UC SANTA BARBARA
Bren School of Environmental Science & Management

Business and Sustainability
ESM 210, Fall 2025

Class: T/Th: 9:30-10:30 am (BH 1414)

Instructors:
Professor Eric Masanet (BH 3510)
Office Hours: T 10:30 am-12:00 pm and by appointment
Email: emasanet@ucsb.edu

Lecturer Emily Cotter (BH 3406)
Office Hours: By appointment (see booking calendar)
Email: ecotter@bren.ucsb.edu

Teaching Assistants:
Jaenna Wessling (Maple Room: BH 3016)
Office Hours: W 3:00-5:00 pm and by appointment
Email: jaenna@bren.ucsb.edu

Nick Leong (Davidson Commons: BH 3330)
Office Hours: T 2:00-3:00 pm and Th 1:30-2:30 and by appointment
Email: nleong@bren.ucsb.edu

Description of TA Duties

Jaenna Wessling: Business and Sustainability Topics

- Lead discussion sections related to business and sustainability practices (case studies)
- Answer student emails and questions regarding memos, case studies, and business and the sustainability topics
- Host weekly office hours related to memos, case studies, and business and sustainability topics
- Grade all assignments

Nick Leong: Discovery Team Project

- Lead discussion sections related to the Discovery Team Projects
- Answer student emails and questions regarding the Discovery Team formation, discovery research, project management, project deliverables, and project presentations
- Provide feedback on the Discovery Team Project process
- Host weekly office hours related to projects, including discovery research and innovation process

Course Description

This course provides an understanding of how businesses can become more sustainable and how accountability is ensured with external stakeholders. Students will examine sustainability from multiple stakeholder perspectives: finding opportunities in compliance, increasing efficiencies in the value chain, and designing, marketing and selling more sustainable products and services. Topics will include ESG reporting frameworks, risk management, carbon footprints, sustainability certifications, life cycle assessment, green design principles, greenwashing, and science-based targets. In addition, students will be introduced to organizational behavior as a critical part of sustainability transformation within businesses and industry sectors. Through project- and case-based learning, students will develop cross sector leadership skills while applying useful innovation frameworks, including customer discovery, design thinking, and systems thinking. Students will also gain experience in stakeholder communications and relations.

This course consists of lectures to cover concepts and a class project for students to search and discover innovation opportunities for improving sustainability, using a human-centered approach. Working on project teams, students will (1) investigate environmental problems in a particular industry/sector; (2) speak with stakeholders to understand the industry dynamics and explore the human

context; and, (3) collaborate on ideation. In parallel, students will learn important tools for understanding, communicating, and improving the sustainability impacts of organizations, including ESG reporting, sustainability certifications, life-cycle assessment, sustainability target setting, supply chain strategies and more. Discussion sessions will go over business cases and readings that illustrate key concepts and will be used for workshops that support the team project.

This syllabus provides a brief summary of the course, assignments and policies. Consult the course Canvas webpage for more detailed information.

Announcements

From time to time, we will need to send an email to everyone in class. Announcements and course materials are available through Canvas.

Assignments and Grading

All assignments are due on the date shown on Canvas. All written assignments must be posted on the Canvas course webpage.

Assignment	**Individual Contribution**	**Team Contribution**
Memos: 2 in Total	600 points (30%)	
Attendance and Participation	200 points (10%)	
Discovery Teams:		
Student Profile Survey	100 points (5%)	
Team Proposal		100 points (5%)

Assignment	Individual Contribution	Team Contribution
Sprint 1 Progress Report		150 points (7.5%)
Sprint 1 Presentation		150 points (7.5%)
Sprint 2 Progress Report		200 points (10%)
Interview Summaries (4 per student)	200 points (10%)	
Final Presentation		300 points (15%)
TOTAL	900 points (45%)	1,100 points (55%)

2,000 points (100%)

Instructions for these assignments are posted on Canvas and will be discussed in class.

