate class, my role during each week's discussion is to: (a) make factual corrections, as needed; (b) suggest new/different ideas, building on those expressed by you and your student colleagues; (c) relate the ideas being expressed to additional management topics; and (4) share relevant resources (e.g., journal articles, URLs). With the exception of one week, all discussions will be led by you. It would not be OK for me to "steal" your role as discussion leader, so I won't. Still, **I will be reading every single comment made**, just as I would listen to every comment made in a face-to-face class.
9. Do not post exam-related/course-related questions in session discussion areas. There is a specific discussion forum for "questions to instructor", for your use. Sort of like an FAQs area. I am very happy to answer questions; you may also email me. I will answer any question that you ask, but will neither provide you with a study guide nor lead you in an exam review session. **If you have questions, please ask them!**
10. Please check your e-mail and the D2L site daily, Monday through Friday, as that will be the primary means of communication. You are responsible for following through on any communication sent by me, so please read and respond accordingly. When you send e-mail to me, please put the following in your Subject line: **[SMGT 770]: Your request/topic**. Include the brackets. Your doing so will help me better sort and prioritize my e-mail. I receive dozens of emails every day. I will do my best to answer your e-mails within 48 hours, Monday-Friday. Please recognize that I may need time to reflect upon and answer your question.
11. I will do everything in my power to grade fairly. I am challenging and fair. It is commonly understood that graduate students need to maintain a cumulative B average in order to stay enrolled in a graduate program. This rule is sometimes interpreted by students to mean that they must be awarded an A, A-, B+, or B in every graduate class they take, regardless of their actual performance. In this class, **you will receive the grade you have earned**. No exceptions. If you are concerned about your final grade, please talk to me as soon as possible. Still, do not expect me to give you extra credit, to change the weight of something, or to arbitrarily change a grade already received, etc. Each of those requests is academically dishonest. If you have received a low grade because something did not make sense to you, I will help you – at your request – try to better understand what comes next. If you have received a low grade because you exerted insufficient effort, well, you know what you have to do. Performance = Ability x Effort x Opportunity. I will give you ample opportunities to perform; you must bring the ability and effort.
12. **No whining or bullying, please.** Do not try to intimidate me into giving you a better grade on an assignment because "you have a 4.0 going," or because "you have never received a lower grade than A" or anything like this. I assign the

grade you earn. Asking me to change a grade because you don't like the grade I give you is academically dishonest. Would you tell a boss that you should automatically receive a positive performance evaluation because you always have in the past? I doubt it.

13. You will receive your grades on each written assignment and exam **within two weeks of submission**. Do not wait to receive a grade on one assignment before beginning your next assignment. If you are concerned that you are not sure how to do an assignment, please make an appointment to Skype with me and we can discuss your concerns.

Course activities and assignments include readings (and associated PowerPoints and videos) and discussions of them via discussion forums, midterm exam, four written assignments, and a career applications presentation.

Readings

The textbook readings survey the basic issues and concepts in leading sustainable organizations. In addition to the assigned text chapters, you are expected to locate, read, and incorporate additional **peer-reviewed journal articles** and Internet materials (e.g., from SEC filings to Sustainability reports) to support your written assignments and exams. This means that you must use **your library's** electronic resources to find appropriate peer-reviewed journal articles. If you use Google Scholar or something similar, you'll often be asked to pay for any article you find. **Don't do it!** Instead, look for articles using your university library. When you find them through your university library, they're **free!** If you're not sure how to access your university library's resources, please contact the Academic Program Director at your university, or look at your university library's website. I have access to the UW-Green Bay library, and can only help you with the particulars of that library, if you are enrolled in this class through UW-Green Bay. Graduate students are personally responsible for figuring out how to access their university library's resources. This is not your instructor's responsibility.

Chapter Presentations

For each chapter in the text, there is a presentation that highlights some of the most significant topics raised in the chapter. **Please review these.** Note: They are not narrated. It might be most effective to review them before and after reading the chapters. That said, the presentations do not and cannot address all of the salient points in the text. They're a complement to the reading, not a substitute.

