

Sustainability in Global Value Chains

(MNGT-E2005, 6 cr)

SYLLABUS 23.10.2023

Instructors' contact information	Course Information
Responsible teachers: Tiina Ritvala E-mail: tiina.ritvala@aalto.fi https://people.aalto.fi/tiina_ritvala Phone +358 40 353 8352	Status of the course: Elective in Degree Programmes in Management and International Business and Creative Sustainability, CEMS, and AALTO minor in World in Transition Academic Year: 2023-2024, Autumn II (24.10-30.11.2023) Location: U006 (Ekonominaukio 1) Lecture time: TUE & THU at 14:15-17 Language of Instruction: English Course Website: https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=40766
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1. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student is able to: 1. understand what are global value chains (GVCs) and why are they at the core of sustainability; 2. identify different ways of economic, social and environmental upgrading in GVCs; 3. reflect upon the interdependencies and tensions between social, economic and environmental sustainability of GVCs; 4. envision how MNEs can transform their strategies and GVCs based on sustainability; and 5. apply Excel for basic analysis of data.

2. CONTENT

The course consists of three modules: 1) Introduction; 2) Social, economic and environmental upgrading in GVCs; and 3) Real life applications and conclusions

The first module provides an overview of the course and its key concepts. It emphasizes the role of global value chains (GVCs) in addressing global grand challenges and the UN sustainable development goals. The second module focuses on the different ways that companies can upgrade their GVCs and contribute to social, economic and environmental sustainability. Several classes draw on real-life cases and engage guests from different sectors and industries. The third module is dedicated to students' presentations of future-oriented entrepreneurial solutions to promote sustainability in GVCs.

3. TEACHERS



Tiina Ritvala

Associate Professor of International Business
Assistant Dean of Teaching and Education

Tiina's research and teaching focuses on cross-sector partnerships between multinational corporations, nonprofits, and governments in dynamic policy contexts such as sustainable cities and energy transition. She is alumni of the SCANCOR Weatherhead Initiative at Harvard University and has held visiting positions at Queen's University (Canada) and WU Vienna.

Tiina has published widely on sustainability related topics in leading international business and management journals such as *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of World Business* and *Journal of Management Studies*.



Iris Saittakari

Assistant Professor of International Business

Iris' research focuses on the location of multinational corporations, especially high value-adding activities such as green investments and headquarters. She's interested in the political, emotional and perceptual aspects of location and associated stakeholder pressures, as well as cities' attraction game in competing for the investments. She is alumni of the SCANCOR Weatherhead Initiative at Harvard University.

Her research has been published in e.g. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Management Studies* and *International Business Review*.

4. LECTURES

Lectures will be kept in classroom only (see the schedule below). Introductory material and readings will be available prior to the lectures. Lectures are interactive and engage several top professionals in their fields. To get credit for the course, you must attend 70% of the formal (excl. sessions 3 and 9)

lectures (7/10). Furthermore, the participation in the first lecture is compulsory. Active contribution to class discussions will account for 10 percent of the course grade, as described next.

Students must have MS Excel installed on their computer for the Excel assignment. Aalto University students and employees are provided, free of charge, with Microsoft Office 365 programs (e.g., Word, Excel and PowerPoint): [Microsoft Office 365 Services | Aalto University](#)

5. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The assessment of this course is based on four separate items that are explained in more detail below:

Individual assignments (60%)

- Meaningful contribution to lectures orally or in writing after the class (10%)
- Excel assignment (20%)
- Final paper (30%)

Group assignment (40%)

- Group project: Presentation and two pages executive abstract (40%)

INDIVIDUAL (60% of course grade):

PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTION, 10% (max. 10 points)

Class attendance and active participation are considered integral parts of learning. Therefore, active participation and contribution in lectures counts for 10% of the final grade. Oral contribution in class can also be substituted with a short, written contribution to class discussion. Please write 150-200 words contribution to a topic we have been discussing in class and submit to the submission box for that session by 8pm the same day. It is possible to receive maximum points for participation without submitting the written contribution, as it is an alternative option for in-class verbal participation.

As mentioned above, to get credit for the course, 70% of the formal lectures (7/10) must be attended. Exceptions are made based on medical reasons only.

As long as one is active in most of the lectures or alternatively is submitting written contribution, it is enough for the full participation and contribution grade.

EXCEL ASSIGNMENT, 20% (max. 20 points)

During the course you will perform an assignment that will improve your Excel skills and understanding of how companies' carbon footprint is calculated.

Basic excel skills are needed to complete the excel assignment. Tutorial videos of basic Excel commands are provided for those who are not familiar with Excel. The students must have MS Excel and PowerPoint installed on their computer before the course starts. Aalto University students and employees are provided, free of charge, with Microsoft Office 365 programs (e.g., Word, Excel and PowerPoint): [Microsoft Office 365 Services | Aalto University](#)

More detailed instructions are given in MyCourses once the course starts. Guidance will be given in an Excel workshop for those who need help with Excel. The excel assignment is created together with CarbonLink (www.carbonlink.fi).

While students must pass this assignment in order to pass the course, the workshop is not mandatory.

Format: Excel file and PowerPoint (or equivalent) slides

Length: a) Excel file with data sheet, tables and charts, and b) a summary slide set of 5 slides, including an executive summary slide.

Deadline: November, 13th, 2023 at 23:00 / The assignments submission box in MyCourses. Please be prepared to present your work to others at Session 7 on November 14th.

FINAL PAPER, 30% of course grade

Part 1. Case analysis (max. 20 points)

Part 2. Personal reflection on learning outcomes (max. 10 points)

Case topics and specific questions for the final paper will be given during the first session.

Grading criteria:

1) content and analysis: key elements of the question are covered comprehensively and deeply, reflexive and critical use of the course readings and frameworks, depth of analysis.

