

Seminar Sustainability Management Winter Term 2024/25

Introduction

Welcome to this year's undergraduate seminar "Sustainability Management"! In a world increasingly defined by environmental challenges, the role of companies in the sustainability transition is heavily discussed in science as well as the public. Today's economy is defined by stark contrast between companies like Volkswagen, whose Diesel Scandal heavily damaged its reputation for sustainability, and Patagonia, a brand celebrated for its unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship. Throughout this course, we will delve into the practices that enable firms to act sustainably, transforming their internal working to not only mitigate negative impacts but also to foster positive contributions to society and the planet.

Course structure

The course is structured as follows. After the opening session on the 27th of October, you get assigned to a subtopic of sustainability literature which you have to prepare throughout the semester. Please find the list of topics below. The results of your research will be summarized in a seminar paper, which has to be handed in by the 10th of January 2025. The final presentations will take place on the 16th and 23rd of January 2025.

Content of examinations

Your presentations and written reports consist of two parts. In a first step, each group is assigned to a subdiscipline of sustainability research which, throughout the semester, you should become an expert in. In a second step, you apply your newly gained theoretical knowledge on real life cases by selecting a firm which works as best-practice example. Make sure to explain why you chose the specific company, what and why you evaluate a measure as good and where – based on your new expertise – you see possibilities of improvement.

Goal of this course

By the end of this course, you will have a sound knowledge of the different possibilities of sustainability management and you will be expert on one subdiscipline. You will understand the challenges firms are currently facing and understand which strategies can help to tackle them. Further you develop your ability to hold presentations and advance your language

skills in English. You will also learn how to write a seminar paper, which gives you a solid foundation for your upcoming bachelor thesis.

Advanced Information: Literature list and best-practice guidance

The literature listed below shall offer you a first guidance to get an impression of your topic. This is *not* a complete reference list. For your presentations and term papers, make sure to include *at least six different sources*. Please use the [VHB Ranking](#) for finding appropriate journals. As discussed during the introduction class, please always first try to find relevant papers in A+, A and B journals. In case you think you don't find enough papers related to your topic: Don't panic! Try to use other keywords for your search-prompts and check the reference lists of your assigned papers. Those give you a rough guidance on related works and buzzwords used in the titles.

The topics will be assigned at October, 30th 2024 via ILIAS.

Part 1: Topics

1. How to measure Sustainability?

- Chatterji, Aaron K.; Durand, Rodolphe; Levine, David I.; Touboul, Samuel (2016): Do ratings of firms converge? Implications for managers, investors and strategy researchers. In: Strategic Management Journal 37 (8), S. 1597–1614. DOI: 10.1002/smj.2407.
- Barnett, M.L., Henriques, I. and Husted, B.W., 2020. Beyond good intentions: Designing CSR initiatives for greater social impact. Journal of Management, 46(6), pp.937-964.
- Eccles, Robert G.; Ioannou, Ioannis; Serafeim, George (2014): The Impact of Corporate Sustainability on Organizational Processes and Performance. In: Management Science 60 (11), S. 2835–2857. DOI: 10.1287/mnsc.2014.1984.

2. Shareholder activism and the sustainable firm

- Chuah, Kevin; Desjardine, Mark R.; Goranova, Maria; Henisz, Witold J. (2024): Shareholder Activism Research: A System-Level View. In: Academy of Management Annals 18 (1), S. 82–120. DOI: 10.5465/annals.2022.0069.
- Flammer, Caroline; Toffel, Michael W.; Viswanathan, Kala (2021): Shareholder activism and firms' voluntary disclosure of climate change risks. In: Strategic Management Journal 42 (10), S. 1850–1879. DOI: 10.1002/smj.3313.
- Tindall, Greg; Cole, Rebel A.; Javakhadze, David (2024): Innovation Responds to Climate Change Proposals. In: J Bus Ethics. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-024-05808-7.

3. Sustainable performance: the role of employees

- Flammer, Caroline; Luo, Jiao (2017): Corporate social responsibility as an employee governance tool: Evidence from a quasi-experiment. In: Strategic Management Journal 38 (2), S. 163–183. DOI: 10.1002/smj.2492.
- Bhattacharya, C. B.; Sen, Sankar; Edinger-Schons, Laura Marie; Neureiter, Michael (2023): Corporate Purpose and Employee Sustainability Behaviors. In: Journal of Business Ethics 183 (4), S. 963–981. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-022-05090-5.
- Pellegrini, Chiara; Rizzi, Francesco; Frey, Marco (2018): The role of sustainable human resource practices in influencing employee behavior for corporate sustainability.

In: *Business Strategy and the Environment* 27 (8), S. 1221–1232. DOI: 10.1002/bse.2064.

4. Pay structures and sustainability outcomes

- Flammer, Caroline; Hong, Bryan; Minor, Dylan (2019): Corporate governance and the rise of integrating corporate social responsibility criteria in executive compensation: Effectiveness and implications for firm outcomes. In: *Strategic Management Journal* 40 (7), S. 1097–1122. DOI: 10.1002/smj.3018.
- Deckop, John R.; Merriman, Kimberly K.; Gupta, Shruti (2006): The Effects of CEO Pay Structure on Corporate Social Performance. In: *Journal of Management* 32 (3), S. 329–342. DOI: 10.1177/0149206305280113.
- Lenox, Michael; King, Andrew (2004): Prospects for developing absorptive capacity through internal information provision. In: *Strategic Management Journal* 25 (4), S. 331–345. DOI: 10.1002/smj.379.

