SYSTEMS THINKING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Course Syllabus
Spring 2016
2170 Grainger Hall

En Studies 402, Lecture 3

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(Meiklejohn House – home to the ILS Program)
Objectives:

This course is for students interested in the relationship between systems thinking and the concept of sustainability. In spite of its name, this is not a course about theory, but will look at ways that the concept of sustainability can be operationalized. In short, this is a course about doing something in the real world.

Systems thinking—seeing the underlying structures that drive our behavior and the interconnections in our world—is a key management skill for the 21st century. Transcending the tension between competing sustainability ideas (for instance, protecting natural resources and economic development) will demand the persistence and creativity of innovative "systems level entrepreneurs" in collaboration with social and business entrepreneurs. Understanding the power of structure can help leaders unlock their organization’s potential and avoid unintended consequences. We will spend most of the semester learning how to work within systems to bring about change.

Our social and economic systems continue to grow and evolve. Policy and implementation decisions are often based on outdated assumptions and misunderstandings. Often, decisions lead to actions that are ineffective and create unexpected side effects. In addition, everything is happening faster, including markets and systems that respond almost immediately. Finally, there is little room for failure.

Though this is not solely a class about society’s growing interest in business (both from a social and environmental perspective), it is clear that business plays a central role in our progress (or our lack of progress) toward sustainability. As one of, if not THE, dominant social institutions of our time, corporations have the financial resources, the technology, the know-how, and the global reach to lead an exploration of sustainability. Without the involvement of the business community in reshaping how we think about our individual and collective responsibility to the earth and future generations, our chances of successfully navigating the waters ahead are slim. The market remains the most effective means we know of to allocate scarce and valuable resources in ways that maximize social outcomes.

This class brings together students from across campus to dialogue on the relevance of systems to sustainability in a focused and constructive way. It has been organized to give you better insights into how sustainable development can be a part of most decisions that are made, whether at the individual lifestyle level or at the organizational level. The class will consist of lectures, supplemented with student discussions based on readings and case studies, and research and writing about ways that we can change things right now so that as a society we are able to live in a more sustainable manner.

The key learning outcomes of the class include:

- Understand how institutions utilize systems thinking.
- Understand sustainability in terms of design and systems.
- Understand that responsible producing and consuming is a shared responsibility between corporations, consumers, governments and non-governmental organizations.
- Understand the changing role of business in society and how the expectations on businesses are evolving.
- Understand the relative impact of private sector action versus government and citizen led action.
- Understand various organizational options and the difference it makes in operation.
**WARNING:** This class carries a relatively heavy preparation load for most of the semester. You will be required to indicate that you have done the readings each week (see below). You will learn as much from the preparation of the readings as you will from the lectures. It is essential therefore that you be present and be prepared to discuss the major themes from the readings. If you will be absent, please email Tom to let him know. Advance notice of a planned absence will not hurt your grade (unless this is a repeated behavior), simply missing class will. Finally, if you will need to miss class for religious reasons, please notify Tom within the first two weeks of class of the specific days or dates which you will be gone.

This is not a course geared toward "passive learning". Your purpose for being in this class should not be to passively receive information from "experts", but rather to actively engage in your own inquiry and restructure your thoughts about, and your relationship with, the concept of sustainability.

As part of class participation, I encourage appropriate laptop use. Inappropriate laptop use includes viewing non-relevant sites, instant messaging, e-mailing, gaming and shopping during class. If you would change the window if I was looking over your shoulder, then it is an inappropriate use.

A substantial amount of "out-of-class" time will be required as you work with classmates. Please be thoughtful and considerate of your classmates schedules and place a priority on meeting when needed.

**INTEGRITY**

This class will formally introduce the concept of personal integrity through your responses to the readings each week. This university does not teach about the importance of integrity in any systematized way; however, I believe that any individual’s future success in whatever they choose to do is attributable, to a large degree, to their personal integrity. Personal integrity isn’t achieved through inoculation. It’s a process. It’s rooted in your knowledge of the difference between right and wrong. You shape yourself, decision by decision, across your lifetime. Integrity depends on consistency, continuity, and repetition. So tell the truth, deliver what you promise, let your caring show, and your integrity will shine through for all to see. As Chinua Achebe (Nigerian novelist, poet, professor, and critic) said: “One of the truest tests of integrity is its blunt refusal to be compromised.”

