Global Social Enterprise Consulting Project: A Wharton Undergraduate Capstone

Syllabus

OVERVIEW

This proposed undergraduate capstone course, sponsored by the Legal Studies and Business Ethics Department, is a 7-week, .5 cu class designed to give Wharton seniors the chance to connect academic theory with complex real-world issues arising within the context of award-winning social enterprise projects identified by the World Bank’s “Ideas for Action Initiative.” The course is especially appropriate for sponsorship by the Legal Studies and business Ethics Department because the Initiative is jointly sponsored by the World Bank and Wharton’s Zicklin Center for Business Ethics Research. The aim of the course is to integrate and strengthen students’ academic skills by applying them in cross-functional ways to the production of real-world consulting reports for project founders. The course will also require students to grapple with current ethical and legal challenges that business organizations face, such as defining the purpose of a business, determining how to incorporate global standards like the Sustainable Development Goals or other Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards into a business plan, and designing mechanisms to promote ethical behavior and combat such systemic challenges as corruption.

The Ideas for Action Initiative is an annual competition for global social enterprise founders with new winners every year. Thousands of projects are submitted annually from over 140 countries. From these, a handful are honored with an award. Every year, the best proposals are published in M. Mohieldin and D. Petkoski (Editors), “Financing and Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals – Ideas for Actions”, The World Bank Group, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019. The books are available online. See: http://www.ideas4action.org.

Students will be assigned to work on winning proposals from the most recent competition cycle. The students will work on teams to analyze specific aspects of the project and challenged to produce concrete plans to improve/extend/expand/implement the project under the guidance of the instructor. For example, their work product may include suggestions on how to enrich product or service offerings, create marketing campaigns, better utilize IT, or raise start-up funding – among many other possible topics. The students will interact directly with the founders and others already engaged with the project, including experts from the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and other relevant stakeholders. The interaction with multiple stakeholders will encourage students to deal with competing ideas, investigate contradictions, and consider multiple
forms of evidence in drawing conclusions and making recommendations. Students’ suggestions will be shared with the team that developed the project as well as other interested parties.

GRADING

**Overall Contribution to Class (35%)** The course is intended to engage students in critical thinking, problem solving, analysis, interpretation, and synthesizing information and help them to develop the analytic skills and substantive framework to address challenges as they arise in addressing complex business challenges. Many of these challenges will involve justifying one’s position to those in disagreement. To this end, the course emphasizes articulating reasoned arguments. Class participation is an integral component of this emphasis. Class attendance, class participation, class debates, case study analysis, assignments, project work, instructor evaluation, and peer ratings will comprise 35% of the grade.

**Project Work (50%)** Project Work will account for 50% of the available points.

**Project Presentation (15%)** Project Presentation will account for 15% of the available points.

GUEST SPEAKERS AND RESOURCE EXPERTS

Guest speakers and resource experts will be invited to address the topics in the course, with emphasis on the selected projects. Resource experts, including the founders of the project, will provide inputs on implementation challenges associated with the project. Students will interact with speakers and resource experts either in class or via remote communications outside of class (or both). The coursework in the class session, outlined below, will focus on models for creating thoughtful, impactful consulting reports that will be of practical use to project founders.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING LIST

There is no textbook for this course.

**Week 1**

**OVERVIEW OF THEMES; QUESTIONS; APPROACHES; WHAT'S A BUSINESS FOR; AND THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTATION**

**Required Reading:**

- Andrew Crane, Guido Palazzo, Laura J. Spence, and Dirk Matten, “Contesting the Value of Creating Shared Value”, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, VOL. 56, NO. 2 WINTER 2014 CMR.BERKELEY.EDU
Week 2
INNOVATION LAB: FROM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TO FULL PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT– EXPLORING COMPLEMENTARITY AND IMPACT

Required Reading:

Week 3
MANAGING COMPLEXITY; GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM; INCLUSIVE CAPITALISM; RESPONSIBILITIES IN FRONTIER MARKETS

Required Readings:

Week 4
LEADING AND MANAGING CHANGE: FROM PERSONAL TO ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE FOR ESG IMPACT

Required Readings:
• “International Finance Corporation’s Policy on Environmental and Social Sustainability”, International Finance Corporation, January 2012

Week 5
ENHANCING IMPACT THROUGH LEADERSHIP, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND DESRUPTIVE INNOVATIONS

Required Reading:

Week 6
THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF IMPACT INVESTING: FINACING FOR DEVELOPMENT; BLENDED FINANCE; AND INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Required Readings:
• “Blended Finance— A Steppingstone to Creating Markets”, International Finance Corporation, April 2018
• US SIF, “Sustainable Investing Assets Reach $12 Trillion”, 2018
  (https://www.ussif.org/files/US%20SIF%20Trends%20Report%202018%20Release.pdf) are just two examples of the fundamental shift in the global business environment that will also impact the ecosystem in Lebanon, creating new business opportunities.
• The changing landscape of social-impact investing, McKinsey, July 2017

Week 7
PROJECTS PRESENTATION, COURSE REVIEW, AND TAKEAWAYS