5. The role of executives in shaping sustainable performance

- Aguilera, R.V., Aragón-Correa, J.A., Marano, V. and Tashman, P.A., 2021. The corporate governance of environmental sustainability: A review and proposal for more integrated research. *Journal of Management*, 47(6), pp.1468-1497
- Lewis, Ben W.; Walls, Judith L.; Dowell, Glen W. S. (2014): Difference in degrees: CEO characteristics and firm environmental disclosure. In: *Strategic Management Journal* 35 (5), S. 712–722. DOI: 10.1002/smj.2127.
- Manner, Mikko H. (2010): The Impact of CEO Characteristics on Corporate Social Performance. In: *Journal of Business Ethics* 93 (S1), S. 53–72. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-010-0626-7.

6. Sustainable Innovation

- Stilgoe, Jack & Owen, Richard & Macnaghten, Phil. (2013). Developing a Framework for Responsible Innovation. *Research Policy*. 42. 1568–1580.
- Berrone, P., Fosfuri, A., Gelabert, L. and Gomez-Mejia, L.R., 2013. Necessity as the mother of ‘green’ inventions: Institutional pressures and environmental innovations. *Strategic Management Journal*, 34(8), pp.891-909.
- Kesidou, E. and Demirel, P., 2012. On the drivers of eco-innovations: Empirical evidence from the UK. *Research Policy*, 41(5), pp.862-870.

7. AI and sustainability

- Kaack, Lynn H.; Donti, Priya L.; Strubell, Emma; Kamiya, George; Creutzig, Felix; Rolnick, David (2022): Aligning artificial intelligence with climate change mitigation. In: *Nature Climate Change*. 12 (6), S. 518–527. DOI: 10.1038/s41558-022-01377-7.
- Freitag, Charlotte; Berners-Lee, Mike; Widdicks, Kelly; Knowles, Bran; Blair, Gordon S.; Friday, Adrian (2021): The real climate and transformative impact of ICT: A critique of estimates, trends, and regulations. In: *Patterns* 2 (9), S. 100340. DOI: 10.1016/j.patter.2021.100340.

- Jorzik, Philip; Antonio, Jerome L.; Kanbach, Dominik K.; Kallmuenzer, Andreas; Kraus, Sascha (2024): Sowing the seeds for sustainability: A business model innovation perspective on artificial intelligence in green technology startups. In: Technological Forecasting and Social Change 208, S. 123653. DOI: 10.1016/j.techfore.2024.123653.

8. Environmental sustainability and financial firm performance

- Eccles, Robert G.; Ioannou, Ioannis; Serafeim, George (2014): The Impact of Corporate Sustainability on Organizational Processes and Performance. In: Management Science 60 (11), S. 2835–2857. DOI: 10.1287/mnsc.2014.1984.
- Hawn, O., Chatterji, A.K. and Mitchell, W. (2018). Do investors actually value sustainability? New evidence from investor reactions to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI). Strategic Management Journal, 39(4), pp.949-976.
- Sarkis, Joseph; Cordeiro, James J. (2001): An empirical evaluation of environmental efficiencies and firm performance: Pollution prevention versus end-of-pipe practice. In: European Journal of Operational Research 135 (1), S. 102–113. DOI: 10.1016/S0377-2217(00)00306-4.

Part 2: Apply real-life case studies

For each of your topics, there are several ways to find relevant best-practice examples for your presentations and seminar papers. Many companies share their sustainability efforts in their sustainability reports or annual reports, which are typically available on their websites. Sustainability networks (e.g. [Klimaschutz-Unternehmen](#), [B.A.U.M. e.V.](#), [Bund für Nachhaltiges Wirtschaften](#)) and databases (e.g. [CDP](#)) are another useful source to find inspiring firm examples. Further, national and international newspapers can offer another helpful source of inspiration. Exemplarily, the [Financial Times](#) has an entire online section dedicated to climate, where they discuss firms' climate approaches.

Please note: While using all of these sources, please keep in mind to critically reflect what you read. It is your task as a researcher to assess information from a fact-based perspective.

Advanced Information: Administrative Information

Course Prerequisites and Grading

- Attendance at the kick-off event is mandatory for successful completion of the seminar. During this event, you will not only receive important information about the course but also begin working on the various topics. Please remember to bring your laptop!
- This course is highly interactive, requiring full commitment to individual and group work on assigned topics and questions. Your group members and fellow students rely on your support! Therefore, starting from the 31st of October when groups have been assigned, cancellation of course participation will no longer be allowed. Withdrawing from the course after the 31st of October will result in an official course failure.
- There will be several scheduled meetings, as outlined below, and your attendance is expected unless otherwise specified. Please ensure that you plan your schedule accordingly and inform me at the beginning of the course if there are any scheduling conflicts with other classes.
- Your final grade is based upon an essay and a presentation, which count
 - 4 / 2 credit points (66,6%/33,3%) for students who complete this course in the module “Seminar Nachhaltigkeitsmanagement” (BSc NWR) and
 - 3 / 3 credit points (50%/50%) for students who complete this course via the BSc BWL specialization modules.
- The seminar papers comprise 10 to 20 pages. The duration of the presentation depends on the final number of group members. Each person has to present between 15 and 30 minutes. Further information will be provided during the kick-off.

Important Dates

Deadline for course registration	27.10.2024	Marvin
Kick-off	29.10.2024	12:00-14:00 Room AP 2
Deadline for cancellation of course participation in Marvin	30.10.2024	Marvin
Assignment of groups	31.10.2024	Notification via ILIAS
Individual Discussion of Project Outlines	Tbd	Meeting room of SUMA research group
Submission of seminar paper	10.01.2024	Submission via ILIAS
Final presentations	16.01.2024 & 23.01.2024	9:00-18:00 Uhr Dekanatssitzungszimmer