I will ask that you provide brief comments, reflections or questions from the readings each week to an email distribution list (envirist402-3-s16@lists.wisc.edu). Please don’t send a response if you haven’t really done all the readings—ala the integrity issue. Even with the best of intentions sometimes work just doesn’t get done. While there are links supplied with most of the weekly readings, if a reading is not linked and a pdf has not already been supplied to you, you still need to read it. Contact me or the class liaison and we will send out a pdf of the unlinked reading via email.

**READING RESPONSES**

**REQUIREMENTS:** As described above, each week you will be asked to send to the list serve envirist402-3-s16@lists.wisc.edu an email that contains brief comments, reflections or questions about the week’s readings, due by 10:00 p.m. on the Sunday before class. Your responses form the backbone of our discussions each week, so let me know what interests you, what you have questions about or what you disagree with. This is your opportunity to shape the discussion in class to what interested you from the readings. Keep your responses SHORT, but use them to signal Tom what interested you about the readings! I do not expect you to read all of the readings responses that come in each week (but I know some of you will be curious about what others are writing).

One other benefit of writing each week is to practice thinking! What?! The act of writing, the act of manipulating sentences, integrates the different parts of our thinking such that a new structured thought emerges while writing. Writing is thinking. By placing thoughts in the structure of a sentence, we produce vehicles of thought that then may be manipulated on the page or screen. When writing sentences, creating
new sentences and moving the contained phrases and sentences around in new structures, the writer is actively thinking, bringing ideas together in new ways that illuminate each other in a manner unknown until that moment.

**SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: DUE FEBRUARY 8TH & FEBRUARY 29TH**

You will also be asked to write two short persuasive papers during the semester. Short and persuasive is hard. However, Steve Jobs wrote: “Simple can be harder than complex. You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But, it’s worth it in the end, because once you get there, you can move mountains.”

Past experience indicates that many of you will initially struggle with these assignments. My hope is that by providing comments/feedback, you will find a way to become clearer and more persuasive in your own voice. It is important to note that I will grade you on both content and your writing skills. This means that your factual arguments and logic are given equal weight with grammar, paper organization, sentence structure, and other writing skills. Being able to say what you need to say clearly and concisely is an important skill to learn. You will have the opportunity to revise each paper after having received comments.

For these papers, it may be helpful to recall the structure of the 5 paragraph essay that you learned in middle school. I know that you all know this, but just to review, in the first paragraph, tell the reader what you will be presenting in the balance of the paper and why they are receiving this paper. The second, third and fourth paragraphs should each present a single idea or recommendation along with evidence or examples that help the reader to understand and “buy into” your point. The final paragraph should review what your idea/recommendations were.

The first paper is a response to a column by the President/CEO of WI Manufacturers and Commerce and the second will involve an interview with an elected official.

For the first paper, read the column (which is included in the syllabus under February 8 readings) and prepare a one page response. Your response can either be to affirm the position of the author or to refute it. This is a persuasive writing assignment, so pick out 2 – 4 positions of the author and either provide additional justification for those positions or evidence that the positions are poorly developed. In a persuasive writing assignment, your introduction should identify the positions that you agree with or the positions you disagree with and then each subsequent paragraph should provide justification for your agreement/disagreement with one of those positions.

**PAST MEMOS WRITTEN BY STUDENTS:**
https://uwmadison.box.com/s/dx51lzjyb7x7ir6rui637qfic1a91mqr

In preparing for the second paper (which should take the form of a memo from you to the person you interviewed), you are required to make an appointment with a Congressperson, Senator, state legislator, Governor, Mayor, County Supervisor, County Board representative, city council representative or some other elected (not appointed) official, and discuss with them what their main priorities are for their time in office. Go into this interview with a set of questions that will allow you to understand where their main interests lie. After gathering this background information, your paper is a series of recommendations to the person that you interviewed on how they can incorporate the concepts of sustainability into the issues that are important to them. You are to send them a copy of your paper, with a copy to me.

You’ll find as you leave academia that people are most easily convinced with sound logic and numbers that they can understand. Thus, for the second paper, I will expect you to develop the economic case (I refer to this as the business case) for your recommendations. The purpose of the second paper is to provide enough information to the elected official to get them to agree with your recommendation. The paper should demonstrate the costs of your recommendations and the associated benefits.