Attendance and Participation:

- Class participation (50 points): Students should be prepared based on the readings, assignments and questions posted on Canvas. Instructors will randomly pick students to answer these questions.
- Discussion section (50 points): Come to discussion sections prepared to discuss the assigned readings/case studies. This means having prepared an analysis in response to discussion section questions posted on Canvas. You can bring written notes.
- Discovery Team presentations (50 points): All members of the team must be in attendance. Every team member must present either the Sprint presentation or Final presentation; teams should discuss in advance who will present at each presentation. It is recommended that no more than three team members present at each presentation, since speaker transitions are disruptive and generally reduce the effectiveness of the presentation, especially when there is limited time. The entire team will participate in answering questions at the Final Presentation, as appropriate.
- Peer feedback (50 points): Each team will submit feedback on the Sprint 1 Presentations to one other team.

Discovery Teams:
Students will work collaboratively on an industry exploration, analyzing the industry/sector landscape and human context, and identifying potential innovation opportunities to improve sustainability. Discovery Teams will have five to six students, with a maximum of 14 team projects in the class. Students may choose to be in the same Discussion Section.

Teams are encouraged to select a Project Manager who will be responsible for helping the team perform at its highest level. This involves removing any impediments to progress, facilitating meetings, and making sure the team is organized and working efficiently during each sprint.

During the quarter, teams will conduct discovery interviews and analyze results during two three-week long “sprints,” as follows:

	Sprint Period	Progress Report	Presentation
Sprint 1:	10/14/25 to 11/3/25	11/4/25	11/4/25 or 11/6/25
Sprint 2:	11/7/25 to 12/3/25	12/4/25	12/5/25*

**The Final Presentation will be given to a judging panel composed of local business leaders, industry experts and innovators.*

The goal of these sprints is to "get out of the building" and speak with industry experts, stakeholders and potential "customers" face-to-face (in-person or via Zoom). Teams should set milestones for each sprint (e.g., interview 15 industry experts during Sprint 1), with a goal of at least 2 interviews per student per sprint. The required minimum will be 4 informational interviews per team member over the course of the 8-week project (e.g., a team of 5 students should conduct a minimum of 20 interviews total). Interviews are defined as qualitative, in-depth conversations guided by a prepared list of open-ended questions (not online surveys using closed-ended questions).

Student Profile

The purpose of a Student Profile is to provide the instructors, teaching assistants, and your classmates with some insight into your background and to help in the formation of compatible discovery teams.

Team Proposal

This one-page proposal should provide the team's working name and the name of each team member, followed by a brief description of the team's project direction. Explain why the team came together and address the following questions:

- Is there a particular environmental problem that the team wants to help solve? Alternatively, list the possible environmental problem(s) the team expects to explore. Explain why.
- Is there a particular industry/sector challenge that interests all the team members? Alternatively, list the possible industries/sectors the team plans to explore. Explain why.
- Does the team have an initial hypothesis for a pain point to be solved for an identified customer or specific industry/sector? What data, evidence or observations support this hypothesis?
- How will the team begin its exploration? What steps will the team take to understand the landscape of the environmental problem and/or dynamics of the industry/sector?
- Describe some of the stakeholders the team will want to contact. List any names of industry experts identified (including job titles).

Interview Summaries

Students will demonstrate their analytical skills, observation skills, and their ability to synthesize data through summarizing interviews with industry experts, stakeholders and potential "customers."

An interview summary should be submitted for each interview conducted. It is a brief report of the key insights from an interview, not a full interview transcript (e.g., transcribed interview from Zoom). Be sure to list all students who participated as interviewees. Guidelines and examples will be posted on Canvas.

Each student should aim for 2 interviews per sprint. An interview summary should be written up and shared with the team on a rolling basis. However, grading will take place at the end of the quarter. The required minimum will be 4 interviews per student over the course of the 8-week project.

