BUSINESS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

TERM/HOURS  Spring 2020 / M &W 2-3:15pm
LOCATION    KMEC Room 3-130
PROFESSOR   Jennifer Jacquet, jacquet@nyu.edu or jj84@nyu.edu
            Justin Sable, justin.sable@stern.nyu.edu
OFFICE HOURS  M 3:30-5pm & by appointment; schedule by email or: http://goo.gl/QMPxO
OFFICE LOCATION   285 Mercer Street, Office #708

Course objectives:
Why did the public relations firm Edelman lose executives and clients for representing businesses like Shell and Chevron? Why was a hoax letter about climate change from BlackRock CEO Laurence Fink circulated? What does the escape of CEO Carlos Ghosn say about globalization? Why has Bank of America cut ties to financing mountaintop removal coal mining operations? What are private authority, divestment, Sustainable Development Goals, disclosure, and ‘clean meat’? This course is a broad overview of pressing questions regarding the relationship between business and the environment. It aims to give students a look at the major drivers of environmental change, the shifting roles of government and non-government organizations (NGOs), as well as ways in which there are business responsibilities as well as opportunities. The course makes students familiar with some of the foundational literature in game theoretical, sociological, and psychological research (e.g., research on trust, fairness, etc.), in conceptualizes the role of business in society, and familiarizes students with specific environmental problems (e.g., climate change, overfishing, the wildlife trade). It emphasizes the unique role of business in a rapidly changing, globalized world and gives an overview of environmental issues business leaders are facing and will face in the future. A note that occasionally class readings will be challenging and theoretical in nature (alas, this is a university course!). Each class we look at a business (or more) and its relationship to that lecture’s theme and potential business opportunities. The course also features several guest speakers. Laptops should be closed during guest lectures.

Required texts and media:
See the readings listed on the weekly calendar. These are all available on NYU Classes. Other media, including popular articles, podcasts, and films, are also assigned.
Grade:
Responses and questions about readings -- due before each class (25% of total grade)
3 ‘briefs’ each worth 10% (30% of total grade)
Mid-term exam* (20% of total grade)
Final exam* (25% of total grade)
*Exams will be a combination of multiple choice questions and written essays.

Plagiarism: results in failure in the class and referral to an academic dean. Plagiarism includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes or references; not citing every source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else’s work as your own; or copying verbatim from any source. You are subject to NYU’s guidelines on plagiarism: https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html

Responses and questions about readings: by 1pm the day of class, please submit on NYU classes [via assignments] two sentences about each readings and two questions TOTAL that the combined assignments raised for you [NOT AS AN ATTACHMENT; THE TEXT SHOULD BE IN THE BODY OF THE EMAIL]. These do not have to be particularly formal, but I would like to see proper grammar and punctuation and clarity of thought.

Briefs: 3 due throughout the semester and available on NYU Classes. These are designed to encourage in-depth research on a business or sector or issue. Your chosen topic should be cleared by me (or declared on forums) at least 24 hours in advance of its due date. This is in part to prevent students from choosing the same topic. For each brief, I’d like you to write 750 words about the topic (references are separate from the word count), which is due by 1pm on the due date. The grading rubrics for each brief are available on NYU Classes.