**PAST MEMOS WRITTEN BY STUDENTS:**
https://uwmadison.box.com/signup/collablink/d_2955651871/177b854f69e7aa
The important point with this assignment is to get started early. It will require making an appointment and talking with one of the above people before you can write this paper.

**REQUIREMENTS:** The first paper cannot exceed one page (single-spaced) and the second paper should be no more than 2 single spaced pages with standard margins, and no smaller than a 12 point font. The papers should be emailed to Tom in a Word doc form by no later than 11:59pm on February 8th and March 7th. For the second paper, you are required to also send a copy to your elected official; however you may wait until you have my suggestions before you send the memo to them.

**CREATIVE PROJECTS: DUE APRIL 4th**

You will be engaged in a creative project. Why? Napoleon Hill got it right! "First comes thought; then organization of that thought into ideas and plans; then transformation of those plans into reality. The beginning, as you will observe, is in your imagination." We've all heard it before, "If you always do what you've always done, then you'll always get what you always got." In other words, you can't solve a problem with the same thinking that created it. Such is the case with climate change, water quality and quantity, income inequality and other pressing world concerns. So, if our traditional thinking and approaches aren't cutting it, then what will?

A change in perspective. Sustainability is that perspective. When we make a shift in our thinking, we generate different results in our outer world. As Norman Vincent Peale said, "Change your thoughts and you change your world." Thus, even though you did not sign up for a humanities class, you will be required to be creative.

I am interested in exploring the role of media in influencing or shaping opinions and behavior, especially amongst millennials. By class on April 4th, please prepare one of the following creative projects:

1) Either script and perform, or identify existing text and perform for a 1-4 minute video that you edit, add credits to, and post on the YouTube site for the class. I encourage you to think in terms of performance art in preparing this video. For one excellent example of what I am looking for, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OadZpUJv8Eg or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FJyKYK74DM or see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpnfnqEtAbNE for an example from a previous student.

2) If you have a personal website, develop a new page as to why sustainability is important to you, complete with resources, links, etc. See the class website for an idea of what I’m looking for: http://uwsustainability.com/resources/living-sustainably/

3) Write and produce a children’s story. Example issues could include: global warming, species extinction, over-population, over-consumption, build-up of toxics in our world, ozone hole, growing dead areas in our oceans, food insecurity, accessibility to clean water, soil loss/erosion, vanishing rainforests, or declining fish stocks. Decide on the point(s) that you want to make and how you can explain this point so that a 3rd grade child can understand it. Your story needs to be “produced" (meaning you must develop graphics, and perhaps audio with it) and must be submitted electronically. Your stories will be presented to third graders for feedback.

4) You may submit additional ideas for creative projects to Tom for approval. See this link to a podcast for one creative idea from a student last year: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVVUG4uFf9U

Libraries around campus are good sources for technology that you might need. For open source pictures, see http://search.creativecommons.org/. You can also check out these sites for free downloads of pictures: Microsoft, morgueFile and EveryStockPhoto. You can also find historical photos via the Library of Congress.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Requirements are project specific, make sure to clarify with me before completing your project. Projects are due by 11:59am on April 4th. Evaluation criteria will include:

- Educational Value - Introduces new or unknown information and delivers it in an interesting and compelling way
- Creative/Memorable - Project contains images, music, or elements of the presentation, that are memorable.
- Narrative quality – Project has an understandable and natural flow
- Overall Production Quality - Project looks professional
PAST STUDENT CREATIVE ASSIGNMENTS:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpnfgEtAbNE
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVVUG4uFf9U

FINAL PROJECTS: DUE APRIL 25TH
You will work in groups on a project that will not only satisfy a major portion of your grade, but will also satisfy a research and development need of a local business or non-profit. Each of you will be part of a consulting team that will be providing recommendations to your client by the end of the semester. Possible projects will be distributed during the first class. The first part of your final paper will provide the basic detail about a sustainability topic identified by your client. The second part of your paper provides your recommendations to your client on how to move forward, along with all necessary justification. In general, your final project will be an advocacy piece to convince your client to take an action. You must develop your most convincing argument(s) and be prepared to answer objections (it costs too much, no one would want to do this, etc.). This is NOT your traditional academic paper, and if you insist on writing a traditional research paper, you will have missed the point of this assignment. You must talk with your client, and quite probably others in the field, as you undertake your project. I think you will find it useful to distinguish the kind of writing you have learned to do in an academic setting from the kind of writing you will be asked to do in the real world.