2) organization and style: logical structure of the essay, including an introduction and a conclusion, clear writing style with complete and concise sentences, proper use of references (including a list of references at the end of the essay).

Friendly tip: Keep a learning diary during this course! The length for the Part 2. is 1000 words.

Total length (Part 1 and Part 2): 3000-3500 words, without references

Format: Font size: 12 Times New Roman, 2.0 line spacing, submit as a Word document

Deadline: December 7th, 2023, at 23:00 / The assignments submission box in MyCourses

Please use academic referencing (text references as well as reference list) in all writing. Failure to follow academic writing standards may lead to failing the assignments. Please use APA referencing style: <https://apastyle.apa.org/>

GROUP ASSIGNMENTS (40% of course grade):

GROUP PROJECT (max. 40 points)

Pick a multinational company and consider a new way of upgrading the company's GVC from a sustainability angle. You should focus either on environmental or social sustainability. When choosing your case or doing your analysis, you may find it helpful to browse databases such as the Science-based Targets Initiative (SBTi) <https://sciencebasedtargets.org> or the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/companies/>

Depending on your focus, your task is to propose an action plan on how the company can either cut emissions or improve the human rights in its own operations and across its global value chain. Identify possible challenges in the implementation of your action plan across functions and/or geographic regions and think about possible ways to solve them.

You are expected to use academic literature or frameworks that guide your analysis and proposal. Publicly available data (e.g. company and industry reports, academic and media research material) is enough for your analysis. Note that all literature and pieces of information must be clearly referenced in the text and fully listed in a bibliography at the end of the report. More instructions are given during the course.

Format: Pecha Kucha presentation (20 slides x 20 seconds, see <https://www.pechakucha.com/>)
You can choose if you want to make a video or a real-time presentation. Please inform Marzieh which option you take by November 16.

In addition to an oral presentation, the group project is documented in two page executive abstract. Please, include an appendix where you report the role and contribution of each group member.

Format: Font size: 12 Times New Roman, submit as a Word document

Deadline for the presentation slides or video and abstract: 27 November, 2023 at 23:00 / The assignments submission box in MyCourses

6. STANDARD ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING

General principles for Word files: Double-Spaced text, Times New Roman 12pt font, 2.54cm margin. For references, please follow the guidelines of the Journal of International Business Studies: <https://static.springer.com/sgw/documents/1560273/application/pdf/JIBS+style+guide.pdf>.

7. GROUP FORMATION AND TEAM MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

You will be divided into groups of 5 students during the first session. We will pursue diversity in the group in order to maximize chances for bringing in different viewpoints and practising cross-cultural (national, disciplinary) teamwork skills. Note that each group member is expected to contribute equally. Team members will grade each other’s contributions by using the school ‘Teamwork Rubric’ at the end of the course (online). If there is a problem in the group work, the group should first try to solve it by itself and if the problem remains unsolved, then contact the course teachers. Note that it is possible that group members get different grades if contributions have not been equal.

8. SCHEDULE

#	Date & time	Topic
1	Tue 24.10.	Why sustainability and global value chains? <i>Tiina Ritvala & Iris Saittakari</i> Course goals and practicalities Core concepts and examples

2	Thu 26.10.	What are global value chains? What is the role of sustainability in them? <i>Tiina Ritvala & Iris Saittakari</i> Calculating the carbon footprint Guest: Ari Rekonen, CEO, CarbonLink
3	Tue 31.10.	Excel workshop (optional) <i>Iris Saittakari</i>
4	Thu 2.11.	Environmental upgrading in GVCs <i>Tiina Ritvala & Iris Saittakari</i> Guest: Sissi Penttilä, CSR Specialist, Reima
5	Tue 7.11.	Regulation and GVCs <i>Tiina Ritvala & Iris Saittakari</i>
6	Thu 9.11.	Social upgrading and human rights issues in GVCs <i>Tiina Ritvala & Iris Saittakari</i> Guest: Suvi Halttula, Co-founder, Impaktly
7	Tue 14.11.	Reducing scope 3 emissions <i>Tiina Ritvala & Iris Saittakari</i> Student presentations of the Excel assignment Reducing scope 3 emissions – financing perspective Guest: Antti Niemelä, Head of Transaction Banking, OP Financial Group
8	Thu 16.11.	Corporate approaches for reaching net-zero <i>Tiina Ritvala & Iris Saittakari</i> Guest: Jussi Nokkala, Partner, ESG Advisory Leader, PWC (TBC)
9	Tue 21.11.	Session allocated to Teamwork
10	Thu 23.11.	International firms, sustainable cities and GVCs <i>Tiina Ritvala & Iris Saittakari</i>
11	Tue 28.11.	Team presentations
12	Thu 30.11.	Team presentations and course conclusion

9. SESSION DETAILS

Please check the pre-lecture material through the MyCourses site before each session.

10. STANDARD ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING

General principles for Word files: Double-Spaced text, Times New Roman 12pt font, 2.54cm margin. For references, please follow the guidelines of the <https://apastyle.apa.org/>.

If you have used ChatGPT or other AI tools in your work, describe how you used the tool in your introduction or method/comparable section of your paper. This applies also for the group work abstract. For example, please refer to:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

If utilizing AI tools in your work please bear in mind that the student is always responsible for the content of their submitted work. For example, AI-generated text cannot be presented as is as the student's own written response. The student is obligated to follow academic writing practices. Upon the teacher's request, the student is obligated to describe how, what and/or why AI-based technology has been used to do the learning task.

11. ETHICAL RULES

Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Thereof:

<https://into.aalto.fi/display/ensaannot/Aalto+University+Code+of+Academic+Integrity+and+Handling+Violations+Thereof>