You may have more than one team member participate in an interview. However, each student must be responsible for drafting and submitting at least 4 interview summaries for the quarter.

Team Progress Reports

At the end of each sprint, teams will submit Progress Reports. Each team will report what they learned during the sprint, which should include: (1) any new insights about an environmental problem; (2) any new insights about a specific industry or sector; (3) any new insights about a specific company or organization; (4) any new insights about the ecosystem or industry/sector landscape; (5) any new insights about the human context for the problem(s) identified; and, (6) any potential ways to create value for a potential "customer," between stakeholders, or across sectors. Discovery includes all interviews conducted by the team and may be supplemented by secondary research. Be sure to cite sources of any secondary research. In addition, the Progress Report should discuss any innovation tools used in the discovery process and how the team applied those tools to understand the landscape of the environmental problem and/or the industry/sector. Finally, teams should reflect on which sustainability tools could be useful and discuss how those could be applied to better understand the environmental problem or develop a solution.

Based on the key takeaways, the team should share any potential opportunities for innovation identified (i.e., ideas) or any resulting pivots, along with the future direction for the project. Teams will be evaluated based on the quality of the interviews conducted and analysis performed. Therefore, the number and quality of interviews will be evaluated at the end of each sprint. Guidelines and examples will be posted on Canvas.

Team Presentations

Each team will give one Sprint Presentation on either 11/4/25 or 11/6/25 and one Final Presentation to a judging panel on 12/5/25. Specific guidelines and examples for the Sprint Presentation and Final Presentation will be posted on Canvas.

Policies

Each student is responsible for his or her own work within the team. Any form of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. Refer to the Student Handbook for guidelines on cheating and plagiarism. These rules will be observed and enforced in this course. Cheating or plagiarism on any paper or assignment will result in a score of zero, with the possibility of referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

If you must miss a due date for an assignment, the instructors will consider your excuse. Your case will be helped if you have supporting evidence (i.e., doctor's notice). If you will miss a presentation, you need to let the instructors know as soon as you can. If we are not in our offices, you can email, call, or you can leave a note in one of our Bren mailboxes. If due to some extreme emergency you cannot let us know in advance that you will miss an assignment deadline, we will consider your excuse. If we find your excuse suitable, we will make arrangements for an extension. Do not assume that we will automatically grant extensions.

If you think an assignment has been mis-graded, you can request that it be re-graded. Students requesting a re-grade must submit a one paragraph explanation of why a different grade is justified. Students seeking a re-grade should wait at least one day, but not more than a week, after receiving their grade before submitting their explanation. If we find that a mistake has been made, we will make the appropriate changes to your grade. There are no opportunities for extra credit in this class. Students must pass all assignments in order to pass the class.

All course materials (including class lectures and discussions, handouts, web materials) and the

intellectual content of the course itself are protected by United States Federal Copyright Law, the California Civil Code. The UC Policy 102.23 expressly prohibits students (and all other persons) from recording lectures or discussions and from distributing or selling lectures notes and all other course materials without the prior written permission of the instructor (See http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710530/PACAOS-100). Students are permitted to make notes solely for their own private educational use. Exceptions to accommodate students with disabilities may be granted with appropriate documentation. To be clear, in this class students are forbidden from completing study guides and selling them to any person or organization.

As part of the educational process, individual students will bring a variety of ideas and information to a class project for discussion, review, and analysis. Any ideas or information introduced to a class project by an individual student will be available for use by any student team member, both during or after the class project, for any purpose, unless it is Prior IP. Prior IP is intellectual property that is developed by a student before the class project began and that is both recognized and protectable under United States copyright, patent or trademark laws. Any Prior IP introduced by a student during the course of a class project may be used by all student team members in the course of the class project for academic purposes only.

To avoid misunderstandings and confusion, if a student wants to contribute Prior IP to a class project, that student should clearly identify it as Prior IP to the other student team members and notify the instructor that the Prior IP is being contributed to the class project for academic use in the class project.