During the final weeks of class, you will also be presenting your recommendations to your client. Clients will attend class for 15-minute presentations followed by Q&A. These will be formal presentations and business casual dress is expected.

REQUIREMENTS: Your recommendations are to be contained in your final project write-up that cannot exceed 5 single spaced pages (additional appendixes may be used) with standard margins and no smaller than a 12 point font. These are to be emailed to me by 11:59pm on April 25th as either one PDF or one Word doc. That means to say if you have written your paper in Word and created a graphic as a PDF, please combine them into one document before submission.

PAST STUDENT FINAL PROJECTS:
http://uwsustainability.com/uw-sustainability-business-courses/systems-thinking/

PERSONAL DESCRIPTION: DUE MAY 2nd
At any time during the course of the semester, you are to write your own six-word personal description that describes you; your values and your dreams. How hard can that be?
Some of the examples from last year include: “A guarded heart has a price”, “The girl conquered her greatest fears”, “Hardwired drive slumbering, seeking worthy purpose”, and “Then, I changed "could" to "can"”.

REQUIREMENTS: Six words containing your personal description emailed to Tom before 11:59pm May 4th.

SOCIAL MEDIA (EXTRA CREDIT)
For those of you interested, I would welcome your voices in developing TWEETS that will be distributed through the WI Sustainable Business Council Twitter page (#wisustainablebc). We currently have 593 followers, so you will be reaching a fair number of people. If you post at least one tweet a week for at least 12 weeks, you will earn an extra 5 points toward your final grade. In order to get credit, your tweets must be in your voice – meaning that in 140 characters you must do more than just recite a new fact. All tweets must be relevant to the WI business community. This is an exceptional opportunity to earn extra credit by investing 10 – 15 minutes a week over the course of the semester.
GRADING

25% of your final grade will be based upon “Citizenship” - includes attendance, readings responses, teamwork on project, classmate respect and support, attitude, interest, appreciation, enthusiasm, active and productive participation in class and knowledge of topics. To be clear, you’ll lose points if you don’t come to class or if you don’t submit a reading response. You’ll also lose points if you don’t carry your weight on your final project.

20% of your final grade will be based upon your papers.

15% of your final grade will be based upon your creative project.

5% of your final grade will be based upon your 6 word description.

30% of your final grade will be based upon your final paper.

5% of your final grade will be based upon your presentation of your final paper.

In fairness to others in the class, late submissions of the written material will be penalized at a rate of 20% of the submission's value per day (e.g., your final papers presented one day late will receive at most a weight of 28 out of the 35 points available).

Finally, I want you to know that I view teaching as a serious business. You are all wonderfully bright and talented students. You have almost unlimited potential. For most of you, this is your one shot at college; you deserve nothing less than an academic experience that challenges you to excel from the first day of this class to your last. As a member of the faculty, I have a responsibility to coax the very best from you because you will become the next generation of leaders. Where you go from here, what you accomplish, how you impact the world, depends in large part on the learning environment we create in the classroom. I want every student to leave my class at the end of the semester saying, "I didn't know that I could work so hard, and I didn't realize that I could learn so much." Anything less is unacceptable.

LIST OF MATERIALS

Books:


The World We Made: Alex McKay's Story from 2050, by Jonathon Porritt (New York, NY Phaidon Press) 2013

REQUIRED READINGS: Reading Packet available. However, if you are comfortable reading articles on-line, we will provide either a web address or an electronic copy of all readings. Please do not print these off in order to read them. First, you will spend more than you would have if you would have purchased the reading packet, and second, you will not print them off on as "green" of paper as will be used for the reading packet. If you know you want a hard copy of the reading packet, let Tom know. We will ask on the first day of class how many people want a hard copy of the packet.
January 25) **Introduction**

The first class is designed to accomplish six things. First, the goals, purposes, structure, and format of the class will be made clear through a review of the syllabus and other relevant materials. Second, we will discuss the purpose and structure of the creative exercise that you will be asked to do. Third, we will discuss the final project and go through each of the possible projects. Fourth, students will share information about themselves. Fifth, we will work in teams to solve a problem that requires that we start thinking outside of the box. Finally, we define sustainability and start talking about what we mean when we use this term.