Grading (I do not use the “Stern curve”):
93-100 A, 90-92 A-
88-89 B+, 83-87 B, 80-82 B-
78-79 C+, 73-77 C, 70-72 C-
68-69 D+, 63-67 D, 60-62 D-
<60 F
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic (key concepts)</th>
<th>Readings/media (prepare before coming to class)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 27 (Mon.)</td>
<td>What is the Anthropocene? What are the Sustainable Development Goals?</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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| Jan. 29 (Wed.) | GUEST ROSIE WARDLE, SENIOR ADVISOR, FAIRR                                            | 1) Look through: [https://www.fairr.org/](https://www.fairr.org/)  
2) FAIRR. Plant-based profits: Investment risks and opportunities in sustainable food systems. February 2018.  
3) Beyond Meat: Ethan Brown on How I Built This with Guy Raz, February 15, 2017 (podcast) |
**BRIEF #1 DUE** |
<p>| Feb. 17 (Mon.) | NO CLASS                                                                             | PRESIDENT’S DAY HOLIDAY                                                                                     |</p>
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| Feb. 26    | Wed.      | GUEST EBEN BAYER, CEO OF ECOVATIVE                                    | 1) Look through: https://ecovativedesign.com/  
2) Watch the film Blackfish (2013) |
| Mar. 11    | Wed.      | MID-TERM EXAM                                                         | N/A                                                                       |
| Mar. 16/18 |           | NO CLASS                                                             | SPRING BREAK                                                              |
2) Frumhoff et al. 2015. The climate responsibilities of industrial carbon producers Climatic Change. |
2) Romano, B. “Amazon feels heat from employees on climate change and disclosing its efforts” Seattle Times December 17, 2018. |
| Mar. 30    | Mon.      | What is the current state of renewable energies?                    | 1) Coady et al. 2015. How large are global energy subsidies? International Monetary Fund working paper May 18, 2015.  
2) Kahn and Zhao, 2017. The more climate skeptics there are, the fewer climate entrepreneurs. Harvard Business Review March 16, 2017. |
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<th>References</th>
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2) Look through: [http://nativeshoes.com](http://nativeshoes.com) BRIEF #2 DUE |
3) Look through [https://lagustasluscious.com/](https://lagustasluscious.com/) |
<p>| May 4  | Mon.   | GUEST: ANDRAS FORGACS, CEO, MODERN MEADOW                           | 1) Look through: <a href="http://modernmeadow.com">http://modernmeadow.com</a> |</p>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>May 6 (Wed.)</td>
<td>Wrap up, final exam review</td>
<td>1) Submit at least two content-related questions you have about the final exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 11 (Mon.)</td>
<td>IN CLASS FINAL EXAM</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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BRIEF #1
Due Wednesday, February 27th by 2pm. PLEASE ALLOW YOURSELF PLENTY OF TIME SO THAT YOU CAN ANSWER #5 BELOW BEFORE THE ASSIGNMENT IS DUE.

First choose a website or platform (e.g., Tencent, Alibaba, Pinterest, Etsy, eBay, Craigslist, Facebook, Twitter). Claim the website you will be looking at in the forum that will be open on NYU Classes no later than Friday, February 22nd at 2pm. PLEASE BE SURE YOU DO NOT DUPLICATE SITES. We should have 40 different websites/platforms to discuss.

Note your chosen site in your Brief. Then answer the following questions:
1) What is the platform/website's wildlife policy?
3) Screenshot each of the three ads and include them as part of your assignment. Describe the species and on which list classified is as endangered (CITES or the Endangered Species Act) in your paper.
4) Attempt to flag the problem of these animal sales with the website or platform and describe how this process worked (whether there was a formal or informal method and what steps you needed to take; i.e., you might have to be a registered user, etc.).
5) Note any feedback you received on the flagging.

BRIEF #2
ADD A SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

Due Wednesday, April 10th by 2pm.

Find some questionable sustainability claims by a business. Compare to some that seem legitimate. What are the similarities and differences? Has the business been called out for the questionable claims? If so, by whom? How did the business respond? What was unexpected?

Please write 750-words maximum and please submit it via NYU Classes. Cite at least three references.

Please claim your topic and clear it by me by sending me the 1) the business, 2) a brief description of the environmental claim you will examine NO LATER THAN Friday, April 5th at 2pm. I will send you a very short ‘OK’ as a response.

BRIEF #3
Due on Monday, May 6th by 2pm.

For this assignment, please clear the business case study you plan to work on in an email to me no later than April 29th at 5pm. I will send you a very short ‘OK’ as a response. I WANT TO BE SURE YOU DO NOT DUPLICATE BUSINESSES and that you're each on the right track. In the email, please include at least 5 references on the sin addition to the business and action you plan to pursue. This will help me understand whether there is enough credible material out there for you to pursue that issue.
The assignment is to find a business that is addressing one of the solutions listed on Drawdown.org. By truly addressing one of the solutions, I mean that there is evidence that supports that a practice or change in the firm's behavior led to reduced environmental impact or even net environmental improvements. To demonstrate this, please do NOT rely only on sources from the business itself. I'd like to see a mix of sources, such as (but not limited to): media articles, peer-reviewed articles, case studies, and book chapters. I do not expect the business to be perfect, but the idea is to avoid greenwashing. Be sure to provide context of the broader environmental impact (for instance, if you talk about a cruise ship company that is reducing emissions -- put this in context -- what proportion of the overall emissions does the cruise ship sector represent? What about this particular company? What lingering problems remain?).

Please write 1000-words maximum and please submit it via NYU Classes. Cite at least five references. Please be sure to use a recognized citation format, such as MLA.