This is a synopsis of the course syllabus intended to provide an overview of the course. Please note that details of the course may change from semester to semester and that the syllabus used during a given semester takes precedence over this summary.

General Course Description

This should be a fun class with lots of applicability to what’s going on in organizations in these changing times. In recent decades, and even today, it has been hard to utter the words business and environment or corporate social responsibility in the same sentence without them seeming oxymoronic. They are seen by many as contradictory terms because their goals – in the current paradigm – seem at odds. One of the primary goals of this course is to prove that businesses and governments can do well financially, while doing right by the environment and society.

The course takes the view that while the traditional (current) industrial economic paradigm has provided many benefits associated with economic prosperity (particularly in the Western World), these same achievements also have resulted in dramatic climate changes, increasing ecological degradation, and a growing gap between rich and poor. Sustainable development, on the other hand, is seen as an approach which meets the needs of today without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In other words, the goal of sustainable development is to meet our own needs without doing financial, social, or environmental harm.

We will look at these issues through four common themes, or lenses:

- Systems thinking – Linear thinking vs. circular thinking and the often unintended consequences of human action
- Design – Creating useful solutions that avoid unintended systemic impacts
- Evaluation – Indicators and measures of individual and organizational behavior at multiple levels
- Change Management – Factors that impact how people perceive these issues and how we might move organizations toward long-term proactive solutions rather than relying on short-term reactive ones.

The assignments will focus on several areas:

- Current indicators in the media of climate change, environmental degradation, corporate/governmental social responsibility
- The differences between the current existing linear business and economic paradigm of Take-Make-Waste and the cyclical business and economic paradigm of sustainable development of Borrow-Use-Return
- Various organizational techniques for fostering sustainable development
- Case studies of companies leading the way toward sustainable development
- Change management principles for achieving lasting cultural and attitudinal paradigm shifts

Course Goals

As a result of this course, you should be able to:

1. Identify and describe indicators from a variety of sources documenting evidence of climate change, corporate social responsibility, and environmental degradation or restoration.
2. Describe the characteristics of the current linear economic paradigm that lead to unsustainable outcomes
3. Describe the characteristics of a cyclical economic paradigm that leads to more sustainable development
4. List and describe some common measures for evaluating an organization’s environmental and social impact, and its progress toward sustainable business practice.
5. List and describe established techniques that organizations can use to eliminate harmful environmental or social factors while at the same time improving the organizations financial Return-on-Investment.

6. Diagnose organizational efforts toward sustainable development and prescribe specific actions to improve chances for successful implementation.

7. Describe how performance improvement practitioners can use PI/HPT (performance improvement/human performance technology) models and theories to address sustainability factors in organizations

8. Describe how PI/HPT models might be extended or adapted to include a sustainability perspective in performance improvement projects

Textbooks


Course Assignments

Online Discussion/Participation (Individual Assignment)
You will be required to participate in an online discussion instructor and student discussion questions.

Online Quizzes (Individual Assignment)
For each of the 5 content modules in the course, you will take an online open book quiz to evaluate your understanding of basic concepts covered in that module. These quizzes are open book.

Mini Case Study (Individual Assignment)
Individually write up an original case study description of a business, government entity, or community effort to become sustainable. It should include information about what instigated the effort, what initiatives were tried, what outcomes were achieved (or are expected to be achieved), and, most importantly, what lessons can be drawn from the case for the field of human performance improvement.

Team Project Plan (Team Assignment)
Create a Project Plan that includes a draft of initial sections of a High Level Impact Assessment and proposal (see Team Project below), and includes a plan for gathering data to complete the assessment.

Team Project (Team Assignment)
Create a High Level Impact Assessment and proposal for a small business, or if for a larger organization, then a department, process or function of that organization (See Sustainability Planning, Chp. 4, pp. 56-59). Make recommendations for changes. Describe how you would evaluate your progress (metrics), as well as the design characteristics of your proposed change. The report should be 25 to 40 pages and you should apply 6th edition APA formatting (to the references only).

Time Required

A general rule of thumb is that you should expect to invest approximately 45 hours per credit during a semester. IPT578 is a 3-credit course taught during an 8-week semester. This means that you should expect to invest approximately 135 hours (45 x 3) on this course. This translates to approximately 17 hours per week (135 ÷ 8 weeks). Remember that this is an approximation. You might spend more or less time on the course depending on your relevant work experience and your familiarity with the content.