Points to Ponder Videos

The Points to Ponder Videos describe and critique interesting points in the book chapters. **Please watch these.** As with the presentations, these videos will be a complement to the reading, not a substitute.

Discussions

Discussion forum leadership. Each of you will be responsible for preparing and leading (or co-leading) the discussion for a given session's readings, assigned early in the semester. Discussion leaders will be responsible for the following:

- Preparing two main questions, along with follow-up questions as appropriate. Questions must be provided to the instructor **by noon Friday of the week before** the start of your assigned discussion time frame. The instructor will either approve the questions or suggest changes. **Please do not post your questions without hearing from the instructor.**
- **Posting** the main questions by the due date given in the course calendar.
- **Monitoring, integrating, and responding to classmates' posts** in order to create a rich, evidence-based, and vibrant discussion.
- **Encouraging classmates** to engage in the discussion and elaborate as appropriate on the various posts.
- **Explaining concepts** as needed.
- **Summarizing the results** of the discussion and posting a summary no later than one week after the discussion time frame has ended.
- **Providing a written evaluation of their classmates' participation** and contributions to the instructor no later than one week after their discussion time frame has ended. This is the primary input to determining your discussion Participation grade, and needs to be weighed carefully! The form to be used for this evaluation will be provided under the Content tab, under the Discussions tab.
- Providing a **written self-evaluation** of their discussion forum leadership to the instructor no later than one week after their discussion time frame has ended.

Discussion forum leadership will be evaluated based on technical competence, conceptual skills, people skills, and comprehension.

Discussion forum leadership will be graded **within two weeks of the discussion's conclusion**, after the discussion leader has submitted the self-evaluation.

Discussion forum participation. Participation in the discussion forums is required. This is in lieu of what would normally constitute class discussion if this were a face-to-face course. Each of you will be expected to participate in the discussion from the beginning of the session, Monday through Friday. In other words, unlike discussion forums in some classes, the discussion forums for this class will not follow the structure of "question(s) asked at the beginning of the module, each student posts two answers sometime during the week." This model tends to yield superficial discussions, in which students are more concerned with posting the requisite number of responses rather than with truly considering and grappling with the topics being discussed. It also tends to yield

responses that are posted only at the beginning or near the end of the module's time frame.

So, how many posts are required? It's hard to imagine a high quality graduate discussion that includes fewer than **4-6 postings per person on average per week**. Likewise, please don't post 20+ times per week. If you multiply that by the number of people in this class, you'll see that's an extraordinary number of posts for all of us to read each week. Avoid writing posts that read like essays, complete with a long list of References. You're not trying to "win" the "posting competition." You're trying to make **meaningful contributions to a robust conversation**. That said, brief posts whose primary goal is to agree with or affirm another colleague's posting shouldn't (won't) count toward your required number of postings per week. Examples, "I totally agree with what you're saying." "You make a great point!"

Instead, your posts should **extend** and **enrich** the conversation.

You must respond to the original postings by the session discussion leader by the due date given in the calendar. You then have time to respond to your colleagues' comments. Please don't wait to respond until the last minute, else you risk people not reading and/or responding to your posts. Rather than worry about the requisite number of posts, you should concern yourself with whether you are making a high quality contribution to the discussion. The nature of our topic requires your active engagement. Passively "taking it all in," like a filmgoer, won't cut it for this class. Ergo, I expect you to post as often as needed to move the discussion forward. **In thinking about others' posts**, what is their main point? What is most interesting about what they're saying? What is most controversial about what they're saying? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? In thinking about your posts, are you asking interesting questions and making thought-provoking comments? Are you building on other students' statements and questions?

Discussion forum leaders will be asked to comment on the participation of their classmates. These comments will be considered seriously by the instructor when assigning discussion grades.

Discussion forum participation will be evaluated based on technical competence, conceptual skills, and results.