**VIDEOS:** BEE Environmental Communication: A Systems Story (4:46)  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMmChiLZZHg

Sustainability 2.0 – Systems Thinking (3:13),  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtrRj3C1cKY

February 1) **Laying the Foundation: Sustainability and Systems**

This class will be designed to establish a common grounding for where we will go during the semester. I will talk about sustainability on a conceptual level, and then illustrate how some of these ideas are being implemented in various institutions. We will talk about various frameworks for thinking about sustainability, and I will use The Natural Step as an example of one framework, and how it can be important in guiding people’s understanding, and thinking.

**READINGS:** 5 Ways “Systems Thinking” Can Jumpstart Action, by Network for Business Sustainability, 2013,  

New Belgium Brewing Company: Brewing with a Conscious by Christopher Asher, Elina Bidner & Christopher Greene, case study from Univ of Colorado at Boulder, 2003,  

Thinking in Systems: Introduction and Part 1 (System Structures and Behaviors)

**VIDEOS:** U of Michigan: Dana Meadows Lecture: Sustainable Systems, pt 1 (start at 7:00, end at 23:03)  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMmChiLZZHg

February 8) **Systems Thinking and Sustainability**

Systems thinking has so much to do with sustainability, that it will be a theme that constantly reappears in our discussions throughout the semester. Systems thinking is a mental framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, seeing patterns of change rather than static 'snapshots', and viewing societies and economies as integrated parts of the biosphere. Understanding what we mean when we talk about systems thinking is thus critical. For many people, systems thinking helps explain why we have found ourselves in the mess we are in. The flip side of that coin, is that systems thinking explains why we are so well off, even given all the stupid stuff we are doing. Tim will start the discussion on systems thinking which we will return to at several points during the semester.

**GUEST LECTURER:** Tim Allen, Emeritus Professor, Dept of Botany

**READINGS:** Overview of Systems Thinking by Daniel Aronson, 1998.  
http://www.thinking.net/Systems_Thinking/OverviewSTarticle.pdf
The Lazy Eight: Key to Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Update, Issue 5, p. 2 (only) 2008.
https://uwmadison.box.com/s/z99ujpicfznbsavym5u8nxhn5ngiesf

http://kmhassociates.ca/resources/1/The%20Sustainable%20Economy%20HBR%20October%202011.pdf

Young People Should Fear Debt as Much as Climate Change (If Not More), by Kurt Bauer, published at
http://issuu.com/wmc1/docs/wmc_by_jan2015-med/4

Thinking in Systems: Parts 2 (Systems and Us)


SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
The first paper is a response to a column by the President/CEO of WI Manufacturers and Commerce. Read the column (which is included in the syllabus under today’s readings) and prepare a one page response. Your response can either be to affirm the position of the author or to refute it. This is a persuasive writing assignment, so pick out 2 – 4 positions of the author and either provide additional justification for those positions or evidence that the positions are poorly developed. In a persuasive writing assignment, your introduction should identify the positions that you agree with or the positions you disagree with and then each subsequent paragraph should provide justification for your agreement/disagreement with one of those positions.

PAST MEMOS WRITTEN BY STUDENTS:
https://uwmadison.box.com/s/dx51lzjb7x7ir6ru637qfic1a91mqr

February 15) Mindful Leadership: Creating Positive Change Using a Systems Approach
Mindful leadership is an essential skill for leading in a complex world. We all impact the success and effectiveness of our organizations and the health of our communities. Leadership involves responsibility, service, and commitment which can be incredibly fulfilling and empowering, while also being a source of stress. The applied skills and practices of mindful leadership have emerged as a way to support well-being, sustainability, and effectiveness at work and at home.
The concept of change is at the heart of leading. Individual changes in beliefs, values and behaviors is challenging and complex, but engaging in systemic change can seem even more daunting. Mark will share how a group of leadership experts on campus approached the development and application of a campus Leadership Framework from a systems perspective. Students will learn how leadership framework concepts can support systemic change efforts.

GUEST LECTURER: Mark Kueppers, Assistant Director, Center for Leadership & Involvement


UW-Madison Leadership Framework (http://www.leadership.wisc.edu/documents/CLIFrameworkPoster14x20v16.1Outcomes.pdf) (take time to understand the chart)
February 22) More on Systems – Capitalism as an Example of a System
Tim introduced us to systems last week, and now we’ll talk more about the role of systems and the importance of systems. Steve will talk about the macro systems that we live under – democracy and capitalism. They are both systems and react as systems do to threats, pressure, and perturbations. We’ll start learning about the importance of understanding the logic behind systems thinking, and the power of working within systems (as well as the difficulty of changing a system). Many accuse our system of Democracy as being dysfunctional. But, the system reflects society and is governed by rules (both written and unwritten) that have developed over time. Those rules, of course, are created by the politicians that complain about them.

Guest Lecturer: Steve Brick, Senior Fellow, Climate and Energy, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs


One From Many, Intro – ch 5

February 29) Organization Matters - Organizing as a Not-For-Profit and the Importance of Employee Engagement
Cool Choices is an organization built around the idea that some of the most promising sustainability solutions do not require new technologies, regulations or mandates. They identify the role of employees and support the undertaking of voluntary actions. People want to do the right thing (reduce waste, save money, protect Wisconsin’s natural resources) and with the right help and support, significant change is possible. Kathy will talk about the approach of Cool Choices to understanding the existing systems within a target company, and their process of developing a unique system to engage employees in adopting sustainability actions.

Guest Lecturer: Kathy Kuntz, Executive Director, Cool Choices, Madison


The Stretch Agenda: Breakthrough in the Boardroom, published by Volens Ventures, 2015
SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE

In preparing for the second paper (which should take the form of a memo from you to the person you interviewed), you are required to make an appointment with a Congressperson, Senator, state legislator, Governor, Mayor, County Supervisor, County Board representative, city council representative or some other elected (not appointed) official, and discuss with them what their main priorities are for their time in office. Go into this interview with a set of questions that will allow you to understand where their main interests lie. After gathering this background information, your paper is a series of recommendations to the person that you interviewed on how they can incorporate the concepts of sustainability into the issues that are important to them. You are to send them a copy of your paper, with a copy to me.

Indicate what the key issues of the person you talked to are, and then weave sustainability into your recommendations about these issues. For instance, if a key issue was tax reduction, you could recommend how taxing pollution is far superior to taxing people’s labor, or that subsidies are in fact working against sustainability principles.

PAST MEMOS WRITTEN BY STUDENTS:
https://uwmadison.box.com/s/c57ipyjx5ocezzx67tq5paveespizlvt

March 7) Socially Responsible Investing as a Systems Issue
One of the two most prevalent systems that sustainability exists within is capitalism. As with most systems, capitalism does not easily accommodate the principles or values of sustainability. Yet, within our capitalistic markets, socially responsible investing continues to grow. By some estimates, one out of every 7 dollars is invested with the intention to recognize the values of a company, in addition to providing return on that dollar. Companies that are value based, and that have publicly embraced the tenants of sustainability are competing for dollars that other companies don’t have access to. Brian will talk about the rise of interest in socially responsible investing and the way that it is shaping behavior at some firms.

GUEST LECTURER: Mary Strickland, Vice President, Robert W Baird & Co


Lender 2.0: Kiva’s Premal Shah, The LA Times, May 14, 2011,
http://articles.latimes.com/print/2011/may/14/opinion/la-oe-morrison-premal-shah-043011

One From Many, ch 6 – 11

VIDEOS: TED Talk: Chris McKnett: The Investment Logic for Sustainability, (12:19)
March 14) Organization Matters – Selling Your Company to Your Employees

Employee Owned companies are more democratic, more sustainable, more efficient. The Boldt Company is in the process of becoming an employee owned company. Tom Boldt will talk about the decision to sell the company to his employees, the legal realities of creating and running an employee owned company and also the cultural and day-to-day realities.

**GUEST LECTURER:** Tom Boldt, CEO, The Boldt Company, Appleton

**READINGS:** Capitalism for Everyone, by Karla Walter, D Madland and D Corley, published by the Center for American Progress, 2015

Zingerman’s Community of Businesses: Broad-Based Ownership, Governance and Sustainability, by V Kilibarda under the direction of Wayne Baker, published by the William Davidson Institute, case 1-429-340

**VIDEOS:** Employee-owners do it better: David Erdal at TEDxGlasgow, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yb2h0qPWP2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yb2h0qPWP2Q)

We The Owners documentary, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpkUN0rHR1w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpkUN0rHR1w)

March 28) Organization Matters – Mutual Companies

Mutual companies are a poorly understood organizational option for businesses. Banks and insurance companies are the most frequent sectors that utilize this organizational structure. These businesses exist for the benefit of their shareholders, who are also their customers. This creates a very different dynamic within the firm, as there is much less focus on quarterly earnings. Ron has worked in a Mutual company that converted to a publicly held company, and is now working in a mutual company that has chosen not to convert. He’ll share stories about the difference that organizational structure can make.