Discussion forum participation will not be graded every week. Rather, you will receive a grade at the end of the semester that reflects your overall effort and contributions, and that takes into account the evaluation of your contributions by each week's Discussion Leaders. Along the way, it should be easy for you to compare and contrast your participation with that of your classmates, since you can easily count the frequency of their contributions vs. yours, and you can determine whether you are meeting the

criteria listed above. Please contact me at any point during the semester if you are not sure how you are doing!

While the criteria for both discussion forum leadership and participation are essentially the same, the leader of a given discussion session is responsible for setting the stage for an engaging discussion. **Everyone is responsible** for ensuring that the discussions are intellectually challenging and valuable.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will consist of **three** essay questions. None of the questions will have a particular answer. You should not look in your texts or elsewhere for the so-called “correct” answers. Instead, you should think critically and deeply, and respond accordingly. While undergraduate exams may be written with particular answers in mind, that is not the case for the exam in this graduate class. **I want to see how well you think**, and how well you can articulate a meaningful response to the questions. Your answer to each question will be about *3-4 pages typed, double-spaced, with 1” margins on all sides, and no smaller than 12-point font.*

Written Assignments

You will complete four written assignments, each about *two pages in length, single spaced, 1” margins with 12-point Times New Roman font.* Each written assignment will give you the opportunity to apply lessons from the text to novel and concrete situations. The written assignments will also give you the opportunity to synthesize what you are reading with relevant prior and personal knowledge, and with knowledge from other, appropriate sources. Finally, the assignments will ask you to evaluate consequences and implications of proposed solutions.

The text is organized into six parts (A-F). You will complete one written assignment from parts B-E (i.e., not from Parts A or F). **You will have options!** The specific options available to you for each of Parts B-E are described under "Assignments" on the Content tab. Be sure to review your options carefully before choosing the one that you want to complete for each of Parts B-E. Note: I do not drop any assignments - all of them must be completed. Your assignments will be graded based on two primary factors:

- Quality, substantive, evidence-based, logical investigation of the topic (50%)
- Compelling and professional communication style (50%)

Career Applications Presentation

Each of you will prepare a professional PowerPoint (or Prezi or SlideRocket presentation) that will address how you can be more effective as a professional as a result of the concepts you are learning in this class. Your presentation will address (1) key topics you've learned in each chapter, and (2) how you expect to apply/use those concepts in your professional career. Note: When I say key topics, I don't mean that you should pick out every single topic that might be important. Rather, I want you to make

careful choices about what **you** consider to be the key topics, given your professional experience and plans for the future.

Specifically, your presentation should include two slides per chapter, one that summarizes what you think are the chapter's most salient points and one that describes how you plan to use the information learned to increase your effectiveness in your professional career. This presentation will require reflection and some mental homework, so I encourage you to draft/complete your two slides per chapter immediately after you finish reading each chapter. Do not wait to start working on this assignment. Continue adding to your presentation throughout the semester, revising as the course progresses and as you deem appropriate. My advice again: **Do not wait** to create your presentation until the end of the semester. You will have too much to do at that point to start and finish a presentation from scratch. Slides should be both substantive, in terms of information shared, and aesthetically pleasing. For example, slides should not include text smaller than 18-point font. Each of you will review and provide feedback on all or a sample of your classmates' presentations - the exact number of presentations you will review will depend on the class' final enrollment number. Your presentation will be graded on two primary factors:

- Quality, substantive reflection on personal application of each chapter's concepts (50%)
- Compelling, creative, and professional communication style? (50%)

Grading Policy

Course grades will be based on:

Activity	Points
Discussion forum leadership	50
Discussion forum participation	100
Midterm examination	100
Written assignments (25 points each)	100
Career applications presentation	100
Total	450

The final course grade reflects the scores received on each of the assignments, based on the following scheme:

Letter Grade	Percentage Range
A	93% and above
A-	90% - 92%
B+	88% - 89%

B	83% - 87%
B-	80% - 82%
C+	78% - 79%
C	73% - 77%
C-	70% - 72%
D+	68% - 69%
D	60% - 67%
F	59% and below