**GUEST LECTURER:** Ron Joelson, CFO, Northwestern Mutual, Milwaukee, WI.


The World We Made, Introduction – p. 73

**VIDEOS:** Maddock Douglas, Maria Douglas, Flirting with the Uninterested, [http://maddockdouglas.com/three-steps-enabling-hidden-power-mutual-business/](http://maddockdouglas.com/three-steps-enabling-hidden-power-mutual-business/) (see embedded video on page 2)
April 4) It’s Not Just the Technology that Needs to Change: The Role of Changing Behavior and Demand in Sustainability
Technology has changed how our buildings operate. LEED also influences the design and construction of buildings. Yet building still count for 30% of energy use in the US. Alex will talk about the importance of training building operators and tenants to ensure the most efficient performance of our buildings. Sustainability is not a topic for someone else to engage on. Rather, it is a topic that each of us must be responsible for – whether that means in how we interact with our houses, our building where we work, or in other contexts.

**Guest Lecturer:** Alex Grace, Director of Business Development, KGS Buildings

**Readings:**

The World We Made, p. 74 - 135

**Videos:**
- Overcoming Resistance to Change - Isn't It Obvious?, (6:13) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcZ1aZ60k7w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcZ1aZ60k7w)
- RSA Animate - Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us, (10:47) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc)

**Creative Assignment Due**

April 11) Organization Matters – Running a Cooperative
The state has many small investor owned municipal utilities. Joe runs a municipal utility that is organized as a coop. Wisconsin is home to a large number of cooperatives. Did you know Organic Valley is a coop? Or Ocean Spray? Or Union Cab? Joe will talk about the pros and cons of running a cooperative, some recent projects that they’ve done where members had to be factored in, and the freedom the cooperative structure provides in decision-making.

**Guest Lecturer:** Joe McDonald, CEO, Vernon County Electric Cooperative, Westby, WI


April 18) Last Lecture
I’m intrigued by the rise in interest in Last Lectures. However, I’m not dying, so this is my third delivery of my “last lecture”. In any case, I’m hoping to inspire and challenge you. Feedback will be welcomed!


Part II was not available at the time I created the syllabus


The World We Made, p. 200 – end

Videos: The Last Lecture (1:16:26) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji5_MqicxSo

April 25) First presentations of Final Papers to entire class
ALL FINAL PAPERS DUE –
½ of teams will present. Presentations should be between 12 and 18 minutes without questions. Falling outside those time constraints will result in a penalty.

May 2) Presentation of remainder of Final Papers to entire class.
½ of teams will present. Presentations should be between 12 and 18 minutes without questions. Falling outside those time constraints will result in a penalty.

Summary Schedule:

February 1: Project preferences due.
February 8: Project assignments distributed. First paper due

February 29: 2nd paper due

April 4: Creative project due

April 25: Final papers due. Presentation of first papers (this is a formal presentation).

May 2: Presentation of rest of papers (this is a formal presentation).
Organization Matters – Becoming a B Corp
Adrian pursued his dream of creating a social business – one that both returns a profit and serves a social mission. In his case, his mission was to create an exceptional nut butter AND provide a buy one/feed one program for starving children in Central America. Yumbutter has become a successful niche player in the nut butter market and they continue to make a difference in the lives of children that they help. In 2014, they registered as a B Corporation. Adrian will talk about why these chose to become a B Corporation, and the limitations of “for benefit” corporations under WI law.

**GUEST LECTURER:** Adrian Reif, President, YumButter, Madison


Patagonia, by Forest Reinhardt, R Casadesus-Masanell, H Jin Kim, Case No. 9-711-020, published by the Harvard Business School, 2010. https://uwmadison.box.com/s/kvw5e2429m1cqbfs57e5wbk6mh0vfwx5x

**VIDEOS:** B Corporation Founders Video (4:58) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OOm9ptF8qY and LH Forum, B Lab Co-Founder Andrew Kassoy, (17:15) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzmK1h0aE.